TIPS: SSHRC INSIGHT GRANT

OVERVIEW OF THE PROGRAM

SSHRC Insight Grants (IGs) provide **between $7,000 and $400,000 over two, three, four or five years** to support long-term research initiatives. The maximum annual request is $100,000. Applicants may be established or emerging scholars, and projects may be conducted by individuals or teams of researchers working in collaboration.

IG proposals are expected to respond to the objectives put forward in the call for proposals for the Insight program, namely to:

- Build knowledge and understanding from disciplinary, interdisciplinary and/or cross-sector perspectives through support for the best researchers.
- Support new approaches to research on complex and important topics, including those that transcend the capacity of any one scholar, institution or discipline.
- Provide a high-quality research training experience for students.
- Fund research expertise that relates to societal challenges and opportunities.
- Mobilize research knowledge, to and from academic and non-academic audiences, with the potential to lead to intellectual, cultural, social and economic influence, benefit and impact.

For shorter term and developmental projects, support is offered through the SSHRC Insight Development Grant. NOTE: An unsuccessful applicant for a 2020 IDG can submit an application for an IG in Oct 2020. Normally a researcher cannot apply for both an Insight Development Grant and an Insight Grant in the same calendar year, however, it looks like, for the foreseeable future (and including 2020), they will allow applicants to submit both if an IDG application was unsuccessful.

In the October 2019 IG competition, UofT had an overall success rate of 55.3% (141 eligible applications submitted, 78 were successful), whereas the national success rate was 40.7% (580 out of 1425 applications). The SSHRC IG guidelines say that Stream A applications (budgets between $7,000 and $100,000) will have a higher targeted success rate than Stream B applications (budgets between $100,001 and $400,000), and this is generally the case both nationally and at UofT. However, in the Oct 2019 IG competition, the success rates for Stream A vs Stream B applications from UofT faculty members were very similar:

- Stream A: 70 applications submitted, 39 successful
- Stream B: 71 application submitted, 39 successful

This is not generally the case, as usually one can see a difference in success rates for UofT applicants in favour of Stream A applications. As of the drafting of this tip sheet, the more detailed national statistics for the Oct 2019 IG competition have not yet been released by SSHRC, but they eventually will be on the SSHRC site if one wishes to drill down in the numbers: https://www.sshrc-crsh.gc.ca/results-resultats/stats-statistiques/index-eng.aspx.

Please note that SSHRC provides a detailed description of the evaluation criteria on their website (at https://www.sshrc-crsh.gc.ca/funding-financement/programs-programmes/insight_grants-subventions_savoir-eng.aspx) and the application form itself provides explicit instructions on how to complete each section (at https://www.sshrc-crsh.gc.ca/funding-financement/instructions/index-eng.aspx?fid=ig_instr). Please be sure to read those instructions thoroughly – these tips do not replace the information provided by SSHRC.

TIPS FOR THE SSHRC ONLINE APPLICATION FORM

GENERAL TIPS

Textboxes: the character counter is unreliable. Please save your data and use the Preview function to ensure that all text is visible in the textbox and looks the way you want it to.

Attachments: SSHRC's software will prevent you from verifying successfully if you have not attached a document where required, or if your document is too long. It cannot detect whether the document attached is the correct one. Please ensure that the correct version of each attachment has been uploaded; SSHRC has disqualified applications in the past when a required section was missing because the wrong document was attached.

SSHRC's formatting specifications must be followed:
- Observe the SSHRC page limit for each attachment
- Page size is 8 ½" x 11"
- Attachments must be in PDF format, unprotected
- Maximum file size for each attachment is 500Kb
- Body text in minimum 12 point Times New Roman
- Single-spaced, maximum of 6 lines per inch
- Minimum ¾" margin on each side

There is no need to put your name at the top of each page or use page numbers.

WEBFORM

FUNDING STREAM
Stream A – total budget request $7,000 - $100,000
Stream B – total budget request $100,001 - $400,000
SSHRC are aiming for a higher target success rate for Stream A than Stream B, by approximately 5-7%. The combined success rate will be the rate for the committee, the allocation of budget will depend upon numbers of proposals in each stream. Proposals will be evaluated by the same committee, using the same criteria, but will be ranked within their stream.

COMMITTEE
Choose the committee which most closely represents the subject and discipline of the proposal. For multi- or interdisciplinary proposals, choose the committee closest to your primary discipline (i.e. the discipline in which most of your contributions have been made). Please note that for

some committees SSHRC will create sub-committees, and there will be separate multidisciplinary committees for humanities and social sciences. The 2017 committee membership lists are available here: http://www.sshrc-crsh.gc.ca/funding-financement/merit_review-evaluation_du_merite/selection_committees-comites_selection/insight_grants-subventions_savoir_oct2018-eng.aspx.

REQUEST FOR MULTIDISCIPLINARY EVALUATION

You may select review by a multidisciplinary committee in either humanities or social sciences. In addition, SSHRC may seek expertise from another committee. By selecting this, you will be obliged to provide a justification for selecting a multidisciplinary committee your application's "Multi/Interdisciplinary Evaluation" section (max 1 page PDF document). You will have to explain how your research will integrate intellectual resources (theories, methodologies, perspectives, etc.) drawn from two or more disciplines, and you'll have to list the various disciplines / areas of research from which expertise should be drawn to assess the research proposal.

Be careful in your choice of keywords, disciplines and areas of research related to the proposal. Please note, reviewers may not be within your primary discipline and your proposal should be written accordingly.

A strong reason to consider applying to the multidisciplinary committee would be if your proposal would be at a disadvantage in a disciplinary committee.

RESEARCH-CREATION

SSHRC defines Research-Creation as including elements of artistic practice and expression: if you are considering selecting this option please check the definition at http://www.sshrc-crsh.gc.ca/funding-financement/programs-programmes/definitions-eng.aspx#a22
If you are submitting a Research-Creation application, you must include a Research-Creation Support Material PDF attachment (max one page) in the "Research-Creation" section of your online application. In this document, you'll have to include a website link to samples of work that best illustrate the qualifications of the team and/or the nature of the proposed research-creation project.

ABORIGINAL RESEARCH PROPOSALS

SSHRC strongly advises applicants to consult its definition of aboriginal research http://www.sshrc-crsh.gc.ca/funding-financement/programs-programmes/definitions-eng.aspx#a0 and their Guidelines for the Merit Review of Aboriginal Research

JOINT INITIATIVE

Several partner organizations offer programs which complement the Insight Grant: some but not all provide potential funding for proposals in specific areas which have been adjudicated by IG committees and meet certain criteria. For details, please look at the joint initiatives listed on the SSHRC site: https://www.sshrc-crsh.gc.ca/funding-financement/search_tool-outil_de_recherche-eng.aspx?tID=3 (if they apply to the IG, it will say so in the initiative's description).

SUBJECT MATTER ELIGIBILITY

SSHRC places restrictions on health-related research, although they have relaxed their guidelines somewhat in recent years. Clinical research and education are ineligible as is research related to epidemiology, therapy and kinesiology. To read more, please visit SSHRC's Subject Matter Eligibility guidelines online. For eligibility-related advice, applicants may send a one-page summary (including the proposed objectives) to the IG mailbox (insightgrants@sshrc-crsh.gc.ca).

Also, projects whose primary objective is curriculum development, preparation of teaching materials, organization of a conference or workshop, digitization of a collection, or creation of a database are not eligible for funding under this funding opportunity. If one of these is the main objective of your application, then it will be deemed ineligible.

FUTURE CHALLENGE AREAS

SSHRC has identified 16 future global challenges to which the social sciences and humanities research community could contribute its knowledge, talent and expertise. This is not an evaluation criterion for merit review and does not offer additional or dedicated research funds for this funding opportunity. Please see SSHRC's website on **Imagining Canada's Future** for more: http://www.sshrc-crsh.gc.ca/society-societe/community-communite/Imagining_Canadas_Future-Imaginer_l_avenir_du_Canada-eng.aspx.

PARTICIPANTS

Enter your co-applicants' and collaborators' email addresses. The SSHRC system will send them each an email invitation. They will enter this in their SSHRC Portfolio page (registering for a SSHRC account if necessary) which will generate an Accepted Invitation form.

Co-applicants will upload their Research Contributions to the form. You will be able to see what they have attached and view their SSHRC CV webform. They should update their SSHRC CV webform, edit and Verify until the system indicates they have successfully Verified, then click on Refresh CV. Collaborators will upload a simplified identification module.

Your co-investigators must all have successfully Verified their invitations before you will be able to Verify the full application.

EDITORIAL ADVICE ON SPECIFIC SECTIONS

SUMMARY

The summary is the first impression you make on reviewers. It's the one section all committee members will read, and many use it to refresh their memories before reaching consensus on scoring your application.
- Successful grant writers sometimes start with the summary (as a scaffold) and then go back and revise as the proposal takes shape.
- Use plain language and make it compelling.

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- Avoid cutting and pasting text from your detailed description: readers encountering the text again in the detailed description may read less closely.
- Have as many people as possible read the summary, including non-specialists, and revise it until everyone says it is crystal clear.

When writing your summary be sure that it answers the following questions:

- What are the challenges and issues to be addressed and why are they important?
- What are the overall goal and the main objectives of the proposed project?
- Why are you the right person/team to do it, and why now?
- What will be the benefit and impact, within and beyond the academic community?

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

In this section you describe your planned research and its context. In this funding opportunity 40% of the score is based on the Challenge criterion, which assesses the aim and importance of the endeavour, and draws mainly on this section. Ensure that you have addressed all the evaluation sub-criteria. The committee score sheet follows the evaluation criteria closely, and the score for each category is based upon the extent to which you satisfy each sub-criterion.

While the committee will refer to the assessments by external reviewers, they are not bound by them. It's a good idea to explain all terms and ensure that your methodology is described in detail and clearly linked to your objectives. NOTE: If you have requested a multidisciplinary evaluation, your proposal may be adjudicated by a multidisciplinary committee with no members from your own discipline. If a committee member from another committee is included, to provide expertise not represented on the committee, they will provide a written assessment which will be read in the committee meeting; they are not present.

At a minimum, use the headings SSHRC requests: Objectives, Context, and Methodology. Allocate space appropriately. Ensure that your Detailed Description is easy for assessors to read and navigate through, and ensure that they can find the various elements addressed in the evaluation criteria. You can use other headings as appropriate, and make judicious use of bolding and italics. Leave plenty of white space, as previous adjudication committee members have mentioned that something as simple as the readability of a proposal should not be taken for granted.

State clearly and precisely the explicit objectives of your research and explain its originality, significance and contribution to knowledge. Situate it in the context of the relevant scholarly literature and describe the theoretical approach or framework. Ensure that your literature review is thorough and up to date; an inadequate literature review is a common complaint of adjudication committees. It is usually better to acknowledge work with which you disagree than to omit it.

Describe the proposed research strategies and activities and relate them to the objectives. Clearly justify your choice of methodology and explain any specific instruments or procedures.

Consider including tables or charts, where appropriate. Timelines are ideally presented in Gantt or other chart form, and are great for demonstrating how well-planned your project is and giving a quick overview of its parts and their relation to each other. Governance structures or flow

charts can also be effective. Tables and charts form part of the six pages allowed for this section, and the text within any tables should be legible, ideally 12 pt, although a proposal will not be disqualified for a slightly smaller size.

KNOWLEDGE MOBILIZATION

In this section you must convince SSHRC that you have solid plans to facilitate the multidirectional flow of knowledge to benefits and impacts of research beyond campus (wherever appropriate).

- ➢ What is your plan for increasing the accessibility, flow and exchange of knowledge among various appropriate audiences (academic and/or non-academic)?
- ➢ Give concrete examples, highlight <u>unique</u> initiatives, and ensure the purpose of the activity is clear. Consider both traditional and innovative methods.
- ➢ Who is the audience for knowledge mobilization (including, as applicable, diverse groups of researchers, policy-makers, business leaders, community groups, educators, media, international audiences, practitioners, decision-makers and the general public)?
- ➢ You can refer to teaching, curriculum and pedagogy development.
- ➢ What is the schedule for the KM activities? Be realistic and consider a figure or Gantt chart if applicable.

For more information on knowledge mobilization approaches, see SSHRC's website.

NOTE: The *Tri-Agency Open Access Policy on Publications* is mandatory for all peer-reviewed journal publications arising from SSHRC grants awarded from May 1, 2015 onwards (http://www.science.gc.ca/default.asp?lang=En&n=F6765465-1). It does not apply to books and monographs. Address compliance where appropriate. If you must publish in a journal which charges open-access fees, explain and justify the choice of that journal and include the costs in your budget. Be realistic in your choice of journal and in the number of articles which will be forthcoming. Information on UofT resources, including institutional repositories, self-archiving, journal selection and amending publication contracts is available at:
http://onesearch.library.utoronto.ca/triagencyopenaccesspolicy

SSHRC encourages applicants to, if applicable, discuss how research data arising from the project will be managed, including collection, preservation and sharing (ie, your Data Management Plan, as part of your Knowledge Mobilization strategy). This is currently not a mandatory part of your application, but SSHRC may make it mandatory in the future. For more, you can review SSHRC's *Research Data Archiving Policy*. SSHRC's expectations for research data management—including the responsibilities of researchers, research communities, research institutions and research funders in meeting these expectations—are described in the *Tri-Agency Statement of Principles on Digital Data Management*

LIST OF REFERENCES

This is a list of references cited in your proposal. It should indicate a thorough review of the literature. SSHRC program staff may also use it as one of their resources for identifying potential external reviewers.

RESEARCH TEAM, PREVIOUS OUTPUT AND STUDENT TRAINING

RESEARCH TEAM

If you have co-applicants/collaborators, describe why a team approach is required.
- Indicate the roles and responsibilities of each member; and the value added by each.
- Use percentages to show the proportion of the project for which each researcher is responsible. The score for co-applicants' CVs will be weighted in proportion to their participation.
- Co-applicants' CVs are included in the scoring for Capability, those for collaborators are not.
- If you have a co-applicant who is an established researcher, clearly explain their contribution. This is especially important if they are senior to the applicant (the committee are asked to evaluate the applicant's suitability to lead the project).
- Ensure that your methodology is supported by the areas of expertise of your research team.
- Don't include in the team members who don't have a clear contribution to make.
- Do not include research assistants in this section, or paid technical consultants.
- If you are the sole applicant, you may use this section or leave it blank.
- Keep in mind that if you add students (Postdocs, Graduate students, etc) as Co-Applicants or Collaborators, then those same people cannot be paid from the grant funds.

PREVIOUS AND ONGOING RESEARCH

- Summarize the results from previous and ongoing research. Describe any results which have informed the current project, and any feasibility or pilot studies which contribute to its likelihood of success. Demonstrate how the new research builds upon past work.
- Note any links between co-applicants' research and the current proposal.

STUDENT TRAINING AND MENTORING

In this section you describe your plans for training and mentoring, and link these plans to your project and its objectives. This section contributes to the score for Challenge, which is weighted at 40% of the total. SSHRC encourages the training of students, but it is vital that their participation be essential to the project.
- Ensure that you describe what the students will be doing, what they will learn and how they will benefit from participation.
  - How will they be supervised?
  - Will there be opportunities for co-authorship?
  - Are tasks assigned at appropriate levels?
- If appropriate, note whether you have access to students who possess specialized skills.
- If you have a particular student in mind who brings unique and valuable skills, it is fine to describe them.
- Read SSHRC's Guidelines for Effective Research Training (http://www.sshrc-crsh.gc.ca/funding-financement/policies-politiques/effective_research_training-formation_en_recherche_efficace-eng.aspx), which will also be read by the reviewers.

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FUNDS REQUESTED FROM SSHRC

Here you must convince SSHRC of the quality of your financial planning and your justification of the proposed expenditures. The Feasibility criterion includes appropriateness of the requested budget and justification of the proposed costs. Although it only counts for 20% of the overall score, a proposal must receive a passing mark in Feasibility (minimum 3/6) for the application to be potentially fundable, and a low score will lower the ranking of a proposal with otherwise strong scores.

Before a proposal reaches the committee, the program officer reviews the eligibility of the expenses; if more than 30% of the budget is ineligible, a proposal is disqualified.

In reviewing the budget, the committee apply the principle of "minimum essential funding." A review committee may recommend budget reductions if they determine a request is inadequately justified; and may consider failing a project on the Feasibility criterion if they deem that 30 per cent or more of the overall budget request not appropriate to the proposed objectives or outcomes of the project. Failure is automatic if 50% or more of the budget is considered insufficiently justified and/or not appropriate.

Each committee considers a group of applications: ensure that your requested budget is in line with what is being requested in your discipline. Budgets which are very high or very low attract extra attention. In addition to justifying all expenses, ensure you have included all necessary costs. Check with past grantees, consult the SSHRC website for past competition results, and if necessary contact a SSHRC program officer.

Read the Tri-Agency Use of Grant Funds guidelines for eligible and ineligible SSHRC expenses, at http://www.nserc-crsng.gc.ca/Professors-Professeurs/FinancialAdminGuide-GuideAdminFinancier/FundsUse-UtilisationSubventions_eng.asp
- Ensure that your budget reflects closely the activities described in the proposal.
- Follow institutional guidelines where applicable:
    o For compensation rates, ask your business officer
    o Travel per diems, use UofT rates ($55/day in Canada, $75 international)
- Students may be paid by stipend or hourly: if by stipend, it must be justified by their role; if hourly, indicate that the total rate includes benefits and vacation pay.
- Support for post-doctoral fellows is limited to two years (per individual). If a post-doc is receiving compensation from the grant, they cannot be listed as a collaborator. Be sure to indicate why this level of research assistance is necessary.
- Tablets are now allowed, if necessary for the project – if you are including them you must demonstrate that they are essential and are the most effective use of the funds.
- Cell phones are only allowed if needed for data collection or safety.
- Home internet is not eligible.
- Total costs for Research Tools with a development/purchase cost between $7,000 and $100,000 must be listed under Other and described in the Budget Justification (see SSHRC's Support of Tools for Research and Related Activities guidelines).
- Avoid including items that are not clearly related to the project e.g. travel for dissemination early in the project.

- Insight Grant funds must not be used for remuneration or travel and subsistence costs of presenters or guest speakers.
- Avoid multiple trips to one destination without justification.
- Avoid hiring non-students without a clear justification.
- Do not include overhead or administrative charges.
- Avoid math errors.

BUDGET JUSTIFICATION (2 PAGES MAX)

- Follow the structure of the Funds Requested from SSHRC section.
- Explain what each student will be doing during each period.
- Distinguish between research and dissemination travel.
- Explain how each budget item is calculated: e.g. number of people x (airfare + local transportation + ((hotel + per diem) x number of nights); and explain why each trip is necessary. Indicate the significance of conferences (why that conference? and if you know the place and date you can include it) and the reason for travel to a particular destination.
- Use the UofT per diem rates (at https://finance.utoronto.ca/policies/gtfm/travel-and-other-reimbursable-expenses/reimbursement-rates/).
- Research Tools with a development/purchase cost between $7,000 and $100,000 must have a fully justified budget breakdown in table form (see SSHRC's Support of Tools for Research and Related Activities guidelines).
- The *Tri-Agency Financial Administration Guide* allows for data management and open access-related expenses. The guide should be consulted for detailed information on all eligible and ineligible expenses.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

Use the drop down lists and text box to indicate the significance, contribution and impact of the project, which will be evaluated under the Challenge criterion. SSHRC has introduced a new version of the final research report which allows you to comment on the actual outcomes.

RESPONSE TO PREVIOUS CRITIQUES

This section is optional, but can be used effectively. The tone of the response is very important – it's a good idea to have others read it to ensure that it is courteous and positive. Committee members will not be given previous submissions, but because committees often have continuing members, an earlier application may be remembered. This section can be used to indicate how feedback has been used to strengthen the proposal, in particular the committee's recommendations or any comments from the external assessors which the committee noted as significant in their assessment of the previous proposal. You can usefully highlight praise of the earlier proposal. You can also address aspects of the previous proposal which were misinterpreted, if you have addressed this in the main proposal but wish to ensure that your decisions are understood.

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SUGGESTED REVIEWERS

If possible, suggest at least two. SSHRC will try to use at least one of yours and one of their own choosing, so if your field is small, do not list all of the obvious people. In addition, please note that one of the sources SSHRC program officers draw on in identifying external assessors is the proposal's literature review.

EXCLUSION OF POTENTIAL REVIEWERS

This is an optional one-page attachment which is only used by SSHRC staff; it does not go to external assessors or the adjudication committee. It is used to request SSHRC not to select specific individuals as external assessors for the project because they will not be able to provide an impartial review (due, for instance, to professional disagreements or past associations). A brief justification should be included. The SSHRC staff is not bound by these requests, but will take them into consideration.

RESEARCH CONTRIBUTIONS

The Research Contributions document is uploaded to the application form. Observe SSHRC's categories. Do not include work not yet submitted (you may allude to it in the Previous and Ongoing Research section of the application). Be sure to use asterisks to indicate contributions which result from earlier SSHRC support; the committee will be evaluating your productivity with past SSHRC funding.

You can use free-form text to explain the significance of contributions, particularly important in applications to multidisciplinary committees in which the members may be unfamiliar with the key journals or conferences in your field. You can, for instance, highlight the importance of journals, include citation figures, and be sure to explain how you have shown student authors.

Career Interruptions: a career interruption is a period in which you were unable to conduct research for various reasons. You can include contributions going back for a period of the same length before October 2011, so that your contributions represent six years of activity.

Special Circumstances: special circumstances are those which cause a slowdown in your research output but not a complete halt. You cannot add time to the six-year period, but you can include an explanation of the slowdown, and confirm if possible that the issues are resolved and that your usual productivity has resumed.

SSHRC FORMAT CV

Your CV webform is captured at the moment when you click on Submit. Your co-applicants' CVs are captured when they Accept the Invitation. They should follow the instructions on the SSHRC site to refresh their CV webforms if they make changes after Accepting the Invitation.

GENERAL EDITORIAL TIPS

Write with the committee and assessors in mind, anticipate their questions and make sure that you provide answers. Clearly establish the need for the research. Present a challenging topic and

demonstrate its importance and originality. Convey and inspire confidence, and excitement, and strike a balance between ambition and realism.

Invest time in the preparation of your proposal, it should be well-written, carefully crafted and without errors.

Best wishes for success!