

# Crafting your Banting application

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# Agenda

1. Getting started
2. Project management
3. Getting started questions
4. Don'ts



# IMPORTANT

- This workshop describes a one-fits-all proposal application – CIHR, NSERC, SSHRC
  1. Funders have specific criteria for every aspect. Make sure to follow the latest (NOT last year's!) guidelines. Read funder guidelines **each time you apply** even if you apply to same funder the succeeding year – they may have changed something.
  2. Your proposal is always a work in progress. Once written, it can be re-configured so you can apply to multiple funders, etc. Time spent writing it is **never** time wasted, funded or not.
  3. Your Common CV is a living document. Once the basics are included it can be applied to other funding opportunities.



# Getting Started

- Read **ALL** the funder's instructions, read **ALL** the documents in the Application process, Review process, FAQs, etc – **this is crucial**.  
**[https://banting.fellowships-bourses.gc.ca/en/about\\_fellowship.html](https://banting.fellowships-bourses.gc.ca/en/about_fellowship.html)**
  - What sort of research are they funding?
  - Who are the reviewers and what criteria are they judging you on?
  - When are the deadlines – helps to know, no?
  - What documents are necessary and when?



# Eligibility – windows of opportunity

- Eligibility – can **you** apply to this?
- Go to the funder website – Note that last year's details may no longer apply so only visit the criteria for the year you will apply.
  - **Months/terms/years in program** –make sure you are within the range they will accept.
  - **Citizenship** – Canadian, Permanent residents and International students can apply to Banting

# Banting Objectives and Scope

## **HIGHLY competitive**

- Attract and retain top-tier PDF talent (nationally and internationally)
- Develop the PDF's leadership potential
- Position the PDF for success as research leaders of tomorrow
- 70 are awarded annually, split among the 3 agencies so ~23-24 / agency / year
- \$70,000 per year (taxable) for 2 years
- ~700 to 800 applications / year (you do the math – this is competitive but the rewards are huge!)

# Banting is unique

- Emphasizes synergy between: **Applicant and institution**
- Applicant - their individual merit AND potential to launch research-intensive career AND why this research environment is the best place to carry out their research
- Host – institution's commitment to the research program AND alignment with its strategic priorities
- Emphasizes **research leadership**

# Banting PDF Profile

- Future leader in their discipline
- Future societal leader
- Excellent communicator
- Innovator and ground breaker in their field
- Person who seeks maximum impact for their work
- **Tip:** check out previous Banting results



# Evaluation Criteria - 1

- 1. **Research excellence and leadership in the research domain (33%)**
  - **Research excellence** based on track record to date defined by quality of applicant's research contribution, not just publications see the Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA)
  - **Leadership in research** domain defined by the sphere of influence achieved to date by the applicant.
  - Reviewers will look for these in your proposal, your supervisor's statement and in the referee assessments – tell them what you need them to say
- Stage and career path considered
- Applicant's role in research contributions important
- Impact of previous research contributions important

# Examples – Research Leadership

- **Memberships**
  - Academic/scientific committee membership, including involvement in student/fellow or professional associations
  - Selection/merit/peer review committees, thesis examination
- **Teaching activities**
  - Courses taught
  - Course development
  - Program development
- **Administrative activities**
  - Editorial service
  - Event administration
- **Supervisory and advisory activities**
  - Student supervision
  - Staff supervision
  - Mentoring
- **Assessment and review activities**
  - Journal review
  - Conference review
  - Grant/scholarship review

# Evaluation Criteria 2

## 2. Quality of applicant's proposed research program (33%)

- the promise and quality of the proposal;
  - SGBA+ considerations
  - Indigenous Research – community engagement
  - Novelty, feasibility, significance
- **the environment(s)** in which the proposed research will be conducted; and
- the aspirations of the applicant (impactful, research-intensive career).
- Reviewers will look for this in your proposal, lay abstract, bibliography, supervisor's statement and referee assessments

# Evaluation Criteria 3

## 3. Institutional commitment and demonstrated synergy between applicant and institutional strategic priorities – (33%)

- Demonstrated **commitment to support development** of the applicant's research and leadership capacity through:
  - **institutional support** (e.g., funding, facilities, equipment, mentorship, environment)
  - **professional development**  
Reviewers will look for this in your proposal, lay abstract, supervisor's statement and referee assessments
- Demonstrated **institutional research capacity** in the applicant's research area – why are you here
- Demonstrated **alignment and synergy** between:
  - Applicant's research ambitions and the institution's potential to benefit strategically from engagement with the applicant
  - Alignment with institution's strategic priorities

# Tips for Success

- Polish and revise the application
- Show how project is original, innovative, feasible
  - Convey timeliness of opportunity
  - Avoid jargon in the proposal - the committee will include scholars outside your area.
- Aim to demonstrate why **you** are:
  - The right person
  - With the right project
  - Working with the right research group
  - In the right place to develop a world-leading outcome

# Tips for Success

- Engage with your supervisor and ask for their help throughout the process.
- Select referees carefully
  - \*\*especially arm's length referee\*\*
  - Select face-to-face reviewers carefully – they need to be critical
- Don't be humble! Be explicit about why YOU are the best person for this fellowship.
- Make sure they know what they need to put in their letter – this is NOT the usual reference letter!
- Ensure you address institutional synergy throughout.
- Take full advantage of any internal review process.

# Getting Started – Tools!

- Start early.
- Make a to-do list or checklist.
- Make a timeline.
- Get the tools (Word/Libre Office, Endnote/Zotero, SPSS, Inkspace, R, etc.).



# To-do or checklist

- Funders may have one – if so use it.
- **Add dates to each task** – put in updates – make it a living document.
  - Sent email request – documents received
    - uploaded – verified is correct.
- **Check off items as they are completed**
  - give yourself a pat on the head.





# Banting Timeline

- April to September – applications seek endorsement from host to apply, prepare and submit applications (institutions have internal deadlines – know these!, miss them at your peril)
- **20 September 2023 @ 8PM – Deadline** for submission of complete application
- October to December 2023 – Evaluation
- Mid-February 2024 – Notifications – Applicants notified by email to go to ResearchNet
- April to October 2023 – Payments begin

# McGill's Timeline

- April/May 2023 – Launch of program, information appears on GPS website, units informed and notified of any changes.
- April to June 2023 – Faculties solicit and identify nominees.
- Faculty send names of selected nominees to GPS [via webform](#).
- During July - GRAPHOS offers writing workshops/Peer Review for all selected nominees. Take advantage of this opportunity!
- During August – You and your supervisor arrange for **face-to-face or zoom meeting** with expert and non-expert reviewers. Revise your application.
- 5 September 2023 – Submission of complete applications to GPS for final vetting to GPS and Nominations on FAD
- 18 September 2023 - Letter of Endorsement to successful nominees provided by GPS
- FINAL SUBMISSION - You submit on ResearchNet deadline: **20 September 2023 at 20:00 ED (8PM).**

# Your Timeline

- **Start from the submission date (20 September 2023 this year) and work backwards.**
- **Know when all the documents need to be uploaded.**
- **Be conservative** – make sure there is wiggle room for all deadlines – not everyone has your priorities as their priorities.
- **Do the easy stuff first.**
- **Ask for references.**
- **Ask for transcripts.**
- **Input information in your CCV.**
- **Complete your Sex and Gender certificate if that is necessary.**



# Reference Letters

- **Be polite** – if possible, ask in person.
- **Give them your transcript and CV** – this is no time to be modest – they need ammunition to support you.
- **Tell them the deadlines** – pad it to allow for unforeseen circumstances. Your faculty contact needs a copy sent directly to them.
- **Tell/send them the funder details and what the criteria are.**
  - Three research contributions
  - Three leadership contributions
- **Give them a rough outline of your project.**
- **Follow up with friendly reminder at least 1-2 weeks before the deadline** – send them the penultimate project too.
- **Do NOT forget to thank them.**
- **Successful or not let them know the result** – and thank them again.



# Common CV

- **Get signed up** – get your PIN (BTW it will be yours for life).
- **Select the funder and the correct type of CV** – the funder will have indicated which one to request.
- **Add all the details** – a CCV is a living document.
- **Verify the details in the PDF “draft version” of the CCV** – do NOT submit this version.
- **Make a PDF, review it, change any errors/omissions and repeat.**
- **Submit the CCV** – you can go back and change it if needed BUT your application MUST have the last and correct CCV number.



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# Application

- READ THE FUNDER'S INSTRUCTIONS – READ THE GUIDE, ALL PARTS OF THE APPLICATION, THE FAQs – DO THIS **BEFORE** YOU START ANYTHING!
- Put in the basic information – your name, degrees, email (use your official email and **not** a Gmail or other non-McGill email) etc.
- Understand and follow the directions for font type and size, margins, word or character count – do not let your application get rejected for something avoidable.
  - E.g.. Abstract – (300 words), update the word count as you revise.
- Use Word or other text software. Easier to correct spelling, grammar, verify word or character count, etc.
- When satisfied upload to application – verify that it fits, do not assume that it will fit.



# Know the funder

- **READ THE FUNDER'S INSTRUCTIONS.**
- **Know their criteria.**
- **Know the kinds of projects they fund.**
- **Look up what projects were funded in previous years.**
- **Know who were on the review panels in the previous year.**  
Look them up to get an idea of their expertise – 2/3s of them will be there for your application.
- **There may not be a single person who is an expert in your field** – so write for the committee members who will review your application not some mythical expert.



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# Setting up your proposal

- Make an outline – this is your blueprint, it is NOT rigid.
- Break down your proposal into point form before writing your first draft.
- Decide whether you will have headings/subheadings and what they will be (e.g., Introduction, Background Material, Methodology, and so on).
- Follow the funder's headings if supplied.
- NEVER EVER disregard the page limit/font size etc. criterion – your project will **not** go forward to committee – set up your very first page accordingly.





# KISS Principle

- Describe your project in non-technical terms. Use clear, plain, inclusive language and avoid jargon and acronyms.
- Typographical or grammatical errors. Do not rely completely on your grammar checker – they will make mistakes, verify your text yourself. Ask a friend if you are not sure. Correct mistakes right away. Do not leave this job until the end.
- Review committees are multi-disciplinary and will include researchers in many fields other than your own.
- Hence, follow the **KISS** principle – **Keep It Simple Stupid!**
- Reviewers like it that way.
- Many times less is more.



# Title and lay abstract

- Title – Have a clear title – make it snappy.
- The title should be simple, understandable, have no jargon or acronyms and attract interest.
- Lay abstract title – make it significantly different from the research title.
- Lay abstract – do NOT wait until the last minute to complete this task. Ignore this important component at your peril. All reviewers will read the lay abstract and all reviewers end up voting in committee. Make sure that all reviewers understand how important and key your research is.



# Definition of strength

A strong research proposal:

- Has a precise, pertinent and interesting research question/hypothesis.
- Highlights the significance of the proposed research.
- Describes the data or source material.
- Clearly outlines a research plan that is doable by you within the funding term.
- States what new areas your research might reveal.
- Excites the reviewer so they can appreciate the wider significance of your project – the BIG picture is impressive.
- Demonstrates your synergy with your supervisor and the institution EVERYWHERE in the application.



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# Make it easy for the reviewer

- Make an impact in the first few sentences.
- Grab your reviewers' attention and excite them about your project from the get-go.
- Make it easy for them to write the review and thus fund your proposal. Know what the criteria reviewers are asked to write about in their review (see above). Make sure your proposal addresses each one clearly.
- Tell them in bold sentences how your research is innovative and valuable.
- Have a clear hypothesis or research objective – make this a statement.
- Significance is vital. Answer the “Who Cares” question. Be emphatic about how your research/scholarship will make a “contribution to knowledge” or address an important question.



# Park your ego

- Have the proposal reviewed and commented on by others – tell them to be critical, nasty, a true devil's advocate.
- Get feedback. Edit. Then edit some more. Repeat. The more diverse opinion and criticism you receive on your proposal, the better suited it will be for a multi-disciplinary panel. Your non-expert reviewer is a critical reviewer.
- If your reviewers think Aim 3 is rotten – remove it; if Aim 2 should be before Aim 1 – change the order.
- Your document should be exciting, showcase a significant research question, be well-done, well-researched and doable by you.



# Lean on others

- Get help – writing is a learned skill.
- **McGill Writing Centre – Graphos**
- Consult (rope in!);
  - Other members of your research team
  - Your supervisor and other mentors
  - Have friends read your lay abstract
  - Have them read your project







<https://www.mcgill.ca/graphos/commons>

- **Courses**: 1-credit offerings that complement your degree program.
- **Workshops**: focused events on key writing strategies, conventions, topics, and genres.
- **Peer Writing Groups**: small clusters of advanced graduate students who meet regularly to share and improve works-in-progress.
- **Tutorial Service**: one-on-one sessions to improve your writing skills.  
(Offered by the McGill Writing Centre)
- **Writing Commons**: a space in which we create conditions for you to write productively in the company of others during thesis retreats and related events.



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# A compelling proposal **MUST** have:

**THE ARGUMENT.** What exactly will you investigate?

**CONTEXT.** How does your research fit within your field?

**A RATIONALE.** Why must your investigation/idea be funded, i.e., what research gap are you filling?

**WHO CARES!** Significance. How and why does your research matter? How does it relate to the **BIG** picture?

**THE HOW.** Methodology—how and what you are going to do to test the hypothesis or answer the proposed questions and why? What is success? What is plan B?



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# How to get started

**Introduction:** What exactly do you want to study?

- What is your research question/hypothesis?
- Who cares?
- What is its purpose/significance? Does it have a practical use?
- How are you defining your terms?
- What are the limitations of your study?
- What is your perspective or viewpoint?



# Sex and Gender

- Know the sex of the biologicals in your project – animals AND cells, make sure to include males and females in every experiment and separate sex as part of your analyses. “Not applicable” is no longer an option.
- [SGBA/GBA+](#) - methodology measuring how groups of women, men and gender diverse people experience policies, programs and initiatives. Include them.
- Intersectionality: The “plus” in GBA+ i.e. differences between biological (sexes) and socio-cultural (genders), other factors (such as race etc.,) AND how these factors influence policies, programs, services, and research initiatives. Talk about it.
- Resources: [Gender-based Analysis Plus research guide](#), Women and Gender Equality Canada; [SGBA in Clinical/Health Research \(CIHR\)](#); [Course on GBA Plus](#), Women and Gender Equality Canada ; [EDI in Research](#), Equity at McGill



# Human Subjects & Research Design

- Explicitly state how SGBA/GBA+ and intersecting identities factor into all aspects of your research (design, methodology, data analysis and impact).
  - Does your research directly or indirectly involve/impact diverse or underrepresented populations?
  - Does your project involve Indigenous communities?
  - Does your project involve secondary analysis of data? If so, why?
  - If SGBA/GBA+ or other diversity factors are not applicable, why not? Is this a limitation?
- If your proposed topic and disciplinary norms include researcher positionality, how does it impact the research problem, research design & methodology of your research?
- How did/can you mitigate bias?



# Literature Review

- What is already known? What is your end goal?
- Do past studies disagree? If so, how?
- What knowledge gap will your project resolve/fill?
- What research model was used previously and what were/are its advantages and disadvantages?
- Did past studies address, or not, the relevance and impact of the topic/question for diverse groups? Underrepresented groups? Diseases? Populations? Models? Age groups? Sex and gender? Etc.
- How does consistent underrepresentation of any of the above, if present, impact previous work? How is your study going to address/fix this problem?



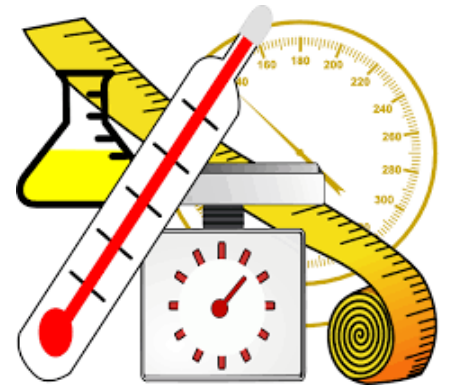
# Materials and Methods

- What approach will you use? Why is your approach the best one?
- What is your experimental model and how and when will you collect the data? How relevant is the model to the human experience?
- Who are your subjects and control populations? How will you recruit them? How will you respect/include EDI? Respect ARRIVE guidelines? Will you randomise? Are some of the team blinded?
- How will privacy be protected? Do you have consent? Are the IRB and FACC approvals completed? Did you complete a power calculation?
- Is the research team in place? Will you have client/patient members on the research team? Are knowledge users appropriate and is the research panel diverse if that is important for the funder? Are sex and gender included in every aspect?
- Does the project integrate any sustainability concerns of the funder? – Eg., FRQ has specific sustainability goals that you must address.



# Measurements

- What are your key variables and measurements? How are they defined?
- Will you randomise? Are some of the team blinded to your intervention?
- How and when during your experiment will you collect the data for your study (observation, interviews etc. daily, weekly, yearly, etc.)? Why are these the most informative times?
- Are your methods of data collection feasible by you?
- Is the necessary expertise in place? Equipment available to you?
- Do your definitions and measurement methods duplicate or differ from those used previously? Why are the ones you chose better?
- Are you developing something (e.g. questionnaire / technique)? How will you validate the new method?



# Analysis and feasibility

- What kind of analysis will you use? Do you have the expertise?
- Will you disaggregate your data by any specific factors? Why is this important to do?
- How will you account for variation in your population or model? Did you factor this into your power calculations?
- What variables will your analysis consider? Inclusion/exclusion criteria? Why these ones?
- What will be a success? What alternative plans and/or mitigation strategies do you have? What is your plan B?
- Are all the biological systems (e.g. cell lines) and methods in place already? If some are not currently available, how will you acquire them?
- Does the research team (and you!) have all the expertise to complete the study? Are all instruments necessary for success in place?
- Does the preliminary data support your hypothesis and demonstrate that you can perform the study?



# Outreach and publishing

- Will your research be published through accessible formats, i.e., open-source platform)?
  - Understand the funder's rules on open access
- Will you share your findings with your human participants?
- How will you reach those who could benefit from the findings?
- How will you share your research findings? Where will you share your work? Give names of conferences if possible.



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# Conclusions

- How does your research project address a burning need?
- How will your research inform on your hypothesis and/or objectives?
- How does your project relate to the BIG picture?
- How might others use your results/discovery?
- How will this information change the field? Advance knowledge? Impact policy? Change outcomes?



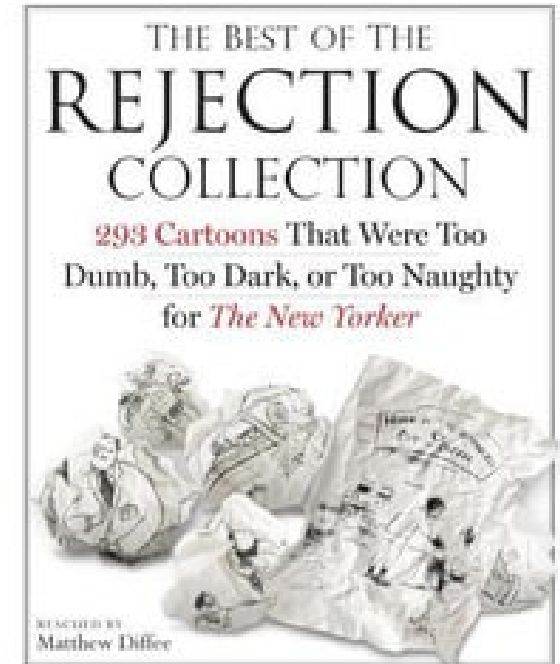
# Don'ts (Ever)

- **Flaunt funder guidelines.** Know what they are and use them.
- **Omit necessary documents.** Your application will be triaged.
- **Submit lengthy proposals.** Get to the point. Be focused and concise. Don't diverge into irrelevant tangents without a clear sense of purpose. Don't be vague.
- **Cover too much research ground.** Focus your study. The research plan must clearly inform the reviewer how the study will test the hypothesis or resolve a problem.
- **Neglect the BIG picture.** Mentioning minor issues is acceptable BUT they should not overpower the major one.
- **Poor grammar or careless writing.** Careless writing is equated with careless research. Don't go there.

# Rejection

An important aspect of the proposal experience.

1. Do NOT despair! Many more projects are not funded than are funded meaning that you are in good company. Now, pick yourself up and get going on the next application; you and it **will** be better.
2. After a week or so – reread the review comments in detail. Remember to park your ego.
3. The positive comments. Keep these factors in your proposal.
4. Those negative comments –
  - Short term text modifications: Immediately alter your proposal. E.g.. hypothesis not clearly stated, power calculation flawed, unclear if patient/client numbers can be recruited, etc.
  - Long term experimental modification: Make a plan for what you need to do to address these. Such as, publications are wanting, preliminary data are scant, etc.



# Funding unit contact



[graduatefunding.gps@mcgill.ca](mailto:graduatefunding.gps@mcgill.ca)



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# Questions? Comments?



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# Thank you!

