How to be successful in your CIHR fellowship application

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Overview

Provide insight into how your application is reviewed (i.e., know your audience).

I will not tell you how to fill out the forms (e.g., Canadian Common CV, etc).
 Goals of graduate fellowships

For Canada:
Produce the next generation of researchers for academia and industry.

For you:
It looks great on your CV.

For your advisor:
Frees up money for other aspects of his/her research program.
Evaluating your application is really hard

All the applicants are great!
Review process

You write it → Send to CIHR

Reviewer 1

(about 35 dossiers per reviewer)

Reviewer 2

No conflict of interests → Assign scores to application

Reviewers return ratings

If both reviewers are in agreement the rating stands

If reviewers disagree they are asked to consult each other with the option to modify the rating

Decision based on rating
How to get your application funded

• The reviewer has to read about 35 proposals. You get 10 minutes.

• An application that is well written and easy to follow, all else being equal, stands a much better chance of success.

• The reviewer will not be an expert in your study area.

• It is mostly about you, not the project.
How to get your application funded

Academic excellence (actual weight 50%)
Your grades.  *Have you aspired to academic excellence?  Have you found your inner scholar?*

Research potential (actual weight 50%)
Past research (papers, abstracts, posters, talks, research rotations, etc).  *Do you love research?  Are you motivated?  Are you capable?*

Recommendations (actual 0%)
Your letters of support.  *Can you contribute to a research team?*
How to get your application funded

Project description

Actual weight 0%

But reviewers want to know what you are working on
How to get your application funded

Project description

• Be clear. Proof read. Max 5 or 6 sentences per paragraph. Limit jargon.

• State motivation, hypothesis, expected outcomes and potential pitfalls.

• Use clear sections headers (e.g., Motivation, Hypothesis, Expected Outcomes and Potential Pitfalls).

• Get a copy of your supervisor’s grants. But do not cut and paste. This is about how you will do the work.
How to get your application funded

Project description

Abstract (lay summary) is very important

- Make it readable.
- Think about explaining your project to a relative or friend (but don’t be condescending). This is NOT the place for jargon or hyper-specialist text.
The complete data set for 15N-labeled samples included [15N,1H]-HSQC, 2D 15N-decoupled flip-back TOCSY (SL = 33–60 ms), 2D 15N-decoupled flip-back NOESY (m = 200 ms), 3D 15N-edited TOCSY-HSQC (SL = 58 ms), 3D 15N-edited NOESY-HSQC (m = 200 ms) and MJ-[15N,1H]-HSQC NMR spectra were processed with NMRPipe and converted to the format used by NMRView for further analysis. Residue-specific assignment of the 15N and proton resonances was achieved by spin system identification using [15N,1H]-HSQC, 2D 15N-decoupled TOCSY and 3D 15N-edited TOCSY-HSQC spectra, followed by sequential assignment through NOE connectivities from 2D 15N-decoupled NOESY and 3D 15N-edited NOESY-HSQC.
How to get your application funded

Academic performance

Actual weight 50%  *Have you aspired to academic excellence? Have you found your inner scholar?*

• Make sure your transcripts are easy to read.
• In CV, convert GPA to McGill scale (if necessary) and state major and class ranking (if available).
• Discuss reasons for low academic performance.
• Emphasize periods of high academic performance (especially STEM and graduate level courses).
How to get your application funded

Letters of recommendation

Actual weight 0%  *Can you contribute to a research team?*

• Writing a good letter is hard and takes time (at least one full page of single spaced text).

• Ok to first ask if the referee will provide a supportive letter. Allow three weeks minimum.

• Help referee by providing a CV, draft of application and a bio-sketch.

• Be sure to provide due date and instructions how to submit the letter.

• Send a gentle reminder if letter has not been submitted a week before due date.
SPONSORS MUST FILL OUT THIS FORM- they will also provide a written letter to explain their scores, and a statement explaining how long and in what capacity they know you.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHARACTERISTICS</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION</th>
<th>Rarely exhibits</th>
<th>Sometimes exhibits</th>
<th>Often exhibits</th>
<th>Always exhibits</th>
<th>Unable to judge</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CRITICAL THINKING</td>
<td>Judicious evaluation of all information, regardless of its source</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>INDEPENDENCE</td>
<td>Pursuit of knowledge or taking of action on own initiative, seeking guidance only when appropriate</td>
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<tr>
<td>PERSEVERANCE</td>
<td>Determined persistence in pursuit of goals despite obstacles or discouragement</td>
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<tr>
<td>ORIGINALITY</td>
<td>Imagination or ingenuity in problem solving</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>ORGANIZATIONAL SKILLS</td>
<td>Systematic, careful planning and coordination of activities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>INTEREST IN DISCOVERY</td>
<td>An inquiring mind and a strong desire to pursue new knowledge</td>
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<tr>
<td>COMMUNICATION SKILLS</td>
<td>Effective interpersonal and written communication in a work or study environment.</td>
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</table>
Who to ask for a letter of support

Someone who can speak for your (in order of preference):

1) Research potential

2) Academic potential

3) Professional/work potential

Preferably someone who knows what these letters look like.
Good candidates for a letter

• Your project supervisor - this is a must.

• Someone who has scientific credibility and direct experience of working with you.

• Supervisor of your summer studentships.

• Supervisor of a research project.

• Scientific officer of a research company or government department that you worked for.

• If you worked as a technician ask your supervisor.
How to get your application funded

CV

Part of the 50% research potential weight  *Do you love research? Are you motivated? Are you capable?*

• Very important. Do not leave blank.

• Make it clear with nice section headers.

• Include all activities that are relevant (*publications*, abstracts, posters, talks, rotations, science competitions, awards, volunteering, certifications ...).

• Provide all details (authors, title, date, location).

• Provide a short description of your role and significance of each activity.

• Can include work experience even if not science related.
How to get your application funded

Training expectations

Part of the 50% research potential weight

Do you love research? Are you motivated? Are you capable?

• Do not leave blank. Create a narrative about yourself.
• Make it clear with nice section headers. 5/6 sentence rule.
• Future career goals - you want to be a researcher in the field of XXX and make a contribution to YYY.
• Opportunity to present your story - why you should be awarded this fellowship.
• Describe your career path - why you got into research, milestones along the way (same stuff as in CV), why you selected your current program and supervisor, and what you hope to achieve during your graduate studies.
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