

Guidelines for Reviewing JELF Expressions of Interest

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Acknowledgement: These guidelines are based on and contain some verbatim content from the CFI’s John R. Evans Leaders Fund Guidelines for reviewers – Unaffiliated stream (March 2021).

Intention

These instructions are intended for reviewers who are reviewing JELF expressions of interest submitted to the University of Winnipeg.

About the funder: Canada Foundation for Innovation

Created by the Government of Canada in 1997, the Canada Foundation for Innovation (CFI) strives to build our nation’s capacity to undertake world-class research and technology development to benefit Canadians. Thanks to CFI investment in state-of-the-art facilities and equipment, universities, colleges, research hospitals and non-profit research institutions are attracting and retaining the world’s top talent, training the next generation of researchers, supporting private-sector innovation and creating high-quality jobs that strengthen Canada’s position in today’s knowledge economy.

About the fund: John R. Evans Leaders Fund

The John R. Evans Leaders Fund (JELF) is a critical strategic investment tool designed to help institutions attract and retain the very best of today's and tomorrow's researchers. The JELF enables a select number of an institution's excellent researchers to undertake innovative research by providing them with the foundational research infrastructure required to be or to become leaders in their field. In turn, this enables institutions to remain internationally competitive in areas of research and technology development that are aligned with their strategic priorities.

Eligible Canadian universities receive an allocation of CFI funds commensurate with funding received from the three federal research funding agencies (CIHR, NSERC, SSHRC) over the last three years.

The JELF allocation is for a three-year period. CFI provides the final approval for the use of funds, but UW chooses which projects are allowed to apply for CFI's approval for use of JELF funds.

The University of Winnipeg's use of JELF funds

In 2023, in order to ensure fair review of applications, equitable dispersal of funds, and strategic investment aligned with institutional priorities, UW began to use its JELF allocation using these mechanisms:

1. Streamed call:

- Frequency: annual
- Focus: Streams are natural sciences and engineering (NSE), social sciences and humanities (SSH), health and interdisciplinary.
- Total project cost maximum: \$62 500 or \$125 000 with the larger maximum is provided to a different stream each year.

2. Large call:

- Frequency: once a JELF allocation (once in 3 years)
- Focus: This call does not use a streamed approach. It is up to the discretion of the Associate Vice-President and Vice-President, Research and Innovation (AVP-RI and VP-RI), if this call has a special focus or eligibility requirements.
- Total project cost maximum: variable by up to \$175 000

3. Remainder call:

- Frequency: last year of the JELF allocation (once in 3 years)
- Focus: This call does not use a streamed approach. It is up to the discretion of the AVP-RI and VP-RI if this call has a special focus or eligibility requirements.
- Total project cost maximum: based on whatever funds remain after all other calls have been adjudicated.

Funding breakdown

- CFI: 40% of a project's eligible infrastructure costs
- Research Manitoba: 20-40% of a project's eligible infrastructure costs
- UW: 20-40% of a project's eligible infrastructure costs

Infrastructure Operating Fund (IOF)

CFI contributes to the operation and maintenance costs of funded projects through its Infrastructure Operating Fund (IOF). The IOF support is an additional 30% of the CFI contribution to the funded project.

Role of the assigned Research Office Program Officer

- Communicating JELF calls for expressions of interest to the UW research community
- Helping the UW research community understand application requirements and review process
- Conducting eligibility checks
- Helping recruit and train reviewers to ensure consistency in the application evaluations
- Collecting and collating reviewer ratings and comments
- Scheduling and attending all review meetings
- Drafting the summary of the meeting discussion, documenting the committee's ranking of applications, providing these and any other requested documentation to the Associate Vice-President and Vice-President, Research and Innovation (AVP-RI and VP-RI) to support their decision-making
- Supporting selected applicants in developing full applications to CFI
- Meeting with unselected applicants to provide feedback

Role of JELF expression of interest reviewers

Through their rating, comments, discussion and ranking consensus, reviewers inform the AVP-RI and VP-RI's decision regarding which applications should proceed to full application to CFI. Through their rating and comments, reviewers provide essential feedback to applicant(s) regarding the strengths and weaknesses of their application.

Role of Associate Vice-President and Vice-President, Research and Innovation in JELF expression of interest adjudication

Using the applications, reviewer comments, a summary of the meeting discussion, and the committee's ranking and considering the equitable dispersal of funds and strategic investment aligned with institutional priorities, the AVP-RI and VP-RI decide which applications proceed to full application to CFI.

Applicant eligibility

- Current faculty members with full-time academic appointments
- Recognized innovative leaders or researchers who have demonstrated potential for excellence in the proposed research fields
- Engaged in/embarking on research that is innovative, high quality and meets international standards
- Up to three researchers may be listed on the application and either:
 - Work collaboratively using the same requested infrastructure, or
 - Work independently while sharing the requested infrastructure. For this, ensure justification for the infrastructure be articulated for each researcher in the EOI.

The AVP-RI and VP-RI may choose to add eligibility criteria for a JELF call for an expression of interest in order to improve equity in the dispersal of funds, and alignment with strategic institutional priorities.

Eligible infrastructure projects

- The acquisition or development of research infrastructure to increase research capacity and enable innovative research activities, including workhorses (high usage equipment), and upgrading or replacement of aging infrastructure;
- Research equipment that, while in and of itself is basic, will enable innovative research;
- The construction of a new building or the development of new space in an existing building (e.g. new floors, reconfiguration of existing space) only when new space is essential to house and use the eligible infrastructure requested in the application or when additional space to house and use other eligible infrastructure (i.e. not part of the current application) that is essential for the use of the requested infrastructure.

Expression of interest review process

The objective of the expression of interest review process is to choose which applications should be supported for full application to CFI. Applicants must address specific criteria in their application. Failure to address all of the aspects of the criterion should be treated as a weakness and assessed as such. The application should be the only source of information for the review.

1. Eligibility Check

The assigned Research Office Program Officer checks the eligibility of the applicant(s), project, budget items, and any other relevant aspect of the application. Ineligible applicants, projects, and budget items will be removed. The applicant(s) will be notified of removals and a short rationale will be provided. Removal decisions of the Research Office are final.

During this stage, in consultation with the AVP-RI and VP-RI, the assigned Research Office Program Officer may change the stream of the application. The applicant(s) will be notified if their application changes streams and a short rationale will be provided. Stream decisions of the Research Office are final.

2. Preliminary Assessment

The reviewers must rate, using whole numbers only, the degree to which the application documents meet each criterion using an assessment scale (below) and substantiate the ratings by explaining the strengths and weaknesses perceived for each of the criteria. Rating and comments will be provided to applicants, so reviewers must ensure their comments are respectful and collegial and contain sufficient detail as to be helpful to the applicant(s).

3. Meeting

During the meeting, reviewers will present their preliminary assessments. A general discussion will ensue, focusing on the criteria where there are significant discrepancies among the reviewers' assessments. Ultimately, the committee must reach a consensus on a ranking of applications.

4. Research and Innovation Selection

After the meeting, the applications, the reviewer comments, a summary of the discussion, the committee's ranking of applications, equitable dispersal of funds, and strategic investment aligned with institutional priorities are considered by the AVP-RI and VP-RI and they decide which applications shall proceed to full application to CFI.

Assessment scale

Rating	Definition
5	Application satisfies and significantly exceeds the criterion.
4	Application satisfies the criterion.
3	Application satisfies the criterion, but has a few weaknesses.
2	Application partially satisfies the criterion and has some significant weaknesses.
1	The application does not satisfy the criterion due to major weaknesses.

Assessment criteria

1. **RESEARCH: 20%:** The research activities are innovative, feasible and meet international standards. The research activities are aligned with institutional priorities.
 - 1a. Demonstrate the innovativeness and feasibility of the research activities by positioning them within the national and international context, describing the proposed approach. (10%)
 - 1b. Describe how the research activities relate to the University of Winnipeg Strategic Directions. (10%)
2. **RESEARCHERS: 40%:** The researchers demonstrate excellence and leadership at a level appropriate for the stage of their career and have the expertise/ collaborations to conduct the research activities.
 - 2a. Describe the researchers' track record, including scientific and technical expertise relevant to conduct the research activities. (10%)
 - 2b. Describe the applicant(s)' contributions to the research activities, including how the infrastructure will be used by or benefit researchers within 5 years of their first independent academic position (ECR). (10%)
 - 2c. Describe the benefits to the applicant(s)' research program and long-term objectives. (10%)
 - 2d. Describe the concrete EDI strategies used the design and management of the research team, including the applicant(s), collaborators, users, and HQP*. Do not include demographic information of the research team. (10%)
3. **BUDGET: 5%:** The budget items are necessary and appropriate to conduct the research activities.
 - 3a. Describe each item and justify its need to conduct the research activities. For construction or renovation, provide a description of the space including its location, size and nature. Explain why existing infrastructure within the institution and the region cannot be used to conduct the research activities. (5%)
4. **SUSTAINABILITY: 10%:** There is a feasible and robust plan to ensure the infrastructure will be optimally used and sustainable through tangible and appropriate commitments over its useful life.
 - 4a. Describe the plan to ensure the infrastructure will be optimally used and sustainable. (10%)
5. **BENEFITS: 25%:** The research is likely to generate social, health, environmental and/or economic benefits to Canadians, including better training and improved skills for HQP.
 - 5a. Describe potential socioeconomic benefits to Canadians. (5%)

5b. Describe training and skills for HQP enabled by this application, outlining how these are relevant to academia, industry, or other relevant contexts. (15%)

5c. Describe benefits to UW graduate programs. (5%)

*HQP: highly qualified personnel: includes technicians, research associates, undergraduate students, graduate students and postdoctoral fellows.

Conflict of interest

A conflict of interest is a conflict between a person's duties and responsibilities with regard to the review process, and that person's private, professional, business or public interests. There may be a real, perceived or potential conflict of interest when the reviewer:

- would receive professional or personal benefit resulting from the application being reviewed;
- has a close professional or personal relationship with a candidate;
- has a direct or indirect financial interest in the application being reviewed.

A conflict of interest may be deemed to exist or perceived as such when reviewers:

- are a relative or close friend, or have a personal relationship with the candidates;
- are in a position to gain or lose financially/materially from the funding of the application;
- have had long-standing scientific or personal differences with the candidates;
- are closely professionally affiliated with the candidates, as a result of having in the last two years:
 - been a supervisor or a trainee of the candidates;
 - collaborated, published or shared funding with the candidates, or have plans to do so in the immediate future;
- feel for any reason unable to provide an impartial review of the application.

Disclosure and compliance measures

Any reviewer who becomes aware of a conflict of interest must promptly disclose the conflict to the assigned Research Office Program Officer. The Research Office will determine if it constitutes a conflict of interest and what measures—such as recusal—are required. No reviewer may participate in the review process of an application with which he/she is in conflict of interest. The conflict of interest depends on the role and level of involvement of a reviewer. Such disclosures and compliance measures shall be documented and retained by the Research Office.

Confidentiality

Rarely and only with sufficient and compelling rationale, can reviewers' names can be released at the discretion of the Research Office. Written materials used in the review process are made available to candidates when they are notified of the funding opportunity results.

Reviewers must ensure that:

- all documentation and information that the Research Office entrusts to review committee members is maintained in strict confidence at all times. It must be used only for the purpose for which it was originally collected— namely, to review applications and make funding recommendations as applicable;



- review documentation is stored in a secure manner to prevent unauthorized access. Any loss or theft of the documentation must be reported to the Research Office;
- Reviewers must not contact the candidates for additional information or disclose matters arising from the review process to the candidates.
- Review deliberations are confidential. Comments made by reviewers during the review of applications and the conclusions of the committee’s review must never be discussed or disclosed with individuals not involved in the review process.
- The identity of successful candidates and the details of the awards must remain confidential until a decision is made by the CFI and officially announced to the candidates and the public. The identities of unsuccessful or ineligible candidates are not made public and must not be divulged.

Confirmation

I have read and understood the Guidelines for Reviewing Expressions of Interest. I agree to comply with the requirements of the conflict of interest and confidentiality policies stated above. I understand that any breach of this agreement will result in a review of the matter, with the Research Office reserving the right to take appropriate action including, but not limited to, my removal from serving on current or future review committees.

By signing this form, I also certify that I am not currently ineligible to apply for and/or hold funds from UW, CFI, NSERC, SSHRC, CIHR or any other research or research funding organization worldwide for reasons of breach of policies on responsible conduct of research—such as ethics, integrity or financial management policies.

I agree to take personal responsibility for complying with these requirements.

Name	Date	Signature
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