2016 NSERC Discovery Grants Competition

Notification of Intent to apply – Mandatory in order to proceed to full application phase

OSR Internal program guide included.

Program Objectives:
The Discovery Grants Program assists in:

- promoting and maintaining a diversified base of high-quality research capability in the natural sciences and engineering in Canadian universities;
- fostering research excellence; and
- providing a stimulating environment for research training.

The Discovery Grants Program supports ongoing programs of research (with long-term goals) rather than a single short-term project or collection of projects. These grants recognize the creativity and innovation that are at the heart of all research advances. Discovery Grants are considered ‘grants in aid’ of research as they provide long term operating funds to support the costs of a research program. As a grant in aid of research, Discovery Grants are not meant to support the full costs of a research program and they can facilitate access to funding from other programs. NSERC recognizes that, while being of a grant in aid nature, Discovery Grants must be sufficient to support a program of quality research that can have a meaningful impact on the field of study.

Recipients of Discovery Grants are not restricted to the specific activities described in their applications, but may pursue new research interests, provided they are within NSERC’s mandate. This provides researchers with the flexibility to pursue promising research avenues as they emerge and the opportunity to address
higher-risk (higher reward) topics. Researchers can use their grants to participate in collaborative efforts.

**Important Change to the Discovery Grants Program**

**Phase-out of Discovery Team Grants**

As of the 2016 Discovery Grants Competition, NSERC will no longer be accepting Team Grant applications. After careful consideration, it was determined that Team Grants are not effectively meeting the needs of the research community they are intended to support. While all new applications must now be made individually, applicants are encouraged to continue incorporating collaboration into their individual applications. Existing team grants will continue to receive support until their last instalment. Researchers who are supported by an NSERC Team Grant should submit an individual Discovery Grant application when submitting a new request for funding.


Application submission: Application to DG requires Canadian Common CV (CCV), NOI and Application. To create or access a Notification of Intent to Apply or an Application, select Research Portal.

Notification of Intent Deadline: Monday, August 3 @ 8 pm. This is a direct submission to the agency. NOI must be submitted in order to apply for the DG in the Fall.

OSR optional review internal deadline: Monday October 19 @ 5 pm.

Mandatory OSR checklist and Final Application Deadline (without review): Friday, October 30 @ 10 am. Please note a duly-signed OSR checklist is mandatory in order to forward application to NSERC.

Final Agency Deadline: Monday, November 2 @ 5 pm. Please note that while NSERC’s deadline time is 8 pm, OSR closes at 5 pm therefore proposals must be submitted prior to the office closing in order to be submitted.

Internal Contact: Agnes Wong, Grants Officer, 514-398-3102
*To unsubscribe to any or all of the funding opportunity listserv groups, please visit the following link: [http://www.mcgill.ca/research/researchers/funding/sign-funding-alerts](http://www.mcgill.ca/research/researchers/funding/sign-funding-alerts)
Applying to the NSERC Discovery Grants (DG) Program

The Discovery Grants Program supports ongoing programs of research (with long-term goals) rather than a single short-term project or collection of projects. Recipients of Discovery Grants are not restricted to the specific activities described in the application, but may pursue new research interests, provided they are within NSERC’s mandate. Discovery Grants are awarded for one to five years, the most common term being five years.

The Discovery Grants Program assists in:

- promoting and maintaining a diversified base of high-quality research capability in the natural sciences and engineering;
- fostering research excellence; and
- providing a stimulating environment for research training.

OSR reviews and comments on applications received by the optional internal review deadline. Applications received after the internal deadline will be reviewed only if time permits.

Once the application is submitted via the Research Portal, OSR can return it to the applicant for revisions or forward it on to NSERC.

Applications are submitted through the NSERC Research Portal and the NSERC version of the Canadian Common CV (CCV) replaces NSERC Forms 101 and 100 in the NSERC online system.

CCV can be uploaded to the Research Portal by entering a confirmation number provided upon submission in the CCV system.

NSERC has made improvements to the CCV on initial login time, formatting, publication reference formatting and more.

The primary objective of any research supported by NSERC must be to advance knowledge and training in the natural sciences or engineering (NSE). The question to be asked is: does the research challenge lie within the NSE?

Eligible NSERC applications related to health: 1. animal health and veterinary medicine; 2. nutrition related to food components, nutraceuticals, or functional foods; 3. seeking to further understanding of fundamental processes in humans; 4. primary purpose is the development of monitoring and diagnostic technologies; 5. major challenges lie in the NSE which could eventually lead, among other applications, to the treatment or prevention of human disease

Ineligible NSERC applications related to health: 1. refinement of already existing technology for facilitating clinical therapies or health delivery systems; 2. investigation or development of vaccines, active pharmaceutical ingredients, or other therapeutics agents for human applications; 3. investigation/treatment of injuries of human performance; 4. seeking to develop animal models of human diseases in order to study primarily disease state, or treatments for injuries or diseases represented by the model; 5. disease treatment, diagnosis or prevention, 6. clinical trials

*Researcher eligibility will be verified in the Research Portal. For researcher eligibility criteria, please consult the following page.*
General Instructions for Application

1. Summary of Proposal—2500 character limit

◊ Use simple, plain language to summarize your research. Emphasize why and to whom the research is important, expected outcomes and benefits to Canada and academic field.

2. Relationship to other Research Support—10,000 character limit

◊ For each grant currently held or applied for: describe main objective, provide brief outline of methodology, budget and details on HQP.

◊ Explain relationship to the current NSERC application and how this application complements other funded research.

◊ There should be no duplication of funding for the same research. If there is budgetary overlap, explain and justify the additional benefits of NSERC support.

◊ Ensure the application meets NSERC’s mandate. Do not submit the same application to NSERC and CIHR or SSHRC.

REMINDER: Researchers who currently hold, or have applied for CIHR or SSHRC research support need to provide a summary and the budget page of these proposals, to be attached to the application form.

3. Highly Qualified Personnel (HQP)

   A. Training Plan (5,000 character limit for individual applications)

◊ Describe the projects that are appropriate for HQP training, the pertinence of the training plans and the involvement of trainees in individual projects. Explain the expected outcomes in terms of contribution to knowledge, and the training value of the proposed projects.

◊ What are the benefits to the student by joining your research program?

   B. Past contributions (2,500 character limit)

◊ Highlight students’ success stories and provide details to HQP contributions over the last 6 years. Describe your role in the training (co-supervision, primary supervisor).

◊ How did your HQP benefit from training in your research group? Did they get training in challenging areas, specialized methodologies, interdisciplinary or industrial collaboration?

◊ Applicant must obtain consent from former trainees before providing personal data about them to NSERC. Provide generic information only if consent is not obtained.

4. Most Significant Research Contributions (7,500 character limit)

◊ List up to 5 of your most significant contributions to research and/or to practical applications over the last 6 years (2009-2015). The contributions can be a body of work or single publications. You may include older contributions if the impact is still being felt.

◊ For each contribution, describe significance in terms of influence of the direction of thought or activity in the target community, field of research and end users. Describe role in collaborative contributions.

5. Additional information on contributions (2,500 character limit)

◊ This section is intended to help committees evaluate contributions to and impact on NSE, including interdisciplinary research.

◊ Provide more details on contributions listed in CCV (formerly Form 100), including nature of collaborations, explanation of formatting of publication lists (order of authors, students, etc.), role in joint publications.

REMINDER: Researchers who currently hold, or have applied for CIHR or SSHRC research support need to provide a summary and the budget page of these proposals, to be attached to the application form.

OSR checklist, completed and duly-signed by Applicant, Chair and Dean/Associate Dean, Research (ADR)*

* Dean/ADR signature required for non-departmentalized faculties. Internal policies may also require that the Dean/ADR sign. Check with your faculty.

Important change to the DG Program

As of 2016, NSERC will no longer be accepting Team Grant applications. However applicants are encouraged to continue incorporating collaboration into their individual applications. Existing team grants will continue to receive support until their last instalment.

Useful websites

NSERC Discovery Grant Description: http://www.nserc-crsng.gc.ca/Professors-Professeurs/Grants-Subs/DGIGP-PSIGP_eng.asp

Applying to the NSERC DG Program

### Proposal — 5 page limit
Describe the proposed research to be supported using the following suggested section headers (if appropriate for your discipline):

- **Recent progress**—describe your recent progress related to the proposal or progress attributable to your previous DG.
- **Objectives of the research program**—describe the short- and long-term objectives and provide details on the long-term vision of your program that extends beyond the 5 years of a DG.
- **Literature review**—place your proposed research in the context of the state of the art.
- **Methodology**—provide sufficient details to allow reviewers to assess feasibility.
- **Impact**—explain anticipated significance of the work.

### References — 2 page limit

**Budget Justification**—2 page limit

- Consideration will be given to:
  - Appropriateness of, and justification for, the budget
  - Availability of other sources of funding and how they complement the current proposal
  - Special needs related to the nature of collaborative activities or infrastructure costs such as user fees
- Do not request what you think NSERC will award - request what you need. NSERC cannot award more than you request. Be reasonable in your budget request keeping in mind the average grant for committee. Requests of $100K/year from a new applicant might negatively impact the applicant’s credibility.
- Provide detailed explanations for budget requests and ensure the eligibility of expenses. For students, give names (if possible), explain responsibilities, provide information on the research training environment & benefits to be gained by students working in your group.
- To comply with the Tri-Agency’s new Open Access policy, publication costs in open access journals are eligible costs. There are 2 routes available: 1) submit to an open access repository; and 2) publish in an open access journal.
- If you have students funded from other sources involved in the proposed research program (e.g. fellowships), mention these in your budget justification. This indicates that you can attract students of a high caliber and also provides additional proof of feasibility of the proposal.
- Demonstrate that HQP are intellectually integrated in the research program.
- Provide details on types of conferences to be attended. Indicate if students will be attending/presenting at conferences.
- Do not request less than the average grant of your committee (statistics from the previous competition).
- Please ensure that the budget takes into consideration the exchange rate (when applicable) as well as sales taxes (on all goods and services, including consultants). Budget items that are subject to goods and services taxes must add 6.937%.

### Salary

| **Casual Research Assistants** are students who earn an hourly wage for work on a PI’s research, not necessarily related to the topic of the student’s thesis (taxable as salary). Postdoctoral fellows cannot be paid salaries—only stipends (minimum of $30K for postdocs). |
| **Grad students at McGill cannot be employed more than 10 hrs/week on topics unrelated to their thesis work.** |
| **The minimum hourly salary rate for Research Assistants** is $21.00 and for Research Associates is $24.19 + mandatory benefits (25-28% in addition to salary). |
| **The minimum hourly salary rate for Casual Research Assistants (students) is $12.91 (undergraduate) or $14.90 (graduate) + mandatory benefits (19.6% in addition to salary).** |

### Presentation standards

- Explain any acronyms and abbreviations fully;
- Pages must be 8 ½” x 11” (216mm x 279mm);
- Pages must be single-spaced, with no more than six lines of type per inch;
- All text must be in 12 pt Times New Roman font;
- Condensed fonts will not be accepted;
- All text should be black, and no colour images should be used;
- Margins must be set at a minimum of ¾” (1.87 cm);
- Your name must appear outside the set margins of the page, at the top right corner of every page;
- For multi-page attachments, pages must be numbered sequentially;
- If you have supporting documents written in a language other than English or French, you are required to provide NSERC with a certified translation of the document.

### Student stipends and salary benefits

- The tri-agencies have revised their policies on support paid to students and postdoctoral fellows from research grants, so that specific minimum and maximum stipends are no longer in effect.
- Applicants can now request additional funding for stipends beyond the previous rates ($16,500 for Masters and $19,000 for PhD/postdoc). Like all expenses, the requests for stipends must be justified in relation to the activities proposed.
- Graduate student and PDF stipends may include PGSS Health and Dental Insurance ($434/year) as a non-discretionary benefit.
- Benefits are an eligible expense with NSERC funds.
- Mandatory benefits paid on salaries, but should not be included on stipends.
- Mandatory benefits must be paid for casual Research Assistants salaries: up to 12% mandatory government benefits, plus an additional 4% vacation pay and 3.6% holiday indemnity = 19.6% in addition to salary.
- Mandatory benefits for Research Assistants or Associates: varies as a function of included benefits; includes vacation indemnity, designated paid holidays and authorized leaves = 25-28% in addition to salary.

For more information on salaries: [http://www.mcgill.ca/research/researchers/proposal/budget](http://www.mcgill.ca/research/researchers/proposal/budget)
General advice

✔️ Address all points clearly, use headings and sub-headings, figures, etc. Headings facilitate the process for reviewers to re-read and refer back to certain sections. Don’t cram text.

✔️ Don’t leave the committee with any questions – anything that is unclear will count negatively.

✔️ Ask a colleague to comment on your proposal.

✔️ Avoid acronyms & abbreviations (or explain them fully).

✔️ Follow presentation standards and page limits – extra pages will be discarded by NSERC staff.

✔️ Address all selection criteria.

✔️ It may be useful to read sections 6 and 7, appendices 5 and 6 of the Peer Review Manual 2014-15 to understand how NSERC guides peer reviewers and outline principles for evaluation.

Peer Review system

◊ 12 Evaluation Groups (EGs) review the proposals submitted to NSERC.

◊ Conference model, with several sessions occurring in parallel streams.

◊ EG members may participate in reviews of several sections.

TWO-STEP REVIEW PROCESS and 2015 COMPETITION RESULTS

1. Merit Assessment

◊ Applications are evaluated equally on 3 selection criteria: Excellence of the Researcher, Merit of the proposal and Contribution to the training of HQP.

◊ Each criteria will be scored as Exceptional, Outstanding, Very Strong, Strong, Moderate, Insufficient (6 point scale)


2. Quality Bin placement

◊ Applications are place in 16 “Quality Bins” based on merit against 3 selection criteria using a six point scale and each bin has a funding range (Bins A to P).

◊ NSERC aims to support ER to Bin J (equivalent to rating of Strong on 3 criteria) and ECR to Bin K or Bin L.

◊ Bin K is usually the first bin not funded for Established Researchers and corresponds to receiving 2 ratings of Strong and one Moderate. Other combinations such as Very Strong, Strong and Insufficient or 2 ratings of Moderate and a Very Strong make up the rest of cases.

◊ Amount awarded depends on “cost of research” designation of Low, Normal or High.

◊ NSERC makes every effort to keep funding levels in each bin relatively stable but they may vary from year-to-year based on annual budgets.

◊ Funding levels for each Quality Bin vary by EGs

◊ For more information on Quality Bins and Bin Values by EG from the 2015 DG competition: http://www.nserc-crsng.gc.ca/_doc/Students-Etudiants/2015StatsDGP_e.pdf

2015 DG Competition Results

National success rate and average grant ($):

Early Career Researchers (ECR): 65% / $26,191

Established Researchers—renewal (ER-R): 82% / $35,109

Established Researchers—not holding a grant (ER-NHG): 38% / $26,756

McGill success rate and average funding ($):

Early Career Researchers: 80% / $28,200

ER-R: 82% / $38,707

ER-NHG: 41% / $29,333
Personal Information *

Education *

Recognitions *

User Profile *

Assessment and Review Activities

Research Funding History

Activities

Supervisory Activities

Knowledge and Technology

Memberships

Contributions *

Activities

Recognitions

User Profile *

Supervisory Activities

Memberships

Research Contributions

Describe your contributions to research over the last six years (2009-2015).

This section is mandatory; however, you are NOT required to complete all categories.

Use an asterisk to identify students who are co-authors on the contributions listed.

Any delays in research activities and/or dissemination of research results should be described under the Section Employment (Leaves of Absence and Impact on Research).

Using the following headers (if applicable), please list and/or describe:
- Presentations;
- Interviews and Media Relations;
- Publications (Journal articles, journal issues, books, book chapters, reports, manuals, conference publications (e.g. Abstracts, papers, posters); and
- Intellectual Property (Patents, licenses, disclosures, registered copyrights, trademarks)

NSERC requires additional information to assess the researcher and contributions to the training of highly qualified personnel. In the Research Portal, as part of your funding application (see page 2), you will be asked to provide:

- your most significant contributions to research and/or to practical applications;
- additional details on the contributions listed in your CCV; and
- clarification on your contributions to the training of highly qualified personnel.

Employment

Academic work experience:
- Provide all information requested;
- Indicate if position is tenured or tenure-track; part-time of full-time; and
- If you have not taken up your position at the time of application, indicate in this section where you have been offered a position or where you will hold the grant.

Non-Academic Work Experience
- If you currently hold a non-academic position, you must complete the Work Description field and provide the following information:
  - the nature of your research program and other activities at your other place of employment; and
  - the relationship between your research program at this organization and the proposed research. Refer to the institution’s involvement in research and development, if possible.

Leaves of Absence and Impact on Research
- Provide information on any leave of absence that affected research activities and/or dissemination of research results.

Activities

Supervisory Activities
- Include role as “Principal Supervisor” and “Co-Supervisor”;

Do not include students supervised as part of an undergraduate course or activities as part of thesis supervisory committees.

Assessment and Review Activities
- Include review activities related to the assessment of an institution;
- Journal reviews, external reviews of grant applications are NOT required in CCA but you may describe these activities in the “Additional Information on Contributions” section of Application form.

Knowledge and Technology Translation
- List those related to practical application.

Memberships
- Committee and Other Memberships over the last 6 years.

Research Funding History

List all sources of support (including NSERC grants and university start-up funds) held as an applicant or a co-applicant,

- support held in the past six (6) years but now completed;
- support currently held; and
- support applied for.

Note: the details in this section should match those in the “Relationship to Other Research Support” section of the application.
**Tips for Completing the CCV**

- In sections where a year limitation is imposed, the system will calculate the number of years from the date you submit your CCV to the end date of the activity (back to January 1st of the first permissible year). The “End Date” field is therefore mandatory in those sections – enter the anticipated end date should the activity still be on-going.

- While you must use “Name Withheld” for HQP whose consent to provide their personal information has not been obtained, listing all trainees in this manner should be avoided.

- Explain and give dates for any delays. Do not use teaching/ administrative duties as reasons for delays in research activity. Do include parental leave, medical leave, bereavement, etc.

- Please note that a green check mark will appear next to any section where mandatory fields contain some information, however each required section should be reviewed prior to submission to ensure completeness.

- After submitting your CCV, you will be provided with a confirmation number that you will need to enter in the CCV Uploaded section of the Application Overview page of the Research Portal to upload.

- Publications: Add * next to student authors. This will demonstrate contributions towards HQP training.

## Tri-Agency Open Access Policy on Publications

- As of February 27, 2015, SSHRC, NSERC, and CIHR have a harmonized "Open Access Policy on Publications" that requires research publications from their grants to be made openly available.

- The policy requires that "any peer-reviewed journal publications arising from Agency-supported research are freely accessible within 12 months of publication." It applies to NSERC and SSHRC grants awarded May 1, 2015 and onward, and continues the pre-existing open access requirement for CIHR grants awarded January 1, 2008 and later. It is the responsibility of the researcher to ensure the policy is followed.

- For more information on how to comply with the new Open Access Policy, please refer to OSR’s information session or McGill’s library website

## Useful Websites

- NSERC Tutorials

- Useful Chapters
  - Chapter 2: Navigating the Research Portal
  - Chapter 14: How to obtain your NSERC CCV confirmation number
  - Chapter 15: Uploading your NSERC CCV

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For technical issues with the Research Portal or CCV, please contact the NSERC Helpdesk at 613-995-4273 or [webapp@nserc-crsng.gc.ca](mailto:webapp@nserc-crsng.gc.ca).

**Questions? Contact Us**

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