# Grant Writing:
## How to put together a superior funding request

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# Step one:
# Prior to applying

**Ready yourself to lead your research project**

-Start with smaller grants and work your way up to larger opportunities.

-Be sure that you or the team that is applying has all of the requisite expertise to successfully (and convincingly) complete the program of research. Seek collaborations to fill gaps.

-Become a Co-Investigator on another researcher's grant – either at Education or in collaboration with researchers at another faculty or university.

-Get your papers published or submitted before you submit your grant – if the paper is of relevance to your grant, make sure it is submitted or recently published.

# Step two:
# Initial suggestions for writing your grant

Following these basic suggestions should give you a major advantage, simply because few applicants do all three:

(1) Answer all questions asked in the application,

(2) organize peer review for your application and

(3) **Essential**: In your grant's Summary/Overview section and again in the first paragraph, even if it is not requested of you, say:

-WHAT? State what you are planning on doing
-HOW? Say how it will be done (e.g. we will do projects x, y, z)
-EFFECT? State what the effect of your research will be

# More specific suggestions:

**Take special care with the first section of the application**. This can serve to set the tone and engender an enthusiastic response to your work. Be confident, not boastful as you write (tip: use the third person, it's easier to be complimentary about yourself when writing this way).

Give **concrete evidence or examples** whenever you can to explain your qualifications.

Be sure that you **respond to each and every one of the evaluation criteria** outlined in the application materials provided by the funding body. My opinion is that it is difficult to be too explicit in responding to criteria/justifying your responses.

**Write to your intended audience** (very important). Remember that not all reviewers will be experts in your field. Some might be from a different discipline altogether (depending upon the funding opportunity). In some cases reviewers might not even be academics.

Write out every question and sub-question you are asked to respond to out as a **separate heading** as you prepare your first draft. Respond to each and every question. Afterwards, you can remove or incorporate your headings.

Write to the grant's **scoring rubric** if this is available to you. Request this of the funder

# More general suggestions for success

1. Learn from others. Read examples of successful grants that have been funded by the granting foundation/agency/ministry to which you are applying

2. Apply for grants. You will hone your skills, focus your work, receive feedback for improvement and generate text that you can recycle.

3. -Set up a peer review committee
More on this in the [CIHR Guidebook for New Investigators](#)

# Respond to the review criteria against which you will be adjudicated

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# The Evaluation and Scoring Rubric for the SSHRC has three sections

-Challenge (6 Qs)
-Feasibility (5 Qs)
-Capability (4 Qs)

Tip 1: Keep a copy of the scoring rubric at the top of your desk while writing and check off the sections as you respond to them.

Tip 2: Use the *exact wording* from the scoring rubric when responding to the questions posed. Weave the language of the scoring rubric through the application sections.

To be successful, you must receive scores of 4.5+ out of 6 on the following 15 questions and you must have your budget pass

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# CHALLENGE = *THE RESEARCH*

**The aim and importance of the endeavour (Insight Grant - 40% - Insight Development Grant - 50%):**

Ch1. Originality, significance and expected contribution to knowledge;

Ch2. Appropriateness of the literature review;

Ch3. Appropriateness of the theoretical approach or framework;

Ch4. Appropriateness of the methods/approach;

Ch5. Quality of training and mentoring to be provided to students, emerging scholars and other highly qualified personnel, and opportunities for them to contribute; and

Ch6. Potential for the project results to have influence and impact within and/or beyond the social sciences and humanities research community.

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# FEASIBLILITY = *FEASIBILITY*

**The plan to achieve excellence (IG and IDG - 20%. The budget is virtually pass/fail):**

F1.  Probability that the objectives will be met within the timeline proposed;

F2.  *Appropriateness of the requested budget and justification of proposed costs;*

F3.  Indications of financial and in-kind contributions from other sources, where appropriate;

F4.  Quality and appropriateness of knowledge mobilization plans, including effective
dissemination, exchange and engagement with stakeholders within and/or beyond the research community, where applicable; and

F5.  Appropriateness of the strategies for conducting the activity/activities proposed.

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## CAPABILITY = *YOU AND THE TEAM*

**The expertise to succeed (IG - 40%   -   IDG - 30%):**

Ca1.  Quality, quantity and significance of past experience and published and/or creative outputs of the applicant and any co-applicants, relative to their roles in the project and their respective stages of career;

Ca2.  Evidence of other knowledge mobilization activities (e.g., films, performances commissioned reports, knowledge syntheses, experience in collaboration/other interactions with stakeholders, contributions to public debate and media), and of impacts on professional practice, social services and policies, etc.;

Ca3.  Evidence of contributions to the [development of talent](); and

Ca4.  Potential of the applicant/co-applicant to make future contributions.

# SSHRC Scoring Rubric example – p.1

Following each section is a spot for comments.
2 to 4 feedback sentences are usually all applicants receive

**Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada**
**Committee Evaluation**
**Insight Grants October 2015 Competition**

| Committee: | 435-5B (Education and social work 1) |
|---|---|
| File Number: | |
| Applicant Name: | |
| Application title: | |

## Part 1: Challenge - The aim and importance of the endeavour (40%)

| Sub-criteria (No specific weighting assigned to each sub-criterion) | N/A | Unsatisfactory | Satisfactory Good | Good Very Good | Very Good Excellent |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| Originality, significance and expected contribution to knowledge | | | | | |
| Appropriateness of the literature review | | | | | |
| Appropriateness of the theoretical approach or framework | | | | | |
| Appropriateness of the methods/approach | | | | | |
| Quality of training and mentoring to be provided to students, emerging scholars and other highly qualified personnel, and opportunities for them to contribute | | | | | |
| Potential for the project results to have influence and impact within and/or beyond the social sciences and humanities research community | | | | | |

# Example application Instructions
# SSHRC IG

# Detailed Description—maximum six pages (mandatory)

You must attach an electronic copy of your Detailed Description. Write your proposal in clear, plain language. Avoid jargon, acronyms and highly technical terms. Not all committee members will have an intimate knowledge of the subject matter of all proposals.

Using the headings below, describe the proposed research in enough detail to allow informed assessment by committee members:

- Objectives
- Context (including literature review and theoretical approach)
- Methodology*

*SSHRC encourages applicants to, if applicable, discuss how research data arising from the project will be managed, including collection, preservation and sharing.

Your detailed description must address the Challenge and Feasibility evaluation criteria listed under Evaluation and Adjudication in the funding opportunity description, except for those criteria addressed in other sections of the application, i.e.:

- Research Team, Previous Output and Student Training;
- Expected Outcomes;
- Funds Requested from SSHRC;
- Funds from Other Sources;
- Budget Justification; and
- Knowledge Mobilization Plan.

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# The problem with application instructions

The way the SSHRC suggests you lay out your Detailed Description is far from ideal: Objectives… context… lit review… theoretical approach…
*Yes. Thank you. But what are you actually planning to on doing?*

(A) SSHRC's format is not ideal because you are not scored against many of the questions listed in a given section (this is not unique to SSHRC grants).

(B) You will be pages and pages in before you get to the part your reviewers care about:
    -What are you planning on doing?
    -How are you going to do it?
    -Why is this grant important to fund instead of one of the other 1,991 IG applications?

Instead of doing what is requested, begin the Summary and main Description section of *any* grant as listed on the next slide.

# How to begin any grant

This applies to the Summary sections and should be given again in the grant's main, long Description section.

On the first page, indicate:

-WHAT? State generally what you are planning on doing. Keep it to two or three lines

-HOW? Say how it will be done (e.g. we will do projects x, y, z)

-EFFECT? State explicitly what will be the (a) specific contributions and
(b) the important effects of your research.

This should take up about a quarter page. Then go on to answer the grant's questions.

Note that if you can find the space to hint at methodology before giving all the background, so much the better. This can be done through a bulleted list that matches the Methodology.

# Methods

Remember that your methodology is what your grant will be judged against.
They must like your CV and the project but it is usually the methods description that will see you funded or not.

Be sure that your methods description is <u>absolutely clear</u>. Insufficient detail / hard to follow = not successful.

Describe everything and be explicit.

In many cases, applicants should bank on the methods description taking up close to half of the available space of a SSHRC Detailed Description section.

# Other things to note for SSHRC applications

-Be sure to choose the right committee (likely Committee 5: Education and Psychology)

-Do not choose the Multidisciplinary Committee

-The Committee members will not likely look at the expert reviewers' assessments

-There will be 2 assessors per application

-Assume that neither assessor will read your application in detail (make it v. easy to read )

-Your grant will likely be discussed for 5 minutes max in the committee room

-Your grant must be understandable even to those who know nothing about your work

-Explain all terms and avoid jargon when possible. A word like "Author-ation-alization-ic" is not usually ideal. Used terms must have meanings agreed upon by all in Education / Psych.

-Make your writing clear, interesting and at the level of, say, a Harpers or Economist article

-Imagine that your grant will be read along with 5 others on a commuter flight at 11pm

-Imagine a clever non academic in your head. You are writing to her/him

-The budget is essentially pass/fail. Justify everything in as much detail as you have space for and do not pad

## UPCOMING SSHRC DEADLINES – Larger individual and team grants

**SSHRC Insight Grant** **(IG)**
$7,000 to $400,000 over 3 to 5 years
Applied to by established scholars
A review is strongly recommended. FoE deadline for a full review: **September 29th.**
Western deadline with ROLA complete: **October 7th – you must submit by this day**
SSHRC: October 15th
-$151,343 average award in 2016
-529 applications
-$80,060,000 distributed in 2016 ($82MM in 2015)

**SSHRC Insight Development Grant** **(IDG)**
$7,000 to $75,000 over 1 or 2 years
Applied for by Emerging Scholars *or*
by an Established Scholar who are planning research on a topic that is new to her/him
Faculty of Education deadline - **anticipated: January 12th**
Western deadline - anticipated: January 23rd
SSHRC - anticipated: January 30th
-$55,690 average award in 2016
-549 applications supported
-$30,574,000 distributed in 2016 ($17MM in 2015)

## UPCOMING SSHRC DEADLINES – Smaller individual and team grants

**SSHRC Connection Grant (CG)** – Four application dates per year. Requires a match from the Faculty of Education
$7,000 to $25,000 for events, and up to $50,000 for other outreach activities – 1 year
Faculty of Education deadline: Next-**October 14th** ||   Anticipated: Jan 14 / April 14 / July 14
Western deadline: Next-October 25th ||   Anticipated: Jan 23 / April 23 / July 23
SSHRC: Next-November 1st ||   Anticipated: Feb 1 / May 1 / Aug 1

**SSHRC Knowledge Synthesis Grant (KS)** – Future Challenge Area topics – Two application dates per year
$25,000 over one year, intended to support the synthesis of existing research knowledge
January and September SSHRC deadlines (mid-December and mid-August FoE internal deadlines)
*Do not apply for a KS if you are a new/emerging scholar. A successful KS renders you ineligible to apply for an IDG

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## UPCOMING SSHRC DEADLINES – Team grants

**SSHRC Partnership Development Grant** (PDG)
$75,000 to $200,000 over 1 to 3 years
Faculty of Education deadline for a full review: **November 14th**
Western deadline with ROLA complete: November 23rd
SSHRC: November 30th

**SSHRC Partnership Grant** (PG)
February LOI $20,000 to be used to prepare a Full Application
November Full Application deadline (by invitation), up to $2,500,000 plus a required match
You must meet with the Research Office and start working on this grant by October 30th

**CONTACTS FOR ASSISTANCE**

Grant review and writing assistance:
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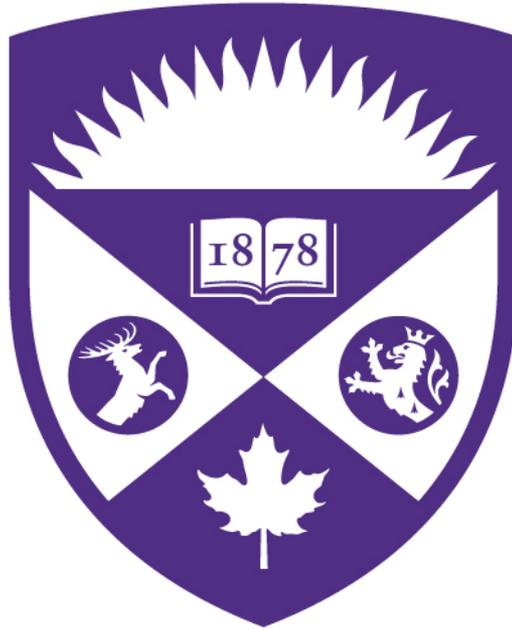Associate Dean Research:
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# Additional slides
# How to write any grant

# Application Example

(Canada Foundation for Innovation – Leaders' Opportunity Fund)

The guidelines for the *Overview* section from the on-line version of the application forms:

Save | Display / Print | Instructions | Portfolio | Quit | Help

**Project Overview**

In language appropriate for a multidisciplinary committee, use the space below (up to 2 pages on the PDF printout) to provide a general description of the infrastructure requested and indicate where it will be located. Briefly explain why the infrastructure is needed at this time, how it enhances existing infrastructure, what research or technology development it will enable, and why that research or technology development is important for Canada.

Approximately 7,000 characters. **?** If the text surpasses the page limit for the PDF printout (stated above), then the additional text will not be included.

Save | Display / Print | Instructions | Portfolio | Quit | Help

Example of the paper copy of this same Project Overview (Summary) section at the next slide.
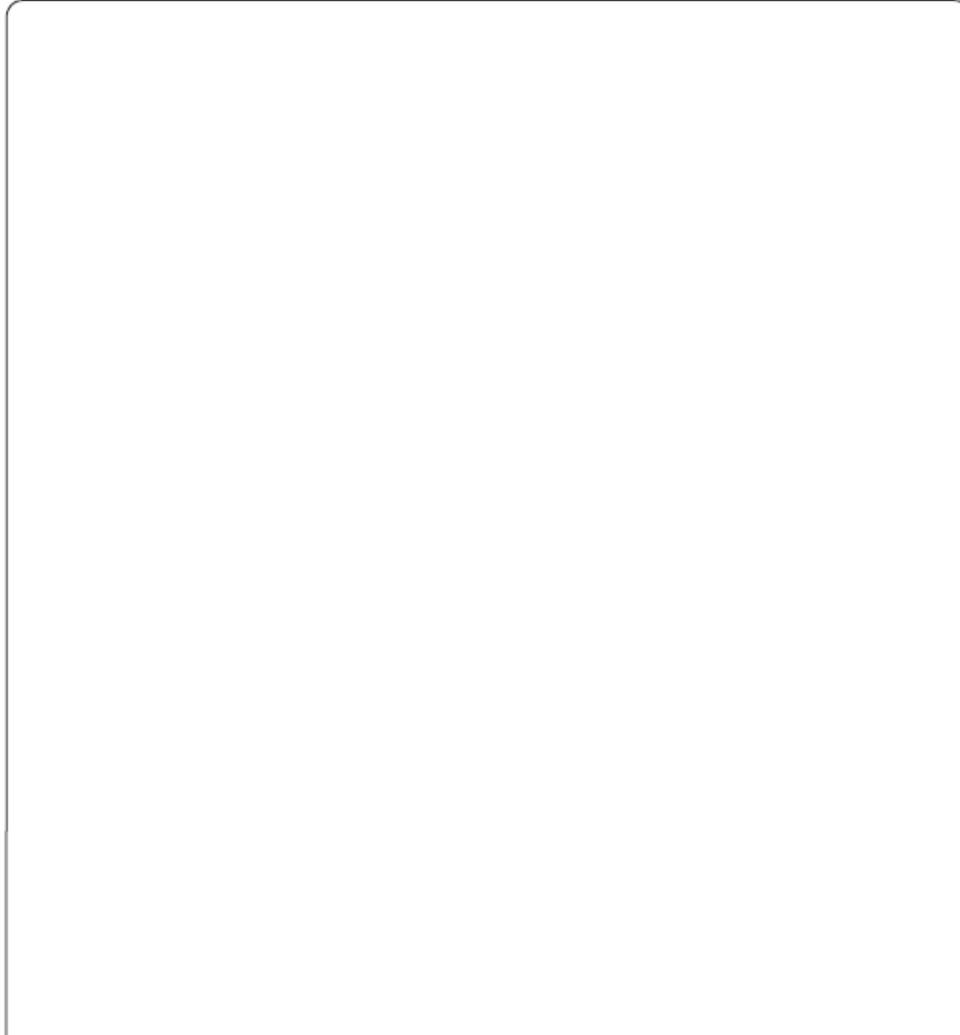
Canada Foundation for Innovation

Institution and title of infrastructure project (from page 1 of this module) :     Project Number :   25571

The University of Western Ontario
Testing 1 2 3 - A test of what researchers see when applying

PROJECT OVERVIEW

Do they match? No. Be sure to check the application
instructions *and* the paper copies of the application.

**How do you write the Overview/Summary/first section of a grant?**

Right at the outset (whether it is requested or not):
A. Set the stage – 1 or 2 sentences (high-level background information)
B. Give the (i) objectives, (ii) significance and outcomes and (iii) impact of your intended research

Then go on to talk about:
C. The research itself / the criteria the application materials request that you respond to.

The *CIHR Guidebook for New Investigators* gives great advice about how to write any grant. In particular, under "The Layout for the Summary Page," there are useful tips for how to write the very important first section of any grant (usually called the "Summary" or "overview" section).

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# What information are you being asked to provide?

(answer all questions!)

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# Example Overview/Summary criteria text:

## Project Overview

### Identification
### Project Overview
### The Research
### Researchers (Candidates)
### Researchers (Other users)
### The Researchers
### Need for the Infrastructure
### Training of HQP
### Collaborations and Partnerships
### Benefits to Canada
### Suggested reviewers

In language appropriate for a multidisciplinary committee, use the space below (up to 2 pages on the PDF printout) to provide a general description of the infrastructure requested and indicate where it will be located. Briefly explain why the infrastructure is needed at this time, how it enhances existing infrastructure, what research or technology development it will enable, and why that research or technology development is important for Canada.

Approximately 7,000 characters. **?** If the text surpasses the page limit for the PDF printout (stated above), then the additional text will not be included.

When writing application sections, my suggestion is that you should **break criteria sections out into separate questions** and be sure that you have responded to each and every one.

The block question/criteria from the previous slide is asking six questions:

1. Give a general description of Infrastructure requested
2. Where will it be located?
3. Why is it needed at this time?
4. How does it enhance current infrastructure.
5. What research (and/or technology development) will it enable?
6. Why is this research (and/or this technology development) important for Canada?

7. Note that you are not asked provide elements **A** (set the stage) and **B** (i. objectives, ii. significance and outcomes, iii. impact) from slide 12 above in this application's first section. Do be sure that you have addressed these two elements none-the-less in the first full section – even if briefly before you go on to respond to the criteria.