

NSERC Discovery Grant Workshop – July 24, 2018

Hosted by the Division of Research and Graduate Studies

Panelists: Dr. Hugh Chipman (Mathematics & Statistics), Dr. Darlene Brodeur (Psychology),
Dr. Kirk Hillier (Biology), Dr. Suzie Currie (Dean of Science)

Common Pitfalls

- **Lack of fit with the NSERC mandate.** Make sure your proposal responds well to the mandate!
- Failure to establish a program of research (a trajectory with long-term impact). **NSERC funds research programs, not projects.**
- **Lack of detail in the research proposal.** Provide enough detail to ensure someone from your area will be convinced you know what you're doing.
 - This includes **methodological detail**. It's important to convince reviewers you have a broad and impactful program of research, but you also need to describe the specifics of your research design.
- Weak or non-existent objectives. **Describe long-term objectives for your research program and short-term objectives for this specific grant.**

Key Strategies

- Give your **Notification of Intent (NOI)** the attention it deserves. It's very important, especially for helping the committee pick good committee reviewers.
- **Choose your referees carefully.** When pitching referees, pitch someone who is likely to write a thoughtful and thorough review. Also provide a good mix of referees from small and large institutions.
- **Respond directly to the Discovery Grant Merit Indicators.** Committee members will use these to settle debates about applications.
- **Provide context where necessary.** For example, in the Excellence as a Researcher section, if you've had a less productive period, you can explain why. Don't invite speculation.
- **Feature publications that relate directly to your proposal.**
- If you have other active funding, **clearly articulate what makes this application different.**
- For the Budget Justification, explain how each budget item will facilitate doing X. **Need isn't good enough.**
- Use the Summary to effectively communicate your research to the generalists on the committee (remember: generalists are still scientists; they are not the general public). **Think of it as a road map for the rest of your proposal.** Write it well and make it different from the introductory section of your proposal.

Small Undergraduate University Context

- **Regarding HQP in the small undergraduate university context**, keep in mind that NSERC is very open to the kind of training we do at Acadia but you need to provide some context.
 - **Educate the committee.** Be clear about what supervision at Acadia University actually entails. Talk about your training philosophy/environment, including broad skills development. Highlight how your students are doing real research and publishing/presenting.
- Don't make excuses for being at a small university. **The tone of your application should always be excellence!** Celebrate your research and record, while still providing a bit of context about the place you work.