Early Researcher Awards Program

Round 19 Information Session
Fall 2025

Ontario

Land Acknowledgement

Please join us in a moment of reflection.

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Today's Agenda

- Major components of the application process, such as:
    - ✓ important dates
    - ✓ application review process
    - ✓ application guidelines
    - ✓ submission process, and
    - ✓ best practices

- **Questions on slido**
    - ❖ **TIP:** Send project-specific questions to ERA@ontario.ca or your institution's research office team.

Reminder: Please refer to the program guidelines for further detailed information.

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ERA Program Overview

- Introduced in 2005 and has held eighteen rounds to date

- Helps early career Ontario researchers build their research teams

- In Round 18, the Ministry received a total of 274 <u>eligible</u> applications, of which 54 were awarded. The success rate was approximately 20%.

- Each award is a maximum of $100,000 for eligible costs and must be matched by an additional $50,000 from the researcher's institution

- In addition, up to $40,000 will be provided to the institution for eligible overhead costs

- The funds are to be used over a **period of 5 years**

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What's New for Round 19!

- Recognized Indigenous Institutes in Ontario are now also included as eligible applicants.

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Program Research Security Requirement Reminders

Research Security Requirements:

- The PI must complete and sign their own Application Attestation Form, as well as complete the *Mitigating Economic and Geopolitical Risk Checklist*.

- Institutions should assess proposals for potential economic and/or geopolitical risks using existing institutional resources, policies and processes, in addition to resources included in the ERA Program Guidelines.

- In addition, when preparing the application, consider any potential controversy or negative views that may result from any existing or planned association with all partners that may ultimately impact the reputation of Ontario.

- Have specific questions related to security requirements? Direct your inquiries to ERA@Ontario.ca or reach out to your institution's research office team.

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Program Requirement Reminders (Cont'd)

- **Intellectual Property (IP)** – review the Ontario government's first IP Action Plan and links to Ontario's intellectual property resources

- **Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)** – institutions and principal investigators (PI) should develop research talent criteria using these principles, and, where possible, use inclusive, unbiased, gender-neutral language throughout the application and proposal

- **Canadian Research and Development Classification Codes (CRDC)** – continuing to use this system to provide a common approach to classifying research

  - ❖ **TIP:** The Ministry will contact Research Offices for corrections if errors are detected. To limit delays, please make sure the accurate codes are inputted
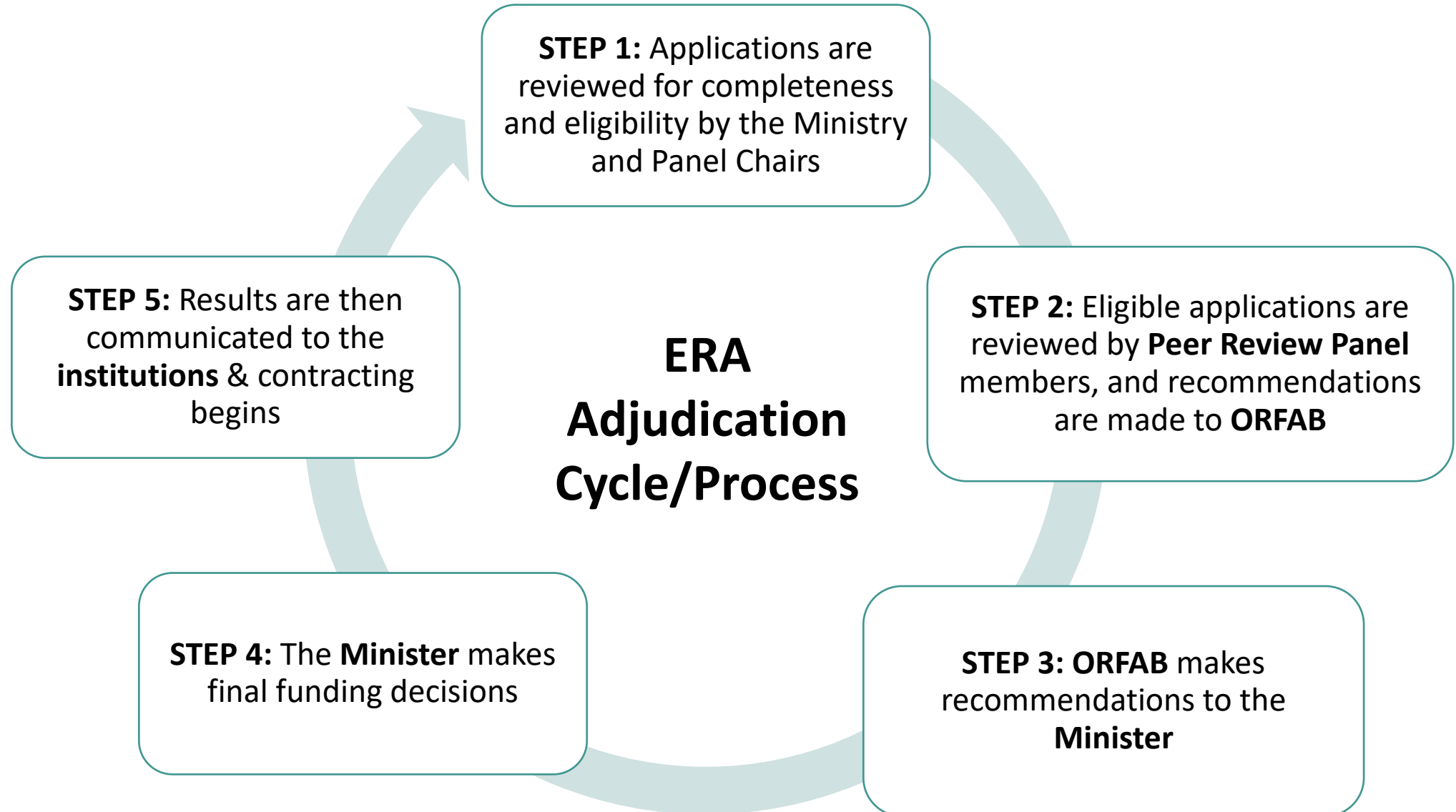
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ERA Ministry Competition Key Dates

Activity	Estimated Dates
ERA R19 program launch/call for proposals	September 25th
Information Sessions (3 virtual sessions)	October 7th, 8th, & 9th
Applications for Eligibility	October 16th
Ministry access to storage solution method	No later than Thursday, November 13th by 5pm EST
Applications are due to the Ministry	No later than Thursday, November 27th by 5pm EST
Adjudication panels	Winter 2026
Ontario Research Fund Advisory Board (ORFAB) review of recommended proposals	Winter 2026
Minister final funding decisions	Winter 2026
Decisions communicated to institutions & contracting begins	Winter/Spring 2026

Please keep in mind your institution may have 'internal deadlines', but we must have all completed applications in by **5pm EST Thursday, November 27th, 2025**.

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Application Review Process

ERA Adjudication Cycle/Process

STEP 1: Applications are reviewed for completeness and eligibility by the Ministry and Panel Chairs

STEP 2: Eligible applications are reviewed by **Peer Review Panel** members, and recommendations are made to **ORFAB**

STEP 3: ORFAB makes recommendations to the **Minister**

STEP 4: The **Minister** makes final funding decisions

STEP 5: Results are then communicated to the **institutions** & contracting begins

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Application Review Process (Cont'd)

- Eligible applications are reviewed by Peer Review Panel members;

- The Ministry reserves the right to choose reviewers and to assign applications to an appropriate panel

- There is no appeal of decisions, including decisions regarding the eligibility of the application

- The ERA program is a discretionary, non-entitlement program; and

- Funding is awarded on a competitive basis

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Eligibility

The ERA program is open on a competitive basis to researchers who:

- are **full-time faculty or PI** who, at the application deadline, are **based at an eligible institution** (adjunct positions **do not qualify);**

- have started their academic career on or after **January 1, 2020**;

- have completed their first Doctor of Philosophy, Doctor of Veterinary Medicine, Medical Doctor or Terminal degree on or after **January 1, 2015** anywhere worldwide (using the convocation date);

- have **not** already held an Early Researcher Award; and

- are **not** a Tier 1 Canada Research Chair

Researchers who were not successful in previous rounds may submit an application to this competition, provided they continue to meet all eligibility requirements.

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Eligibility (Cont'd)

Eligible interruptions:

- Continued education required training, institution-approved medical leave, parental leave, and certain international advanced degree interruptions.
  - ❖ **TIP:** Interruptions **must be clearly** described in the application & include dates for the interruption. Applications with interruptions will be reviewed by a Panel of Chairs to determine eligibility.

- Research associate positions, post-doctoral fellowships and time spent in industry **are not** considered eligible interruptions.

- An independent academic research appointment is a position where a researcher is capable of independently publishing, supervising, & applying for funding on their own.

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Let's take a moment while you send your questions using **slido**!

REMINDER: Please keep ERA program questions high-level. Any project-specific questions should first be discussed with your institution's research office.

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Haven't answered your question?

Two ways to Log into **slido** and ask!

1. Grab your **smartphones** and scan the QR code

OR

2. Grab your **laptop** and open a web browser

Go to slido.com

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Institution's Matching Contributions

- Matching contribution must be secured for the applicant <u>prior to submitting the proposal to the Ministry</u>

- ERA program seeks to leverage additional, **new funding** for early-career researchers, which means 'existing' funds for the project cannot be included

Revenues	Direct Costs	Overhead Costs	Total
ERA Program Funding	$100,000	$40,000	$140,000
Institution's Matching Contributions	$50,000	-	$50,000
Total	**Up to $150,000**	**Up to $40,000**	**Up to $190,000**

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Institution's Matching Contributions (Cont'd)

Let's chat about **eligible matching contributions**

- Private sector contributions in cash

- University scholarships, as well as private or public sector contributions, deemed to be in cash

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Institution's Matching Contributions (Cont'd)

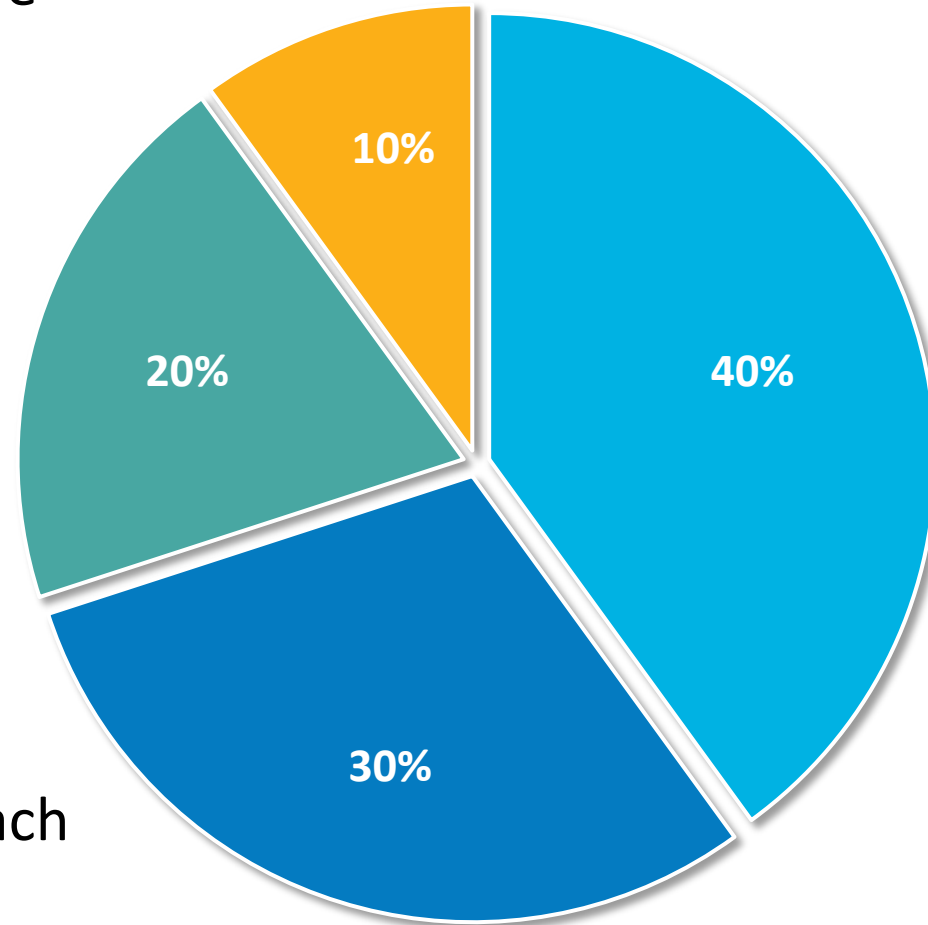## What are **ineligible matching contributions**:

- In-kind contribution

- Teaching assistantships

- Startup funds from the institution to assist newly appointed faculty members

- Awards by federal granting councils (e.g., NSERC, CIHR, SSHRC)

- Specific purpose grants from Ontario government ministries & agencies, and funds leveraged by such grants

- Funding received through Ontario Genomics or Canada Genomics

- Ontario graduate scholarships as part of provincial program funding

- Ontario graduate fellowships as part of provincial program funding

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Evaluation Criteria

The Early Researcher Award applications are evaluated on four weighted criteria.

- Excellence of the Researcher

- Quality of Research

- Development of Research Talent

- Strategic Value for Ontario

Over the next few slides, we will review each criterion in more detail.

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Evaluation Criteria (Cont'd)

Excellence of the Researcher is *weighted at **40%*** and is looking for:

- academic and employment record

- research grants and awards received

- publication record

- other areas of research productivity

- researcher's current and potential standing for excellence in the research field

- independence from previous supervisor

- independent peer-reviewed funding

Reference letters and clear independence are essential when reviewing this category.

Quality of Research is *weighted at **30%*** and is looking for:

- excellence of proposed research

- originality of proposed research

- clarity of research proposal

- relevance of methodology

Clarity in the application to allow for understanding among a multidisciplinary panel is essential.

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Evaluation Criteria (Cont'd)

Development of Research Talent is *weighted at **20%*** and is looking for:

- development of research knowledge of members of research team

- skills development of team

- unique and leading-edge training

- past experience in Highly Qualified Personnel (HQP) training

- clear demonstration of a commitment to EDI when developing the research teams

Strategic Value for Ontario is *weighted at **10%*** and is looking for:

- Commercialization benefits

- Economic benefits

- Societal and/or cultural benefits

Applicants are advised to add details to support the benefits, particularly to Ontario, in this section.

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Youth Engagement and Outreach

- It is <u>expected</u> that PIs help promote their research and help educate our youth in Ontario

- Applicants are required to undertake youth outreach activities and may use up to $1,000 of Ministry funding. You may leverage your institutional youth outreach programs.

- Youth outreach activities are to be undertaken during **<u>each year</u>** of the 5-year project and **clearly identified on your application.**

- Activities should be free and targeted towards high-school, middle school and elementary school students.

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Eligible Expenses

Eligible Direct Costs

- ✓ salaries and benefits

- ✓ travel & expenses to conferences, workshops, seminars or offsite research activities

- ✓ associated expenses related to the research team (Excluding the PI)

- ✓ up to $7,500 for discretionary expenses to be used to fulfill the objective of the program

- ✓ up to $1,000 to supplement the cost of Youth Outreach Activities for eligible expenses

Applicants can budget up to, but not more than $40,000 towards _eligible overhead costs_

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Ineligible Expenses

Funds received through this grant cannot be spent on:

- salary, benefits or expenses of the PI

- the purchase of supplies or equipment

- the operation of equipment and facilities

- salaries or expenses of individuals performing contract research

- salaries, benefits or expenses of visiting fellows or ineligible team members

- travel and accommodation for recruitment purposes

- any items or services not directly related to the project

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Ineligible Expenses (Cont'd)

Ineligible expenses for Youth Outreach are:

- expenses paid to a third party to coordinate, develop or deliver youth outreach activities

- the development of magazines, books, curriculum documents, courses or multi-media, including new websites

- the purchase of commercially available equipment

- honoraria or salaries

- hospitality and catering costs at events

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Join the Q&A using slido.com

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Best Practices

- Being actively involved in conducting research that has been supported by peer-reviewed funding (overlap is okay!)

  ❖ **TIP:** Explain what NEW research components would be covered by the ERA funding when the ERA research proposal is an extension of a research project supported by other grants

- Demonstrating academic <u>independence</u> from previous supervisors

- Evidence of <u>publishing with students</u>

- Using <u>clear and comprehensible</u> content & language

- Linking the proposal to the research milestones by <u>describing specific roles and responsibilities</u> of the Research Team

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Common Application Weaknesses that can be Avoided!

Application has not met the program criteria	• failure to meet the Excellence of the Researcher criterion • failure to demonstrate commitment to EDI when developing research teams • failure to demonstrate independence from previous supervisors
Too broad and lacks focus	• proposed research lacks focus (numerous, unrelated or loosely related projects)
Lack of details	• lack of detail in the HQP plan • lack of detail regarding the Strategic Value to Ontario • failure to confirm that any experimentations will be acceptable on ethical and safety grounds abiding by policies and procedures that govern research integrity • failure to "make the case," i.e., to explain the steps that led to the proposed research concept
Difficult to understand	• proposal contains technical jargon, and the content and language are not clear • simply 'cutting and pasting' content from one funding application to another without tailoring it for the ERA submission
Budget issues	• lack of funds to complete the proposed research and HQP training • sustainability is questionable beyond government funding • failure to provide a full five-year budget for the project
Formatting issues	• failure to follow formatting instructions outlined in the guidelines • failure to keep Appendix B - proposal research to a max of 6 pages, including appendices, excluding references • failure to attach all the required documents with the submission of the application package

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Application Submission Requirements

The submitted application package <u>must</u> include ALL of the following:

- **Document 1:** The completed fillable Adobe application form with Appendices B, C, and D attached as embedded files (accessible by clicking within the form).

- **Document 2:** A single, continuous PDF file that includes the completed application form with Appendices B, C, and D fully displayed within the document (not attached separately).

- **Document 3:** a PDF of the completed *Mitigating Economic and Geopolitical Risk Checklist.*

- **Document 4:** a PDF of the completed *Application Attestation Form.*

- **Document 5 (required if e-signature is not available):** a PDF copy of the signature page signed by the VP Research or any other signing officer with authority to bind the institution.

  ❖ **TIP:** All inquiries/discussions during the application, review and post-award processes are to be coordinated between the institution's named contact on the application and Ministry staff.

Failure to follow the instructions will result in the application being deemed ineligible!

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How to Submit the Completed Application

WHO

- Institutional research offices are responsible for submitting the **electronic** package to the Ministry.

HOW

- Ministry staff will access the storage drive and confirm access has been granted. This step is mandatory and must be completed by **November 13th, 2025**.
- Once you have set up the storage solution method from your end, send the necessary information to ERA@Ontario.ca.
- The research office will need to submit an electronic application to the Ministry (ERA@ontario.ca) via your organization's preferred secure cloud storage solution (File Transfer Protocol (FTP), Dropbox, Google Drive, etc.) no later than **5 pm on November 27th, 2025.**
- The completed application packages must be uploaded to this secure storage solution by the application submission deadline. The institution's research office is responsible for sending an email confirmation to ERA@Ontario.ca once all applications have been uploaded.
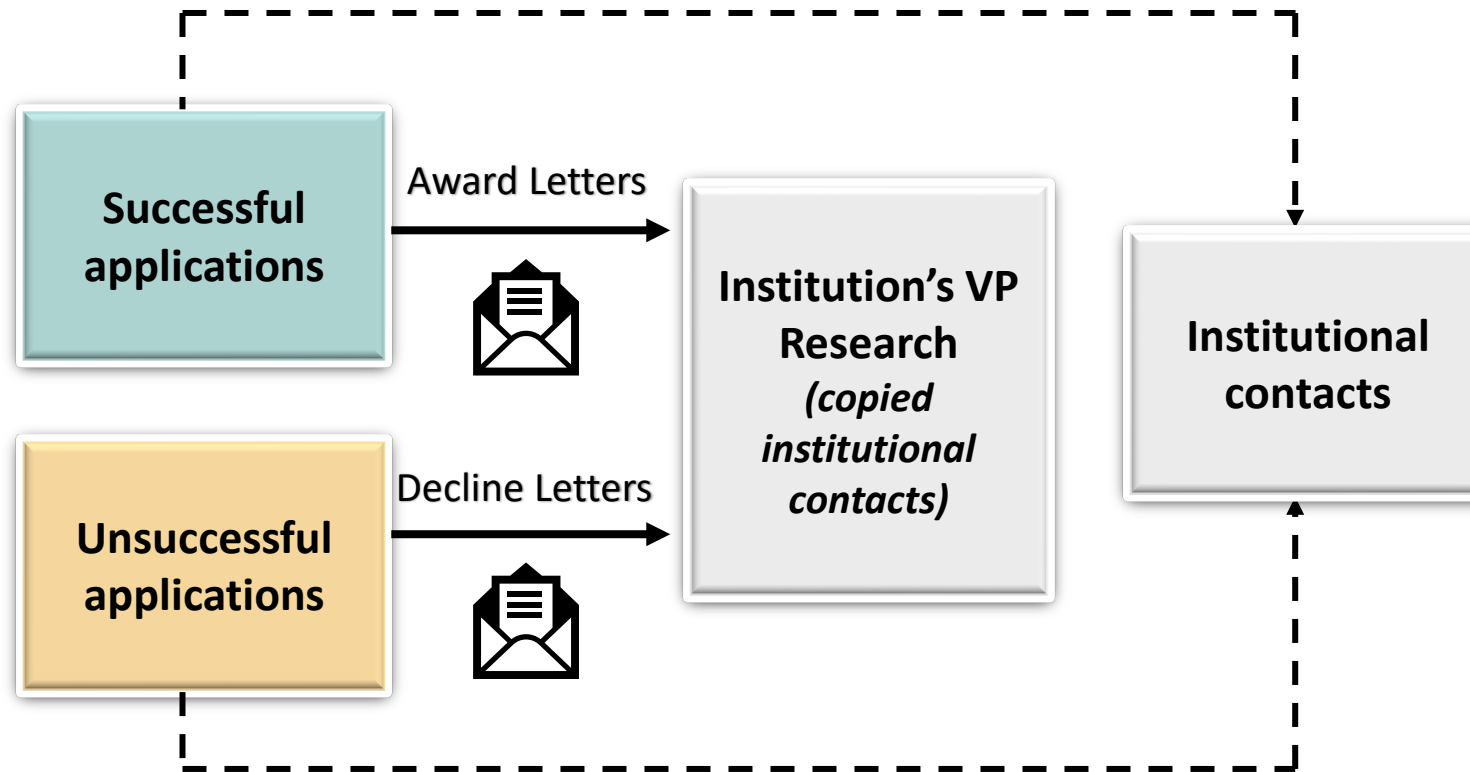
WHAT

- All documents should be included in the **ONE application package**, not sent separately to the Ministry. The application should be a PDF accessible version, not scanned. Scanned reference letters are acceptable.

WHEN

- **Submit by Thursday, November 27th, 2025 by 5:00 PM EST**
- **Late or incomplete applications will not be accepted!**

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Funding Communication Process

Institutional contacts will also receive feedback for unsuccessful applications soon after, which can be relayed to applicants who may be eligible to reapply.

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Contact Information

Please contact the Ministry at

ERA@Ontario.ca

Program Guidelines and Application form can be found at:

https://www.ontario.ca/page/early-researcher-awards

Thank you.

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