

***Environmental Assessment
for Canadian Researchers***

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Today's Environmental Assessment Briefing

- Quick intro to Environmental Assessment (EA)
- Environmental assessment legislation with regard to NSERC, SSHRC & CHIR
- Responsibilities of the granting agencies
 - What this means for researchers
 - Where to find more information

About environmental assessment

"Humanity has the ability to make development sustainable –to ensure that it meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their needs ... a continually evolving concept based on the integration of social, economic, and environmental concerns."— Our Common Future, World Commission on Environment and Development, 1987.

Environmental assessment is a tool for sustainable development, adopted throughout the world by nations signatory to Agenda 21 of the World Summit on Sustainable Development (Rio 1992).

Legislation

The Canadian Environmental Assessment Act obliges all federal departments and agencies, including the Federal Granting Agencies, to review proposals for potential impacts on the environment. It recognizes the use of environmental assessment (EA) as an effective means of integrating environmental factors into planning and decision-making processes in a manner that promotes sustainable development.

Memorandum of Understanding between the Canadian Environmental Assessment Agency and the three federal granting agencies

- ***Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council (NSERC)***
- ***Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC)***
- ***Canada Institutes of Health Research (CHIR)***

Responsibilities of the Granting Agencies

- *developing an EA process that both fully meets the legislative requirements imposed on the Agencies and minimizes the administrative burden on applicants and Institutions;*
- *using this EA process to review all proposals and determine which are subject to the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act. An EA may be carried out even on proposals that are not subject to the Act if there is evidence that the proposed research work may have significant negative effects on the environment;*
- *ensuring that an EA is conducted at the proposal stage and before irrevocable decisions are made; •ensuring that only proposals that are not likely to cause significant*

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Responsibilities of the Granting Agencies

- *keeping applicants and Institutions informed in a timely manner of any requirement for an EA, and, where applicable, the progress of an EA in process;*
- *coordinating, as appropriate, with other jurisdictions such as federal or provincial departments or Aboriginal Band Councils, to avoid any duplication of work;*
- *determining whether public participation is appropriate and, if so, providing the public an opportunity to comment on the screening report; and, when appropriate, requesting that the Minister of Environment refer the project for a public review through mediation or panel review;*
- *establishing and maintaining a public registry of assessments conducted under the Act;*

Responsibilities of the Granting Agencies

- *implementing a follow-up program to ensure that, where appropriate, suitable mitigation measures and monitoring are put into place;*
- *ensuring that organizations receiving funds through other mechanisms (for example, by the creation of Network of Centres of Excellence) will have, as part of their Memorandum of Understanding, a process to identify and assess, as required, proposals which have potentially negative environmental effects.*

What does this mean for researchers?

What applicants need to know

- *The Canadian Environmental Assessment Act requires that an environmental assessment (EA) be carried out before a federal department or agency exercises certain powers with respect to a "project" (defined below), such as undertaking the project itself, issuing a permit or, as in the case of NSERC, providing financial assistance for the purpose of enabling a project to be carried out in whole or in part.*
- *A project is defined in the Act as:*
 - *any kind of undertaking (including any proposed construction, operation, modification, decommissioning, abandonment, or other undertaking) in respect of a physical work; or*
 - *any physical activity, not relating to a physical work, that is described in the Act's Inclusion List Regulations.*

What applicants need to know

- *In this context "environmental assessment" (EA) refers to NSERC's environmental assessment process, which includes: the Environmental Impact Statement (Appendix A in NSERC grant application forms); the two-page Pre-Screening Checklist under the Act (Appendix B); and if required, an environmental assessment (screening report) under either the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act or the NSERC Policy on Environmental Assessment.*

The basics for researchers

- *Indoor (laboratory) work normally is not subject to an EA process*
- *An EA may be required for research which involves at least one phase of work that takes place outdoors, or that involves the construction, operation, modification, decommissioning, abandonment, or other activity in relation to a built structure in a fixed location.*

The basics for researchers (continued)

NSERC research applicants must provide information on

- their research activities;*
- the possible environmental effects of their research activities;*
and
- the mitigation measures that will be undertaken to alleviate potential environmental effects.*

This applies to all research activities conducted outdoors, not only those that trigger an assessment under the Act. NSERC staff use this information to determine if potential environmental impacts were properly identified and if the proposed mitigating measures are appropriate.

The basics for researchers (continued)

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The basics for researchers (continued)

NSERC research applicants must provide information on permits required by the researcher for the conduct of the research and that are not already held or managed by the university.

- Disposal or storage of hazardous wastes;*
- Disposal or storage of radioactive materials;*
- Use, disposal or storage of biohazardous materials*
- Occupational health and safety regulations.*

Where to read more about environmental assessment

Tri-Council Guidelines on Environmental Assessment Legislation

<http://www.sshrc-crsh.gc.ca/site/apply-demande/policies-politiques/environment-environnement-eng.aspx>

N SERC Backgrounder on environmental assessment

http://www.nserc-crsng.gc.ca/N SERC-CRSNG/Policies-Politiques/enviroback-envirosur_eng.asp

An introduction to, and highlights of, the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act

http://www.ceaa.gc.ca/013/intro_e.htm