NSERC Funding Workshop

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Plant Science - FAES
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Perspective of an NSERC reviewer

• Three-year term: NSERC review committee (PhD & Post-docs)

• Based on good and “not so good” examples reviewed in the past few years...
Deadline for application:

*Check with your unit for internal deadlines*

- MSc vs PhD vs Postdoc
- Request official documents (i.e. transcripts)
- Pre-review process (formal or informal)
MSc – PhD & Post-Doc: two very different processes

• MSc: Tri-council (CIHR-NSERC-SSHRC)
  o Faculty/Unit puts forward applications

• PhD & Post-doc: Complete review by NSERC committees (nation wide)
MSc – PhD & Post-Doc: two very different processes

- MSc: Online application, All official university transcripts, two letters of references, Canadian Common CV
- PhD: Online application, All official university transcripts, two letters of references
- Post-doc: Online application, two letters of references

***Changes on the application are frequent: check the guidelines every year.***
Selection criteria:

MSc Scholarships
• Academic excellence (50%), Research potential (30%), Personal characteristics and interpersonal skills (20%)

PhD Scholarships
• Research ability and potential (50%), Relevant experience and achievements obtained within and beyond academia (50%)***

Post-doc Fellowships
• Research ability or potential (70%), Communication, interpersonal and leadership abilities (30%)
Your application should:

- Have a high level of clarity
  - Well structured research project (hypotheses-driven)
  - Concise but complete

- Demonstrate a good potential for research
  - Based on the past and the future
  - Why do you deserve this scholarship/fellowship?
Your application must stand out

• ...but for good reasons!

• High number of applications to review as 1st, 2nd or 3rd reviewer
  o Committees can cover a very broad range of topics
  o Ex.: From kinesiology to molecular plant biology
Your application must stand out

• Focus on the + and not the –
  o Emphasize what you have done as opposed to what you have not done
  o Special circumstances

• No laundry lists... but everything needs to be there
  o Explanation of key elements
Your application must stand out

- Trying to say too much in a limited space
  - Every sentence counts
  - Important not to get lost in less important details
  - Formatting the document properly can go a long way!
Your application must stand out

- Review process is not a guessing game...
  - Things that are implied but not stated are usually not taken into consideration
  - If reviewers need to know, include it in your application (e.g. awards)
Your application must stand out

• Publications
  o Show how you were instrumental in getting this research done and published

• Presentations/Poster
  o Explain why this was presented at this specific conference/meeting
Your application must stand out

***Start Early!!!!***
- Especially to define the proposed research
- Ask for reference letters
Your application must stand out

• Ask a current/former supervisor to read your application
  o But don’t wait until the last minute!

• Ask a colleague to proof read
  o Typos & incomplete sentences
Take advantage of writing workshops such as:

- Graphos
- McGill Writing Centre
- Skillsets
  - Would you Fund it? Fellowship Consultation Sessions
Thank you!
Good luck with your application!
Questions/Comments