NSERC Strategic Projects Grant Program

Tips from a Selection Committee Member

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Assessment Process

External Reviewers

- The “weight” of external review depends somewhat on expertise of committee reviewers, and the amount detail provided in the external review.

Internal Reviewers

- All committee members review all applications.
- There are 3 “main” reviewers for each application, from the committee, who review applications in their area in detail.
- I reviewed 17 applications in detail, of about 55 applications to the committee.
Proposals are ranked in 7 equally-weighted criteria:

1. Originality of the Research
2. Quality of the Research
3. Project Work Plan
4. Quality of the Applicants as Researchers
5. Training Potential
6. Interactions with the Supporting Organizations
7. Benefits to Canada and the Supporting Organizations
Some common weaknesses:

• Too much focus on 1 criterion / imbalance among criteria.

• Ensure the category under which you apply is a good fit.

• Support letter is not strong enough and/or does not show significant interaction with the supporting organization.
Additional Tips

**Budget:**
- Budgets must be well-justified.
- Conference costs can be too high.

**Training Potential:**
- All things being equal, what can help sway the committee is the amount of HQP trained, and the quality of the training.
- Technologists and similar personnel:
  - Ensure their participation in the project is well-justified. Their time commitments will be examined.
  - It is not necessarily a disadvantage supporting technologists (they are HQP too).
Additional Tips

Team Expertise:
• Teams can be a mix of junior and senior faculty; PI need not be senior, but the team needs a leader.

Work Plan:
• Milestones are important markers of progress, and should you be funded, they will be used by NSERC to judge progress.
• Do not begin your list of milestones with a literature review. This should have been conducted prior to the project start.
• The committee will look at the number of hours you commit to the project, as well as other indicators of schedule load. This can reflect on the 7 categories you will be ranked on.
Additional Tips

Originality and Quality of Research:
• Committee will also assess the quality of the impact your research is projected to have.
• Committee likes an element of risk to the research.

Benefits to Canada:
• Not to be underestimated – it is one of 7 equally-weighted criteria.

Your Form 100:
• Should be complete, and do not bury your success.
Questions?