SERB Seed Research Grant
Western Strategic Support for NSERC Success

2016 Program Guidelines

1. OVERVIEW

Jointly supported by the office of the Vice-President (Research) and the researcher’s faculty, the Science & Engineering Review Board (SERB) Seed Research Grant is targeted to eligible Early Career Researchers, who are within three years of the start date of their first eligible academic research appointment at Western (typically a probationary appointment) and who typically have little prior academic or non-academic independent research experience as a Principal Investigator. The researcher must be capable of independently publishing, supervising and applying for funding. Any circumstances that arise from NSERC’s rules on eligibility will be taken into consideration. The purpose of this funding is to develop new and competitive externally-funded research proposals in accordance with NSERC expectations.

SERB funding is not to be seen as a replacement for NSERC funding. The merit of each proposal will be assessed on innovation, impact, deliverables (both long- and short-term), proposed methodology, HQP training plan, and proposed budget. Successful applicants must submit an external NSERC grant application within two years of the start of the award and are encouraged to also apply for other external support.

One competition will be held per year, with a submission deadline of October 10th for the 2016 competition. The presentations and adjudication will take place in November/December, with funds available starting January 1st, 2017.

The maximum award value is $25,000 for one year, with $12,500 supported by the Office of the Vice-President (Research) and matched 1:1 by the applicant’s Faculty.

2. ELIGIBILITY

A Principal Investigator (PI) must hold an eligible academic appointment with a significant research component at Western University. Should the award recipient cease to be a faculty member of the University during the tenure of the award, the award will be cancelled and all remaining and recoverable monies returned to the common fund. All internally funded grants will be administered only at Western.

To be eligible for the SERB Seed Grant, the applicant must (1) be within the first 3 years of first eligible academic research appointment at Western; (2) currently not hold NSERC funding; and (3) typically have not submitted as a PI to prior NSERC competitions.

3. SUBMISSIONS

Applications should be completed according to the posted instructions. All applications with a ROLA proposal must be submitted to Research Development & Services (RD&S) by 4:30 pm on the deadline date. If a deadline date falls on a weekend or statutory holiday, the deadline will be extended to the next business day. It is the responsibility of the researcher to ensure that all conditions are met and that the application is complete and submitted to RD&S as required. Late, ineligible or incomplete applications will not be accepted.

4. ADJUDICATION

Applicants will be asked to provide a 10 minute presentation before the Science and Engineering Research Board (SERB). Members of this Research Board are appointed to adjudicate all NSERC related submissions. The Research Board will be composed of:

- VP Research (or delegate)
Each member of the Review Committee will be asked to rank each proposal as follows: 1 – highest; 2 – middle; 3 – lowest.

Scores will be averaged and weighted equally between each member of the evaluation committee. The SERB Review Committee will meet to finalize funding decisions which are final. There is no appeal process. All scoring results and review comments are then submitted to RDS in order to process and distribute decision letters to all applicants. All decision letters must be approved by the Research Board before distributing.

The goal of the program is to fund excellence and innovation; there is no guarantee of funding for each application submitted. The SERB Committee will allocate funds toward those projects deemed fundable, based on the availability of funds.

5. REVIEW CRITERIA

Merit of the Proposal: A research project must be of high quality to warrant support. It must be clear that genuine research problems in the Natural Sciences and Engineering will be addressed. The program must not be limited to the development of specific applications of existing knowledge; it must promise an original and innovative contribution. In assessing the merit of the proposal, the following elements should be considered:

- Originality and innovation: To what extent does the proposal suggest and explore novel or potentially transformative concepts and lines of inquiry?
- Significance and expected contributions to research/ potential:
  - What will be the likely impact of the research?
  - Will it advance the applicant’s publication and teaching record?
  - Does the program show potential for launching a program of research with the likely notable advancement or innovation or results of importance to a broad range of applications? Will the results be appropriate for open dissemination to, critical appraisal by, and use in the research or receptor community?
- Clarity and scope of objectives: A vision should be of greater breadth and scope than simply plans and objectives. Similarly, clearly defined objectives demonstrate a more thought out research plan than do objectives that are simply stated.
  - Are there long-term goals as well as short-term objectives?
  - Are the objectives specific, well-focused and realistic?
- Clarity and appropriateness of methodology: Applications must be clear and logical.
  - Does the proposal clearly outline the methodology to be used?
  - Is the proposed methodology current and appropriate (i.e., will it contribute to the stated research goals; has the applicant justified the methodological approach)?
- Clarity and appropriateness of the HQP training plan:
  - What skills and experience will the HQP develop?
  - Is the proposed activity appropriate for the skill and educational level of the students involved?
- Feasibility:
  - Will the applicant’s expertise and the proposed methodology allow the objectives to be reached within the proposed time frame?
  - Does the budget request relate well to the proposed methodology and the expected results in terms of scale and feasibility of research?

6. ETHICS, ANIMAL, & BIOHAZARDS

All research proposals involving ethics (human subjects), animal subjects or biohazardous materials must be approved by the appropriate Western certification review committee. Applicants must indicate whether they require approval for the use of human or animal subjects or biohazardous materials under the Certifications tab of their ROLA proposal. If awarded, funds will be encumbered and the work may not commence until appropriate approvals are officially confirmed in ROLA. For more information on the certification approval process, please visit the relevant Ethics, Animal Use or Bio Hazard websites.

7. PROJECT TIME PERIOD

All grants will be available for a period of up to one year and will include an automatic terminal year, where there is an unspent balance. Upon completion of the terminal year, the unspent balance will then revert to the original funding source. Extensions may be considered in special circumstances upon written request to RD&S at internalgrants@uwo.ca. Extension requests must disclose
the assigned research grant number, an explanation to why funds could not be spent within the grant period, a budget justification on how remaining funds would be used, and the length of extension required (1 year maximum).

8. OTHER FUNDING SOURCES
Principal Investigators may apply to more than one funding source for the same research project and budget; however, the other requests for support must be disclosed at the time of application to this program’s competition. If awarded from this program prior to the release of the other funding source(s) results, funds will be encumbered until the results from the other funding source(s) are made available. If successful in receiving support from an external or larger internal funding source, then the pending award will be rescinded and the allocated funds will be returned to the program.

9. FINAL REPORTS
Within six months of the termination of the award, awardees must email a final report to Research Development & Services at internalgrants@uwo.ca. Final report forms are available to download from: http://www.uwo.ca/research/funding/internal/index.html. All final reports must be submitted before new applications will be considered.

10. BUDGET
10.1 Budget Justification
An adequate budget justification is required in each application. To avoid arbitrary decisions on the appropriate level of funding, detailed explanations of costs must be provided.

10.2 Personnel
Personnel costs to hire Research Assistants and to support HQP development may be requested. Western will be the employer of any personnel hired using project funds; therefore researchers must pay appropriate wages and include benefits at established rates. To find current benefit charge rates, see Source Deduction Rates on the HR Services webpage.

The employment category for "research assistants/associates" has the widest flexibility in pay levels and is the most difficult in which to determine appropriate levels. Colleagues, your department, or Human Resources can be a good source of information.

The budget justification must include a description of the duties of the personnel requested, the required qualifications, and an explanation as to why the position is necessary to the project. Workload should be shown to justify the amount of time the person will be employed on the project.

10.3 Supplies & Services
Whenever appropriate, numbers of units and unit costs should be explained. Quotes from suppliers should be provided for purchased services, e.g., computing or equipment repairs.

10.4 Travel
Projects focused on attending archive repositories should provide an explanation why it is necessary to visit the site directly, rather than utilize current technology (internet searches, digital archives, databases, or interlibrary loans).

Travel must comply with Western policies and regulations and will cover travel and subsistence costs only. For students participating in site visits and traveling, travel and subsistence only may be included (no personnel expenses). Original receipts will be required when travel claims are processed.

10.4.1 Fieldwork travel
For fieldwork, average cost per trip and number of trips should be estimated as closely as possible and explained.

10.4.2 Air and train fare & car rental
Applicants are required to provide written quotes for air and train fares and car rental and are expected to use the most economical means of transportation and to take advantage of seat sales and travel discounts whenever possible. (Written quotes are not required for travel to Toronto or Ottawa.) Please note that Microsoft Expedia (http://expedia.ca/) is a good source for fare information.

10.4.3 Mileage
Mileage costs must be calculated using established Western rates.

10.4.4 Meals and Accommodation
Under "meals and accommodation" in the budget, applicants should provide their best estimate of the cost of their subsistence for the travel period. The maximum daily rate for subsistence (including meals and accommodation) will be $125 (Canadian) for a maximum period of 14 days or a total subsistence budget of $1750. Detailed information as to
destination and length of stay are required in the budget. Hotel quotes are not required. Please note as per University policy, per diems are not permitted.

10.5 Equipment
All equipment purchased with internal grant funds becomes the property of The University of Western Ontario. Written quotes, or advertisements giving prices, must accompany the application.

10.5.1 Computing Equipment & Software
The committees will entertain requests for computers and related equipment and software; however, the request must be necessary for the conduct of the research activity described in the application and not for general word processing. The committee encourages applicants to request support from their Dean or Chair to help offset these costs before they apply to these competitions. Requests to supplement or match departmental or decanal contributions, rather than fully fund the costs, are encouraged.

10.6 Ineligible Expenses:
- Conference registration, travel to conferences or other conference fees;
- Faculty salaries;
- Research Time Stipends (Faculty);
- Honorariums;
- Cost of preparing a paper for presentation; and,
- Travel to collaborative meetings, learned societies or other association meetings.

11. QUESTIONS
Internal competitions are administered by Research Development & Services, Room 5150, Support Services Building. (T: 519-661-2111 ext. 84500, E-mail: internalgrants@uwo.ca). For more information, or questions please contact Ryan Salewski (ryan.salewski@uwo.ca or ext. 86801)