

Ministry of Research and Innovation

Early Researcher Award (ERA) Program

**Round 6 NOI Deadline:
Friday, October 2, 2009**

**Round 6 Application Deadline:
Thursday, November 12, 2009**

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Early Researcher Award (ERA) Program

- What is the Early Researcher Award Program?
- What's New?
- ERA Eligibility
- Sources of Matching Funding
- Evaluation Criteria
- Reference Letters
- ERA Application & Evaluation Process
- Youth Research and Innovation Outreach
- Key Elements of a Competitive Application
- When is it Premature to Apply to ERA?

What is the Early Researcher Award Program?

- The Early Researcher Award program (ERA) helps promising, recently-appointed Ontario researchers build their research teams of undergraduates, graduate students, post-doctoral fellows, research assistants, associates and technicians.
- 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.
- ERAs are worth up to \$100,000, to be matched on a 2:1 basis by the research institution and/or private sector partner, so that up to \$150,000 is available to cover the eligible expenses of the research team.
- In addition, the Ministry provides the institution with up to \$40,000 for indirect costs.

What is the Early Research Award program? Cont'd.

- **Eligible Expenses:**
 - ✓ Include the salaries and benefits, and travel expenses related to conferences, workshops, seminars and offsite research activities for undergraduates, graduate students, research assistants, associates, post-doctoral fellows, and technicians carrying out the research.
 - ✓ Youth research and innovation outreach activities (*see slide 17*).
- **Ineligible Expenses:**
 - ✗ Funds are not to be used for: salary, benefits or expenses for the researcher or a visiting fellow; the purchase of supplies or equipment; the operation of equipment and facilities; and salaries or expenses of individuals performing contract research.

What's New?

- Eligible Applicant:
 - *Independent academic research appointment* defined “as a position where a researcher from an eligible institution is capable of independently publishing, supervising, and applying for funding”.
- Research Team Members:
 - Undergraduate students and technicians were added to the list.
- Application:
 - Applications must be received or **post-marked** on or before the deadline of November 12, 2009.
 - References excluded from the 5 page limit for the research proposal.
 - Applicants are allowed to submit a full CV i.e. removal of a 3 page limit.
 - An expanded section 9 allows the Applicant to provide the review panel with detailed explanations for career interruptions/delays.
 - No longer required Appendix A: Career Summary Sheet.
 - Ministry only requires one signed original plus 4 copies **not** 8 copies of the application.

What's New?

- One CD or memory stick of each application containing a PDF of the following items in this order:
 - Letter from institution
 - Matching fund letter
 - Application form
 - Budget form- Appendix A
 - Proposed Research (section 8b)
 - Research Productivity and Recognition (section 14)

ERA Eligibility

- 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 five years from having started their independent academic research career, as of **July 1, 2009**; and
 - ✓ No more than ten years from having completed their first Doctor of Philosophy, Medical Doctor or Doctor of Veterinary Medicine degree, as of **July 1, 2009**; and
 - ✓ Not previous recipients of an ERA, Premier's Research Excellence Award, Premier's Discovery Award or are or have been a Tier 1 Canada Research Chair.

ERA Eligibility Cont'd

- To be competitive researchers are encouraged to be actively involved in conducting research that has been supported by peer-reviewed funding and academic independence from previous supervisors demonstrated.
- Researchers who are not successful may submit an application, in a later competition, providing they continue to meet **all eligibility requirements**.

ERA Eligibility Cont'd

- The following institutions may submit applications on behalf of eligible researchers:
 - ✓ Ontario's publicly-assisted universities;
 - ✓ Ontario's colleges of applied arts and technology;
 - ✓ Ontario's research hospitals; and
 - ✓ Not-for-profit research institutes associated with an Ontario university or research hospital, excluding those funded primarily by business, industry or federal and provincial governments.

Sources of Matching Funding

- Eligible:
 - ✓ Candidates must demonstrate the ability to attract additional funding on a 2:1 basis from the research institution and/or a private sector funding partner. Partner contributions must be in cash. All funding must be used to cover eligible expenses for the research team.
 - ✓ University scholarships to undergraduates, graduate students and post doctoral fellowships on the research team, as well as private sector contributions, are eligible as matching funds.
- Ineligible:
 - ✗ Teaching assistantships; start-up funds; awards administered by the federal granting councils; specific purpose grants received from Ontario government ministries and agencies, and the funds leveraged by such grants; Ontario graduate scholarships, and Ontario Graduate fellowships are not eligible partner contributions.

Evaluation Criteria

- ERA is a discretionary, non-entitlement program. Funding will be awarded on a competitive basis, and applications will be judged according to the following criteria:
 - ✓ **Excellence of the Researcher:**
 - Researcher's accomplishments based on academic and employment record, research grants and awards received, publications and other examples of research productivity;
 - Researcher's current standing and potential for excellence in the research field based on research plans and letters of reference;
 - Demonstrated independence from previous supervisor regarding publication; and
 - Demonstrated independent peer-reviewed funding.
 - ✓ **Quality of the Research:**
 - Excellence and originality of the proposed research; and
 - Clarity of research proposal and relevance of methodology.

Evaluation Criteria Cont'd

✓ **Development of Research Talent:**

- Development of research knowledge and skills based on the training plan for members of the research team, as well as past experience.

✓ **Strategic Value to Ontario:**

- Applicants from all disciplines are encouraged to apply and should demonstrate that the anticipated research results are of strategic value to Ontario.
- Strategic value includes but is not limited to the potential for:
 - Economic benefit
 - Social and/or cultural benefit;
 - Knowledge transfer;
 - Ability to enhance the province's profile in the global academic community; and
 - Anticipated impact on bio-economy and clean technologies, advanced health technologies, pharmaceutical research and manufacturing, and digital media and information and communication technologies.

Reference Letters

- Provide three original signed letters of reference in signed and sealed envelopes.
- **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.
- The letters should address:
 - ✓ the excellence and promise of the researcher in relation to his/her peer group; and
 - ✓ the excellence, importance and potential impact of the research.
- All original signed letters must be received by the application deadline. Letters received from referees other than those listed will not be forwarded for review.
- ***Note: It is helpful to provide referees with your CV, research plan, and background material on the ERA Program.***

Notice of Intent

- Institutional research offices must submit by e-mail a copy of each Applicant's Notice of Intent (NOI) to the Ministry on or before **4 pm Friday, October 2, 2009**.
- The NOI is not binding and will not be assessed by the Ministry but it is an important part of the application process.
- The NOI allows the Ministry to commence the selection of appropriate panel reviewers.
- Use Microsoft Word format.

Application Package

- The Application Package must contain the following:
 - ✓ One signed original plus four copies of the completed application;
 - ✓ Three original letters of reference, in envelopes signed and sealed by the referees;
 - ✓ A signed letter from the institution, and where applicable from private sector partner(s), confirming the matching funds; and
 - ✓ One CD or memory stick of each application.

ERA Application & Evaluation Process

- Round 6 deadline – received or post-marked on or before **4:00 pm Thursday, November 12, 2009.**
- Review Process:
 - 1) Ministry staff reviews applications for completeness;
 - 2) Panel of Chairs review applicant's eligibility;
 - 3) Eligible applications forwarded to peer review panels for an expert review;
 - 4) Review panels make recommendations to the Ontario Research Fund (ORF) Advisory Board;
 - 5) ORF Advisory Board makes recommendations to the Minister;
 - 6) Minister makes final decisions;
 - 7) Applicant Institutions are notified of the decisions; and
 - 8) Feedback is provided to the applicant's institution in the form of a letter with panel comments.

Note: There is no appeal of the decisions including decisions regarding the eligibility of the application.

Youth Research and Innovation Outreach

- Applicants are required to undertake annual youth research and innovation outreach activities and may use up to 1% (equivalent to \$1000) of the funding provided by the Ministry.
- Applicants are encouraged to include in their research plans:
 - Face-to-face contact between youth and researchers;
 - Hands-on research and innovation experiences;
 - Mentorship of youth; and
 - Development of experiments or research projects with youth.
- The primary target audience is high school students as they are most receptive to in-depth mentorship experiences. Researchers can:
 - Engage youth audiences, as well as educators and the general public, both on-campus and in the community;
 - Expand current outreach activities, or start new initiatives that are free to youth and the public;
 - Partner with other researchers to undertake a broader outreach initiative;
 - Participate in outreach activities operated by other organizations, such as science awareness organizations; and
 - Involve undergraduate and graduate students in outreach program design and delivery.

Youth Research and Innovation

Outreach Cont'd

- Eligible Expenses for Youth Outreach:
 - ✓ The costs of coordinating, developing and delivering youth outreach activities such as speaking opportunities, lecture series, workshops and demonstrations, student competitions and lab mentorships; and
 - ✓ Consumable supplies and the development of working models.
- Ineligible Expenses for Youth Outreach:
 - ✗ Expenses paid to a third party to coordinate, develop or deliver youth outreach activities;
 - ✗ The development of magazines, books, curriculum documents, courses or multi-media, including new websites;
 - ✗ The purchase of commercially available equipment, such as computers or software, or to stage conferences; or
 - ✗ Honoraria or salaries for high school student co-operative education or summer high school student positions.
- Funding provided by the partner institution and/or industry may not be used for youth outreach.
- All project activities are to be free to youth and the general public.

Key Elements of a Competitive Application

- Have demonstrated **above average** performance relative to your peer group in your discipline.
- Research plan is clear, **project-focused** with realistic objectives and represents an **original approach to an important research area**.
- Reference letters convey referees' enthusiasm about you as a researcher and your research.
- **Follow the instructions.**

When is it Premature to Apply to ERA?

- Limited experience and chance to demonstrate potential.
- Only have start-up funding.
- Current or recent research activities remain closely linked to former supervisor (Ph.D. or post-doc).
- Difficulty in obtaining strong arm's length letters of reference.
- No funding from the federal granting councils.

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