

DIVISIONAL "GRASSROOTS" STRATEGIC INITIATIVE PROPOSALS: HOW-TO

[DRAFT: 18 MARCH 2021]

STEP 1

HAVE AN IDEA

It needs to be research-driven; see the ISI website @ isi.utoronto.ca for basic guidelines

STEP 2

PRELIM MEETINGS

Early in process, meet with your Vice Principal/Dean Research who is the lead on these things. Ask for copies of successful proposals from that person if need be. This person is going to be your main contact throughout the process and will also be speaking about your proposal in the adjudication committee meetings. Keep them in the loop; you need this person on your side.

STEP 3

GATHER A CORE GROUP

This could happen before Step 2. But basically: have a multi-divisional group of researchers who represent the skeletal constituency: a smaller group of 6-10 people you can genuinely collaborate with. Make sure your group has a 'lead' from each Division you are going to want support from. Consider adding any Senior Research Associates or a postdoc or two to this team. Brainstorm in a big-sky way. Invite the Vice-Principal/Dean Research contact for the lead faculty member who is going to be supporting this.

STEP 4

WIDEN THE CONVERSATION

Once you have some basic ideas in place, let others know. Divisional faculty co-leads should meet with their Research office contacts to let them know and discuss possible support down the line. Invite additional researchers to join you, especially from the key divisions. Organize a workshop or facilitated workshop or planning session; you can get support on this from CRIS (Centre for Research and Innovation Support) and from your divisional Research Office contact. Invite your divisional Advancement person to this event. Consider including a grant writer at this stage, or perhaps later on, at Step 10. Faculty leads should let their unit heads know that they are working on this.

STEP 5

DRAFT PROSPECTUS

Think of this application as a work in progress. At this stage, focus on the basic ideas, not the budget. Faculty leads for each division: share draft with Research Office contact; faculty lead should share with Vice-Principal/Dean Research; ask for feedback. They want to help you succeed.

At this early stage, don't be overly concerned about raising money for the ISI match. You want to see if the idea has any potential first, from the RAB ISI Committee (see Step 6).

STEP 6

VICE-PRINCIPAL/DEAN RESEARCH SHARES PROSPECTUS W/ RAB ISI SUBCOMMITTEE

This is the multi-divisional, tri-campus committee that adjudicates the divisional ISI proposals. The committee wants a chance to weigh in before you spend many months on this ISI, only to have it not succeed. Your Vice Principal/Dean Research, or delegate, will present your prospectus for discussion and will provide feedback to you. The committee meets monthly.



This process can take a long time but it will be worth it if successful.

DIVISIONAL ISI HOW-TO

SOME RECOMMENDATIONS

STEP 8

DISCUSS LATERALLY

Make sure to be in consistent, ongoing conversation with the researchers in your project on each division. Organize another conversation after the RAB SI Committee meeting to share feedback and finetune/revise proposal. Make sure that divisional faculty co-leads are bringing in as many people as they can into the conversation, in a meaningful way. Encourage divisional faculty co-leads to organize workshops/conversations in those divisions. Divisions want to make sure their researchers will benefit from the project

STEP 10

REVISE + SUBMIT THE PROPOSAL

This version of the proposal should have everything in it, including the budget. Consider organizing a small working committee to do this; consider working with a grant writer as well. Once you have a draft that your core group is happy with, share with other researchers on your team; your Chairs; and your VP/D research contacts. Submit the final proposal to your Vice Principal/Dean Research

STEP 12

AWAIT RESULTS

Your proposal may be approved or it might be sent back with feedback and a request that you address particular concerns raised by committee members. If this happens, you are encouraged to revise and resubmit.

STEP 7

RAISE FUNDS + FLESH OUT PROPOSAL

Once you have reason to believe the idea has some legs, begin seeking internal matching funds. Each division faculty lead should play the key role here, with the main Faculty Lead playing a supporting role. Prep work includes reading the divisional plans; developing a set of funding ideas that dovetail with that division's priorities; having a preliminary conversation with that Vice Principal/Dean Research office; making a formal proposal; being patient while they consult other decision-makers in the unit. Faculty leads should discuss and seek guidance from their Vice-Principal/Dean office, including advice on proposed programming, staffing, etc.

STEP 9

COMMUNICATE

Although you will be very busy, it's important to keep everyone in the loop about what's going on. Send out periodic updates to your three constituencies: researchers in the project; faculty lead VP/D Research or delegate; divisional VP research offices.

STEP 11

ADJUDICATION

The RAB ISI committee adjudicates the proposals. They meet monthly. This committee is multi-divisional and tri-campus. You will be asked to make a short presentation of 5 minutes, with 10 minutes for Q+A.

STEP 13

CELEBRATE!!

We hope! If you are successful in your proposal, the money 'lives' in the home unit of the faculty lead, but there's a whole other stage of implementation support, and reporting that you can look forward to!



This informal guide has been developed by the RAB ISI Committee to guide faculty leads through the divisional, or grassroots, ISI proposal process.

Good luck!!