



Memo re: Implementing a New Mandatory Internal Deadline for External Grants

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Background

Across Canada, research administrators and support staff work with researchers to help facilitate the successful submission of research grants to granting agencies at the federal, provincial, and local levels. Many institutions, as a way to ensure there is enough time for staff to perform reviews of these applications—such as check research/researcher eligibility, ensure project compliance with an external agency, perform content reviews, provide suggestions, and prepare supplementary material before submission—implement an internal deadline that researchers are asked to meet.

At UWinnipeg, the Research Office currently has 4 internal deadlines before the final external deadline set by the external agency:

1. 6 weeks before the external deadline - Optional
 - a. Researchers who prepare their full application by this date have the benefit of the Research Office paying for an external reviewer/writer to support their application.
2. 4 weeks before the external deadline – Optional
 - a. Researchers who prepare their full application by this date have the benefit of having their application reviewed by a peer at UWinnipeg who has been successful in applying to the agency they are applying to.
3. 3 weeks before the external deadline – Optional
 - a. Researchers who prepare their full application by this date have the benefit of having their application reviewed by the Program Officer, EDI/AR/D to determine how the researcher can best integrate EDI principles into their grant.
4. 2 weeks before the external deadline – Mandatory
 - a. Researchers are asked to submit their final application by this date, but Program Officers are often able to be flexible on a case-by-case if researchers need more time or can only provide a partly-completed application.

While our office provides a number of opportunities for researchers to plan ahead, including a new (to be announced) plan to provide funding for graduate students to be hired and matched with researchers to help with writing grants, there are times when some researchers disregard all deadlines. It is important to note that the majority of researchers do respect these deadlines, but there are some outliers who repeatedly do not, forcing staff to work overtime to accommodate unplanned submissions at the last minute. This often also means that the institution is obligated, via research administrators, to submit applications that are often not well prepared and/or have not been given time for institutional oversight to ensure there are no issues. At times, it also puts pressure on staff to manage new funder platforms that may require additional steps that are not possible last minute. It is also an equity issue, where staff are obligated to dedicate extra time and energy to a researcher who pushes to become a priority without notice when others have followed the guidelines also deserve support from staff. Ultimately, the practice of not enforcing a strict internal deadline leads to the decline of staff morale, increased stressed levels and stress leaves, and cultivating a culture of lack of respect for research administrators on campus.

New Administrative Change

To address these concerns, the Research Office is instituting a **new additional mandatory internal deadline of 3 business days before an external deadline, effective November 1, 2023**. This would require researchers to submit a completed grant application to a Program Officer in the Research Office by this new deadline, regardless as to whether notice has been given to staff of the intent to apply. If researchers cannot meet this deadline, the Research Office would not agree to sign off on and/or not forward an application to an external agency.

While this new deadline would be strict, there would be times that the VPRI can make some exceptions in exceptional circumstances. Some examples of exceptions include:

- Unexpected illness
- Unexpected family issues, including an unexpected death in the family
- Documented issues with the portal/application system
- Early-Career Researchers who are unfamiliar with the application systems or requirements

It would be required that researchers get in touch with the Research Office staff immediately if they are faced with an exceptional circumstance which would delay their ability to meet this deadline.

This would be instituted for all external grants, including but not limited to those submitted to:

- Tri-Agency funders (SSHRC, NSERC, CIHR)
- Federal funders (CFI, Governmental Departments, National Organizations such as CMHC, CSA, Mitacs, Global Affairs Canada, etc.)
- Provincial funders (Research Manitoba, MMSF, Governmental Departments, etc.)
- Local funders (Winnipeg Foundation, etc.)