



New Frontiers in Research Fund
Fonds Nouvelles frontières en recherche

2019 Exploration Competition

How to Prepare a Letter of Intent to Apply – Applicants

August 2019



Canada



SSHRC CRSH





Presentation Overview

- Program description
- Competition stages and timeline
- Roles and eligibility of participants
- Subject matter eligibility
- Letter of Intent to Apply (LOI)
- Submitting the LOI
- LOI review process
- Convergence Portal live demo
- Q&A Session



New Frontiers in Research Fund Exploration Stream

- **Objectives:**
 - Generate opportunities to conduct high risk, high reward and interdisciplinary research
 - Support research that pushes the boundaries of what is funded through the agencies
- **Minimum of 100 awards**
 - Maximum of \$125,000 per year for up to 2 years
 - includes indirect costs of up to 25% of direct costs
 - maximum of \$100,000/year for direct costs of research

Competition Stages and Timeline

NOI Stage

LOI stage

August

Submission of Notification of Intent to apply (NOI)
(due Aug. 7th)



Submission of Letter of Intent to apply (LOI)
(due Sep. 4th)

October

LOI stage results and invitations to submit an Application
(Oct. 31st)

Competition launch and Convergence Portal opens
(July 3rd)

Application Stage

Dec - March

External reviews and committee assessment

March

Multidisciplinary review panel meeting

March

Release of Notices of Decision
by March 31st

Grant starts on March 31, 2020

Submission of Application
(due Dec.10th)

Roles and Eligibility

- **Nominated Principal Investigator (NPI)**

- Independent researcher with primary affiliation at a Canadian institution holding full institutional eligibility with one of the agencies as of March 31, 2020

- **Co-Principal Investigator (Co-PI)**

- Independent researcher
- May not be affiliated with a government or for-profit organization
- May be a Canadian or international participant

Roles and Eligibility

- **Co-Applicants**

- Independent researcher or other type of research participant
- May not be affiliated with a government department or for-profit organization
- May be a Canadian or international participant

- **Collaborators**

- Any individual that contributes to the project and is not supervised by a team member
- No access to funds

*****No change of participants or collaborators after submission of the LOI to the agency*****

Subject Matter Eligibility

- Must be interdisciplinary
 - Push the boundaries of what can be funded through the agencies, according to their mandates and existing programs
- Must be high risk, high reward projects
 - Project with risk of failure, but that could yield huge impacts



Letter of Intent to Apply (LOI)

An NPI must have submitted an NOI to be eligible to create and submit an LOI in Convergence.

LOI Deadline: September 4

Check with your RGO for internal deadlines



Letter of Intent to Apply (LOI)

Content

- Information submitted in the NOI
- Changes to the participants (Co-PI/Co-app)
 - **Cannot leave one project to join another**
- Changes to the list of collaborators
- Changes to the list of suggested reviewers
- Changes to the list of reviewer exclusions (if applicable)
- 5 supporting documents, each uploaded as a separate attachment



LOI - Selecting External Reviewers

- **Conflicts of interest**
- Identify appropriate **expertise**
 - Ability to review with confidence (incl. language)
 - Experts familiar with the various disciplinary approaches in the interdisciplinary project
- Consider **diversity** in your selection
 - Canadian, international
 - Private, government, public sectors
 - Gender
 - Under-represented groups
 - Established, mid career, early career researchers



Double-Blind Review

- Double-blind review occurs at the External Review stage (after LOI review)
- Anonymity of reviewer and applicant
- Focus of Exploration grants is on the high-risk, high-reward and interdisciplinary nature of the project
- Focus on the research rather than the team
- Feasibility criterion- can the research team carry out the proposed research?



LOI Attachments- Confidentiality

- Attachments submitted at the LOI stage cannot be updated at the application stage
- Requirements for confidentiality:
 - Do not include personally identifying information in the attachments
 - When referring to prior research, use the third person in statements (e.g., article was published; research was conducted on...);
 - You may include your own articles in Literature References
 - Do not provide links to your personal sites (blogs, Facebook, LinkedIn, etc.)
- Double-blinded review will be conducted at the application stage



LOI - Instructions for Attachments

- All documents must be converted to Portable Document Format (PDF) before uploading
- [Formatting instructions for attachments](#)

Be mindful of formatting requirements (page length, font size, margins, no personally identifying information, etc.) as applications that do not adhere to the requirements can be withdrawn

LOI - Supporting Documents

Description of the proposed research project
(maximum one page)

- Overall goal and objectives of the research
- Challenge(s) or issue(s) to be addressed
- Potential benefit(s)/outcome(s)



LOI - Supporting Documents

Explanation of High Risk (maximum one page)

- High risk nature and rationale
- Consider:
 - Unique directions
 - Challenging current paradigms
 - Enhancing our understanding
 - Novel interdisciplinary approaches
 - Development or adaptation of methods and techniques



LOI - Supporting Documents

Potential for High Reward

(maximum one page)

- Potential outcomes and rationale
- Consider:
 - Broad impact
 - Reach
 - Impact on research or the research community



LOI - Supporting Documents

Interdisciplinarity/Fit to Program

(maximum one page)

- Interdisciplinary nature of proposed research
- Why this approach is needed and/or the added value
- Rationale for meeting program requirements and expectations
- Consider:
 - Novelty of perspective
 - Novelty of approach
 - Project design
 - Fit to program



LOI - Supporting Documents

Literature references

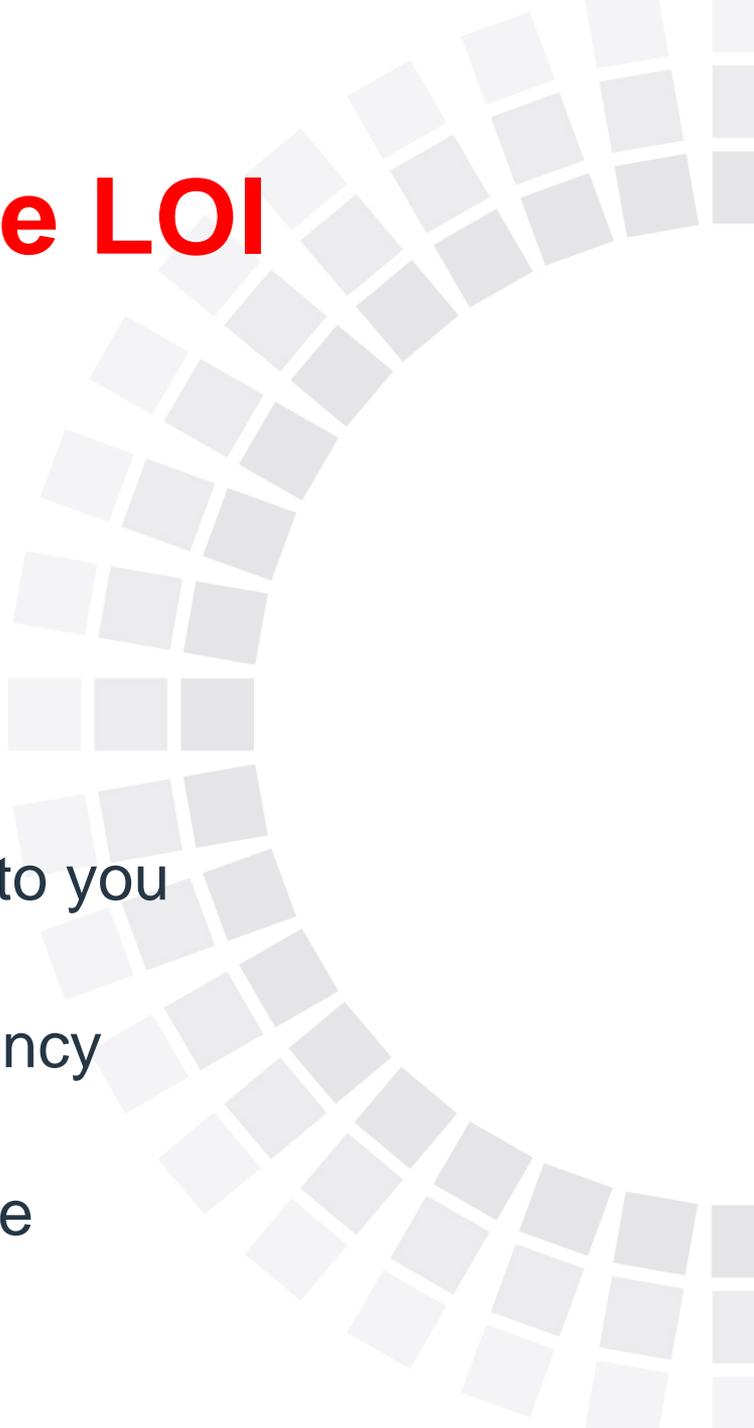
(maximum one page)

- Create new references attachment at the application stage



Submitting the LOI

- Review
- Accept the Terms and Conditions
- Status: Received by Administrator
- For changes: ask RGO to return it to you
- RGO approves and submits to agency
 - Status: Received by Agency
 - No further changes can be made





LOI Review Process

- Adjudicated by Multidisciplinary Review Panel
 - Interdisciplinarity/Fit to program
 - High Risk
 - High Reward

Purpose

- Eliminate applications which do not meet the objectives of the program
- Manage application volume



LOI Review Process - Scoring

- Multidisciplinary review panel
- 3 committee members to evaluate each LOI
 - 2 members with expertise in the fields of research associated with the proposal
 - 1 member with no expertise
- Scoring of assigned applications (evaluation Matrix):
 - Interdisciplinarity/fit to program: pass/fail
 - High Risk: 50% of overall score
 - High Reward: 50% of overall score



LOI Review Process - Scoring

- [Evaluation Matrices found online](#)

High Risk Matrix

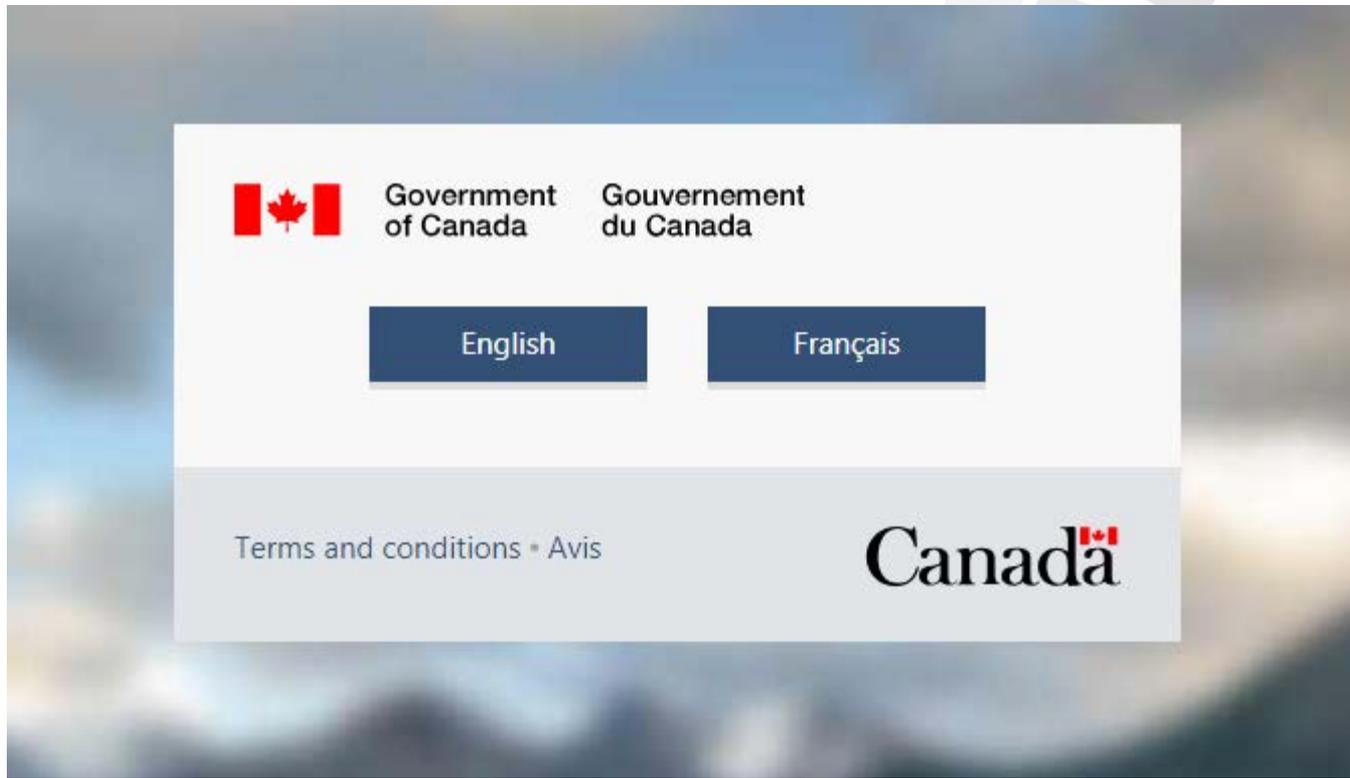
Item	High	Medium-High	Medium-Low	Low
Unique directions	Addresses a completely new theory.	Addresses a novel concept that bridges theories established in different fields.	Addresses a novel concept closely linked to established theories.	Represents an incremental or “logical next step” approach.
Challenging current paradigms	Aims to radically challenge accepted theories.	Aims to challenge accepted theories.	Will test established theories.	Aims to reinforce established theories.
Enhancing our understanding	Aims to extraordinarily enhance our understanding of a complex and challenging issue and/or significantly enhance our understanding of multiple complex and challenging issues.	Aims to significantly enhance our understanding of a complex and challenging issue and/or notably enhance our understanding of multiple complex and challenging issues.	Aims to notably enhance our understanding of a complex and challenging issue.	Aims for an incremental advancement in our understanding of a complex and challenging issue.
Novel interdisciplinary approaches	Is at the interface between disciplines, requiring a novel interdisciplinary approach (i.e., two or more disciplines that are not commonly combined). Goes beyond established approaches of any single discipline, bringing together disparate disciplines in new ways.	Crosses disciplinary boundaries and integrates approaches from two or more disciplines.	Crosses disciplinary boundaries, using approaches from one or more disciplines.	Crosses disciplinary boundaries, involving two (or more) disciplines that are closely related or commonly crossed. (The interdisciplinary approach is established.)
Development or adaptation of methods and techniques	Involves the development of novel methods or techniques.	Involves the adaptation of methods and techniques to a new field.	Involves the application of proven methods and techniques in a new context.	Involves proven methods or techniques.
Other				The application did not adequately establish the high risk nature of the project.



LOI Review Process - Adjudication

- **Top-ranked LOIs:** not discussed, invited to submit application
- **Discussed LOIs:**
 - Discrepancy between the scores where one is high enough to be invited
 - Sufficiently high scores to be invited, but with at least one “fail” for interdisciplinarity/ fit to program
- **Lower-ranked LOIs:** not invited to submit an application

How to use the Convergence Portal



Resources

NFRF contact	NFRF-FNFR@chairs-chaire.gc.ca
Internal Deadlines	Your institution's Research Grants Office / RGO
NFRF website	
Funding Opportunity	
On-line Services Helpdesk	E-mail: websupport@chairs-chaire.gc.ca Telephone: 613-995-4273