

Ministry of Research and Innovation

Early Researcher Awards (ERA) Program

Round 12 Application Deadline:
Monday, August 22, 2016

Early Researcher Awards (ERA) Program

- What is the Early Researcher Awards Program?
- Deadlines
- Eligibility
- Sources of Matching Funding
- Expenditures
- Review Process
- Evaluation Criteria
- Application Process
- Application Package
- Reference Letters
- Youth Research and Innovation Outreach
- Suggestions
- Contact Information

What is the Early Researcher Awards Program?

- The Early Researcher Awards program (ERA) helps promising, recently-appointed Ontario researchers build their research teams.
- The goal of the program is to improve Ontario's ability to attract and retain the best and brightest research talent in all research disciplines.
- Each award to a leading researcher is a maximum of \$100,000 and must be matched by an additional \$50,000 from the researcher's institution and/or partner organization.
- The funds are to be used over a period of five years to fund eligible expenses for a research team of undergraduates, graduate students, post-doctoral fellows, research assistants, associates, and technicians.
- In addition, up to \$40,000 will be provided by the Ministry to the institution for indirect costs.

Deadlines

Application:

- Notice of Intent (NoI) for each applicant are due by **4 p.m. Friday June 17, 2016.**
- Complete applications must be received or **post-marked** on or before the deadline of **4 p.m. August 22, 2016.**

ERA Eligibility

Researchers

- The ERA program is open on a competitive basis to researchers who are:
 - Full-time faculty or principal investigators who, at the application deadline, are based at an eligible institution;
 - No more than 5 years from having started their independent academic research career, as of July 1, 2016; and
 - No more than 10 years from having completed their first Doctor of Philosophy, Doctor of Veterinary Medicine degree, or Medical Doctor as of July 1, 2016;
 - Not previous recipients of an ERA, or are, or have been a Tier 1 Canada Research Chair.

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

ERA Eligibility

Considerations

- Continued education, required training (e.g. medical training and fellowships), and parental leave are considered eligible interruptions, but **must be** clearly described in **section 9e** of the application form.
- Research associate positions and post-doctoral fellowships are **not** considered eligible interruptions.
- The Ministry generally defines an independent academic research appointment as a position where a researcher is capable of independently publishing (without supervision), supervising, and applying for funding.

Sources of Matching Funding

- Each award to a leading researcher is a maximum of \$100,000 and must be matched by an additional \$50,000 from the researcher's institution and/or a partner organization.
- The institution is responsible for ensuring that the partner contribution is in place at the time the award is made.
- Contributing partners must use the Ministry's template for Matching Letters.
- **The intention of the ERA program is to leverage additional, new funding for early-career researchers.**

Sources of Matching Funding

Eligible Matching Funds:

- Partner contributions must be in cash;
- University scholarships for undergraduates, graduate students and fellowships to post-doctoral fellows on the research team, as well as private or public sector contributions are eligible.

Ineligible Matching Funds:

- Teaching assistantships;
- Start up funds from the institution intended to assist newly-appointed faculty members launch their research careers;
- Awards administered by federal granting councils;
- Specific purpose grants received from Ontario government ministries and agencies, and funds leveraged by such grants;
- Ontario graduate scholarships; and Ontario graduate fellowships.

Expenditures

Eligible Expenditures:

- The award can cover the following expenses for the Research Team:
 - Salaries and benefits;
 - Essential and reasonable travel and expenses related to conferences, workshops or seminars; and
 - Essential and reasonable travel and expenses related directly to offsite research activities.
- The award may also be used for Youth Research and Innovation Outreach activities.
- The amount paid to graduate students and post-doctoral fellows must be in keeping with the levels established by other award programs. Salaries must be commensurate with institutional remuneration scales.
- The Research Team must be based in Ontario.

Note: Funds contributed by the ERA for approved projects are disbursed to the eligible lead research institution. All research supported by ERA funds must be conducted in Ontario at an eligible institution.

Expenditures

Ineligible Expenditures:

- Funds received through this grant cannot be spent on:
 - Salary, benefits or expenses of the researcher;
 - The purchase of supplies or equipment;
 - The operation of equipment and facilities;
 - Salaries or expenses of individuals performing contract research (where the contractor owns the intellectual property);
 - Visiting fellows; and
 - Salaries, benefits or expenses of ineligible team members.

Review Process

The ERA review process includes the following steps:

- 1) Institutions submit Notices of Intent (NoI) on behalf of their researchers;
- 2) Institutions submit complete application packages, including letters of reference;
- 3) Ministry staff review applications for completeness;
- 4) Panel Chairs determine applicant's eligibility;
- 5) Eligible applications are forwarded to peer review panels for an expert review;
- 6) Review panels make recommendations to the Ontario Research Fund (ORF) Advisory Board;
- 7) ORF Advisory Board makes recommendations to the Minister;
- 8) Minister makes final decisions;
- 9) Decisions are communicated to the Vice-President of Research and Institutional Contact of the applicant institution; and
- 10) Panel comments are provided to unsuccessful applicants.

Successful Awards will be contracted in Spring 2017

Review Process

In Round 11 of the program, applications were assigned to one of nine review panels: Arts & Humanities; Energy, Engineering & Emerging Technologies; Environmental & Natural Sciences; Health Systems Research; ICT, Math & Physics; Life Sciences – Clinical; Life Sciences – Non-Clinical; Materials & Advanced Manufacturing; Social Sciences

- 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.

Evaluation Criteria

- Early Researcher Award applications are evaluated based on four weighted criteria; Excellence of the Researcher, Quality of the Research, Development of Research Talent, and Strategic Value to Ontario.
- The applications will be ranked exceptional; excellent; very strong; strong; moderate; or insufficient.

Evaluation Criteria

Excellence of the Researcher (40%)

- 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 based on research plans and letters of reference
- Independence from previous supervisor regarding publication record
- Independent peer-reviewed funding

Evaluation Criteria

Quality of Research (30%)

- Excellence of proposed research
- Originality of proposed research
- Clarity of research proposal
- Relevance of methodology

Evaluation Criteria

Development of Research Talent (20%)

- Development of research knowledge of members of research team
- Skills development of team
- Training is unique and leading edge
- Past experience in HQP training

Evaluation Criteria

Strategic Value for Ontario (10%)

Proposed research program demonstrates potential for strategic value for Ontario based on the Ontario Innovation Agenda, including but not limited to:

- Economic benefits
- Knowledge transfer
- Ability to enhance the province's profile in the global academic community
- Social and/or cultural benefits
- Citizen and/or patient engagement
- Anticipated impact on the following Ontario Innovation Agenda focus areas:
 - bio-economy, clean technologies
 - advanced health technologies
 - digital media and information and communication technologies.

Ontario-China Young Scientist Exchange Program (YSEP)

- **Program Overview:**
 - The purpose of the program is to enhance and support scientific and technological cooperation of early researchers between Ontario and China.
 - Ontario institutions may nominate applicants who specialize in **life sciences, clean-tech** and **ICT** from **winners of the Round 12 of the ERA program**.
 - The Ontario applicants will have the opportunity to visit China to collaborate with researchers for a **two-three week period**.
 - Before applying to YSEP, applicants are required to identify and contact potential host researchers in China and propose a collaborative research project, or a specific activity.
- **Funding provided:**
 - The ministry will provide the successful applicants with: Round-trip economy class airfare from Ontario; and Coverage for overseas insurance during the exchange program.
 - Ministry of Science and Technology (MOST) of China will provide the local transportation, accommodation and daily living expenses during the exchange period.
- **Application:**
 - Ontario's institutions with eligible applicants will receive the invitation to apply for the program early 2017 once Round 12 of the ERA results are available.

Application Process

- The Ministry of Research and Innovation requires institutional research offices to email a Notice of Intent (NoI) for each ERA applicant by **4:00pm Friday, June 17, 2016**.
- The NoI is not binding and will not be assessed, but it is a key part of the application process.
- Institutional research offices are asked to email Nols to:

Awards@mri.gov.on.ca

- Complete application packages for Round 12 including three (3) original letters of reference, and the matching letter(s) must be received by the Ministry or post-marked on or before **4:00pm Monday, August 22, 2016**.

Application Package

Applicants must submit the following to the Ministry by the deadline:

Paper Copy:

- One (1) original signed and **complete** ERA application
 - Includes the Application Form, Proposal and CV
- One (1) copy of the **complete** ERA application
- Three (3) original signed letters of reference, in sealed and signed envelopes

CD or memory stick:

- One (1) electronic document (PDF) of the **complete** application

Reference Letters

- Provide three original signed letters of reference in sealed and signed envelopes, in the accompanying ERA package.
- The letters should address the ERA Evaluation Criteria. It is recommended that referees have access to the applicant's research proposal and full CV.
- One of the reference letters must be from a former supervisor, mentor, collaborator or corporate sponsor familiar with the researcher.
- Two of the reference letters must be **from arm's length sources** (i.e., arm's length referees must not have a conflict of interest by having a personal link with the researcher, or by being, currently, or within the last **five years**, a colleague, a research collaborator or a corporate sponsor of the researcher).
- It is recommended that the **arm's length letters** be from researchers of **international stature** familiar with the researcher's work.

Reference Letters

- In order to keep the letters sealed and confidential, it is recommended that references be asked to send their letter in a sealed and signed envelope clearly marked with “ERA reference for (insert applicant’s name on envelope)” within another envelope addressed to the research office.
Note: Do not have letters sent directly to MRI
- Letters may be ineligible if they are not submitted in a sealed and signed envelope.
- Submit **only** three (3) reference letters. Any letters from referees not identified on the application form will not be considered by the review panel (see section 18 of application form).
- **All original signed letters must be received by the application deadline.**

Youth Research and Innovation Outreach

- Applicants are required to undertake youth outreach activities and may use up to 1% (equivalent to \$1000) of the funding provided by the Ministry.
- Funding provided by the institution and/or partner organization may not be used for youth outreach.
- Activities associated with youth outreach are to be undertaken **during each year of the project.**

Suggestions:

- Past review panels have stressed the importance of:
 - Being actively involved in conducting research that has been supported by peer-reviewed funding (overlap is okay!).
 - Demonstrating academic independence from previous supervisors.
 - Evidence of publishing with students, or student involvement in conference papers.
- ERA panels are multidisciplinary and the application will be reviewed by panel members that are within and outside of the applicant's specific field of research. The content and language of the proposal should be clear and understood by people outside of the applicant's field.
- Applicants are encouraged to link the Proposal to the Research Milestones by describing specific roles and responsibilities of the Research Team.

Appendix C: Researcher's CV Format

- All CV's should be formatted in the following order:

Personal Information

User Profile

Education

Recognitions

Employment History

Research Funding History

Activities

Contributions (required complete a category if applicable)

Presentations

Interview and Media Relations

Publications & Citations

Artistic Performances/Exhibits

Intellectual Property

Other

Contact Information

Tehani Mott
Tehani.Mott@Ontario.ca
416-314-2528

Lucy Su
Lucy.Su@Ontario.ca
416-325-6941