Insight Grants: Recent Changes and Important Elements

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Insight

- **Insight Development Grants ($7,000-75,000; 1-2 years)**
  - For “emerging scholars” (various definitions) and faculty moving into a new area of research (but likely still related to their overall research background). Emerging scholars have a protected envelope, so established scholars have a much lower success rate than the program overall.
- **Insight Grants ($7,000-400,000; 3-5 years)**
  - A refashioning of the previous “Standard Research Grants” program
  - Much more flexible than IDG re: kinds of projects, timelines, etc.
- These are separate competitions: you don’t need one to apply for the other. **But SSHRC does not allow individuals to be the main applicant (PI) in both competitions in the same calendar year.**

Change in Architecture

- Standard Research Grants were scored in very straightforward ways: the project proposal and the cv were each scored, and then the two numbers were combined based on whether you were new or an established scholar.
- Now, under the new SSHRC program architecture, there are three broad categories that cut across most pieces of the application: Challenge, Feasibility, Capability. The proposal has a bigger impact on Challenge and the CV is significant in Capability, but the working out of the timeline for completion in the proposal can affect “Feasibility” and anything you say there about the current state of the research will also impact “Capability.” And so on.
- So, every little piece matters for two or three of the scoring categories—and there is lots of repetition between the various sections. Embrace the repetition, and make sure your various pieces are coordinated and reinforce each other.

Open-Access Policy

- Open Access is now a requirement for **all peer-reviewed journal articles** arising from SSHRC, CIHR or NSERC research grants awarded from 2015 on. This means that you have to publish with an open-access journal or one that doesn't have copyright restrictions preventing you from depositing the article in DalSpace.
- You can budget for Open-Access fees if you plan to submit your work to a journal that charges such fees (typically $1500-3000 per article), but there are early indications that committees are reacting to these in very different ways.
- The burden is currently on researchers to navigate the legal minefield: e.g. articles that quote copyrighted material, articles on sensitive subjects that shouldn't be discoverable on Google by 10-year-olds, etc.
- It does not apply to anything but peer-reviewed journal articles: you don't have to deposit book chapters, books, reviews, etc., and putting anything else online is knowledge mobilization, not complying with the open-access policy.

Budget: Even More Important Than It Used to Be

CHANGE: Budgets are now scored. Budgets that appear significantly inflated can disqualify an application. But getting a low score on a budget can be enough to push an otherwise excellent application below the threshold for funding. And committees are being encouraged to cut budgets to maintain success rates.

- get price quotes for flights rather than ballpark the costs;
- use university per diem rates and mileage rates (available via Financial Services website);
- for equipment, use a sentence to explain which model/brand you've selected and the price (incl. taxes);
- for supplies, everything must be justified as a research-essential expense—they have a policy just on eligible supply expenses.
- for research assistants, use exact figures (incl. benefits if per-hour rather than a stipend) and explain the calculation of the number of hours. E.g., conducting interviews, 20h; transcribing and proofreading transcriptions, 75h; literature review and compilation of annotated bibliography, 80h. This is less of a concern with stipends—you just need to justify a full-time RA. But some will ask why 250 hours rather than 200.

Knowledge Mobilization

CHANGES: a number of bits and pieces in the application now go beyond simple "communication of results" (e.g., publishing, conference papers) to "knowledge mobilization," by which they generally mean pushing research results beyond academia: public lectures or presentations, websites, policy impacts (policy papers, connections to government, etc.), sharing research results with community organizations (NGOs/CSOs, local groups), and so on.

TIPS:

- If you're in a discipline that doesn't have clear connections to policy or community groups, then websites and public lectures are often the most straightforward route to meeting this requirement;
- Mention anything you've done in the past that constitutes "KM," so that you can not only say what you will do but also establish that you're capable of doing it ("Capability"!).
- They have a guide: http://www.sshrc-crsh.gc.ca/funding-financement/policies-politiques/knowledge_mobilisation-mobilisation_des_connaissances-eng.aspx

Timeline

- Feasibility is a significant criteria, and it requires more than just a great outline for a research project.
  - You need to be clear about timelines: e.g., year 1 will be a literature review and preliminary survey development; year 2 will be the surveys; year 3 will be follow-up interviews and conference papers on preliminary analysis; year 4 will focus on preparing results for publication and further conference papers.
  - Budget items need to be tied to the timeline: e.g., I need an RA in year 2 when I will be conducting most of the surveys. Student training/budget/description should all make this point.
  - You need to be clear about conditions that affect your research time: e.g., in year 3, I will be preparing this material for publication, particularly during my six-month sabbatical that year.

Some general tips

- Sell your research experience in the project description: if you're doing archival or field research and have done it before, say so; if you published a relevant book 8 years ago, mention it here. "As I argued in my well-received first book, *Important Monograph* (Big University Press, 2002), …"
- If you run out of room in one section, and have some spare in another, see if you can connect them to put further info in the section with some room. Say, you're short on space in the project description and have half a page on what the RAs will do—put some of it into the research training section and put "For more detail on this, see Research Training" into the project description.
- The "response to previous assessments" can be used to cite positive reports from previous years, as well issue pre-emptive strikes. E.g., I was gratified that Assessor A thought my project was "well-conceived, feasible, and important" but appreciate Assessor B's concern about the scope of the survey in the second year so I have modified the project to extend that survey across two years, thus protecting the overall goals but making the work more clearly feasible." But if you use this page, always be generous and positive.

Other changes

- The 2016 Insight Grant competition will introduce a new option: applicants will be able to select their adjudication committee from a dropdown menu.
- Universities used to get results grouped into three categories, with applicants arranged alphabetically in each group: funded; recommended but not funded (4A); not recommended. Now, universities get results grouped into five categories based on ranking: the top four sextiles (1/6ths), and the bottom third, again with applicants grouped alphabetically within them.
- No change: universities do not get your rankings or your reports.

Also note: Howard Ramos is now the Dalhousie SSHRC Leader, and as of July 1st will be the Associate Dean Research in FASS.