1. OVERVIEW

Jointly supported by the Office of the Vice-President (Research) and the researcher's faculty, the *Western Strategic Support (WSS) for NSERC Success* **Seed Research Grant** is targeted to:

1. Eligible Early Career Researchers, who are within five years of the start date of their first eligible academic research appointment (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.*

2. Mid- or Senior Career Researchers who wish to propose a new project or program/area of research.

The purpose of this funding is to develop new and competitive externally funded research proposals in accordance with NSERC expectations. *WSS for NSERC Success* funding should not be used as a replacement for NSERC funding, nor should it be used as an extension of a previously funded NSERC grant.

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 **Wednesday, November 22, 2023 (3:00 pm EST)** for the 2023 competition. The adjudication of applications will take place November to December, with funds available starting January 1, 2024.

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; the applicant) 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 *Seed Grant* as an **Early Career Researcher**, the applicant must:

1. Be within the first 5 years of the start date of their first eligible academic research appointment;
2. Currently not hold NSERC funding or WSS for NSERC Success funding; and
3. Have not previously held an NSERC grant as a PI.

To be eligible for the *Seed Grant* as **Mid and Senior Career Researchers,** the applicant must:

1. Hold an eligible academic research appointment at Western, and
2. Propose a new research project or program/area of research in support of a future NSERC application.

3. SUBMISSIONS

Applications should be completed according to the posted instructions. All applications must be submitted to Western Research Internal Grants via the [online submission portal](#) **by 3:00 PM EST on the deadline date, along with an accompanying ROLA Proposal.** It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure that all conditions are met, and that the application is complete and submitted as required. *Western Research, in consultation with an Associate Vice-President (Research) reserves the right to exclude from competition any submissions that are incomplete or inconsistent. Excluded applications will not be presented to reviewers for consideration.*

4. ADJUDICATION

Members of the Science and Engineering Review Board (SERB) are appointed to adjudicate all NSERC related submissions. The Review Board will be composed of:

- Associate VP Research (or delegate)
- Associate Dean Research, Faculty of Engineering
- Associate Dean Research, Faculty of Science
- Engineering Faculty member
- Science Faculty member
- Faculty member from outside Engineering and Science who currently holds NSERC funding

Each member of the SERB will be asked to rank each proposal using the following scale:

Score	Descriptor
5	Excellent
4	Very Good
3	Good
2	Satisfactory
1	Unsatisfactory

Each application will be reviewed by multiple SERB reviewers (the number of reviewers assigned to each application will be determined based upon the volume of applications). For each application the scores assigned by each reviewer will be averaged to produce the average total score for the application. The average total score will be used to produce a final ranking of all applications (from highest score to lowest).

The SERB will meet to finalize funding decisions. All scoring results and review comments are then submitted to Western Research staff in order to process and distribute decision notices to applicants.

The goal of the program is to fund excellence and innovation in research; there is no guarantee of funding for each application submitted. The SERB will allocate funds toward those projects deemed fundable, based on the availability of funds. All decisions made by the committee are final and there is no appeal process.

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:

    o What will be the likely impact of the research?

    o Will it advance the applicant's publication and teaching record?

    o 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.

    o Are there long-term goals as well as short-term objectives?

    o Are the objectives specific, well-focused and realistic?

- Clarity and appropriateness of methodology: Applications must be clear and logical.

    o Does the proposal clearly outline the methodology to be used?

    o Is the proposed methodology current and appropriate (i.e., will it contribute to the stated research goals; has the applicant justified the methodological approach)?

- Equity, diversity and inclusion in the research team (as applicable): The research project should meaningfully engage members of underrepresented groups within the research team through the engagement of students, postdoctoral fellows, faculty and partners. Underrepresented groups include, but are not limited to, the four designated groups (women, Indigenous peoples, members of visible minorities, and persons with disabilities).
    o Does the proposal include plans, methods, processes, or other considerations for incorporating principles of equity, diversity, and inclusion within the research team?

- Sex and gender-based analysis (SGBA) and/or Gender-Based Analysis Plus (GBA+) (as applicable): It is expected that research applicants will integrate gender and sex into their research designs where appropriate. This expectation aligns with CIHR's guidelines on sex and gender-based analysis (SGBA). SGBA is an approach that systematically examines sex-based (biological) and gender-based (socio-cultural) differences between men, women, boys, girls and gender-diverse people. The purpose of SGBA is to promote rigorous science that is sensitive to sex and gender and therefore has the potential to expand our understanding of health determinants for all people (*Source: CIHR*). GBA+ is an analytical process used to assess how diverse groups of women, men and non-binary people may experience policies, programs and initiatives. The "plus" in GBA+ acknowledges that GBA goes beyond biological (sex) and socio-cultural (gender) differences. We all have multiple identity factors that intersect to make us who we are; GBA+ also considers many other identity factors, like race, ethnicity, religion, age, and mental or physical disability (*Source: Status of Women Canada*).

  - Does the proposal include an integration of gender, sex, and/or multiple identity factors into the research design? Is there an explanation of SGBA/GBA+ design, methods, or approaches within the proposal?

- 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. HUMAN RESEARCH ETHICS, ANIMAL, & BIOHAZARDS

All research proposals involving humans, animals or biohazardous materials must be approved by the appropriate Western certification review committee. Applicants must indicate whether their project involves the use of human or animal subjects or biohazardous materials under the *Certifications* tab of their ROLA proposal *and* on the *WSS for NSERC Success* application form. If awarded, funds will be encumbered and the work may not commence until appropriate approvals are officially confirmed with the applicable oversight committee(s) and noted in the ROLA grants system. For more information on the certification approval process, please visit the relevant Human Research Ethics, Animal Use or Biohazard 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. Nearing completion of the terminal year, the PI should submit an

extension request if they have a significant unspent balance and do not expect to fully utilize funding prior to the completion date. Extensions may be considered in special circumstances upon submitting your request using the online form. Requests for extensions must include the ROLA Proposal/Award ID and/or speed code of your project, an explanation for why funds could not be spent within the grant period, a budget justification for how remaining funds are to be used, and the length of extension required (1-year maximum). After the terminal year and if no extension request has been submitted, the award will be closed and any remaining funds will be returned to source.

8. OTHER FUNDING SOURCES

Applicants may apply to more than one funding source for complementary funding towards the same research project and budget (internal or external funding); however, the other requests for support must be disclosed at the time of application to this program's competition. Applicants must make clear in their proposals that there is no duplication of financial support for identical budget items.

9. FINAL REPORTS

Within three months of the termination of the award, awardees must complete a final report. Final reports are submitted using an online form available on the Western Research Internal Grants website. *Final reports must be submitted before new applications are considered.*

10. BUDGET

All budget items must comply with Tri-Agency policies, the Tri-Agency Guide on Financial Administration and the specific guidelines outlined in this document.

10.1 Budget Justification

An adequate budget justification must be included in the 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. Current employee benefit rates can be found in the Benefit Recovery Rates section located on the HR Services webpage (see Researcher Toolbox).

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

Western strongly encourages faculty and staff to defer travel to all countries and regions identified by the Government of Canada as having active travel health notices for COVID-19. For those faculty and staff who do decide to travel internationally, please follow the steps listed here. No member of the campus community is expected to travel on behalf of the university if they are not comfortable doing so.

Travel requests must comply with Western policies and regulations and will cover travel, subsistence, and accommodation costs only. For students participating in site visits and traveling, travel and subsistence only may be included. Original receipts will be required when travel claims are processed, except in the case of per diem. For Travel & Expense Reimbursement go to: Travel and Expense Reimbursement.

10.4.1 *Fieldwork travel*

Field work travel is an allowable expense. The average cost per trip and number of trips should be estimated as closely as possible and justified.

10.4.2 *Air and train fare & car rental*

Applicants are expected to use the most economical means of transportation and to take advantage of seat sales and travel discounts whenever possible.

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. Requests must be well-justified and include detailed information as to destination and length of stay. Please refer to Western's Meal and Accommodation Guidelines for information on specific meal allowances, per diem, and accommodation rates.

10.5 Dissemination

Dissemination costs such as open access publication fees, workshops and other related activities are allowable expenses, but shall not exceed $2,000 in the project budget.

10.6 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.***

10.6.1 *Computing Equipment & Software*

The SERB will review requests for computers and related equipment and software; however, the request must be necessary to conduct the research activity described in the application and not for routine computing tasks (e.g, word processing or data entry). The SERB 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.

10.7 Ineligible Expenses:

For the objectives of this funding opportunity, the following expenses are ineligible to be included in the budget:

- Conference registration fees and travel/expenses related to conferences;
- Travel to collaborative meetings, learned societies or other association meetings;
- Faculty salaries; and
- Faculty Research Time Stipends

11. ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

- Western Research EDI Resources
- NSERC Guide on Integrating EDI in Research
- NSERC Guide for Considering EDI in your Application
- Best Practices in EDI in Research

12. QUESTIONS

Internal competitions are administered by Research Grant Management and Services, Western Research, Room 5150, Support Services Building. Please direct questions to: intgrant@uwo.ca.