

The following questions and answers were transcribed during the NSERC Discovery Horizons webinar on Thursday, June 2, 2022.

## **Interdisciplinarity and Competition Criteria**

### **Interdisciplinarity**

**Q: Can you explain in more detail the difference between inseparable approaches and which ones could be evaluated separately. Can you give some example?**

A: We cannot give specific examples, since this is a broad competition. One example would be misleading. If the Discovery Horizons could be separate projects, where each is within its own discipline, it would not be eligible. We need different disciplines working together throughout the project.

**Q: Could you confirm that for Discovery Horizons, it asks for using CIHR or SSHRC principles to address NSE questions/problems?**

A: The main area of research should be the NSE, but are looking for SSH and health aspects to help answer those questions.

**Q: Do you know how many of the 842 LOIs last year were excluded for not being interdisciplinary, but focused in the NSE?**

A: We don't have that number. We did see some of them. We were focused on those that were being invited to the full application stage. We noticed some that were solely in the NSE and not eligible.

### **Discovery Grant versus Discovery Horizons**

**Q: How much of overlap is acceptable for applicants holding a Discovery Grant that want to apply for Horizons too?**

A: Research activities should not overlap, which would disqualify the proposal.

**Q: Should the proposal focus on a single specific interdisciplinary project rather than a program like the Discovery Grant?**

A: Is it reasonable to do all the work in the time range you are proposing? It has to be feasible within that time range. Discovery Grant is meant to span beyond the 5 years, while Horizons is a time-limited project.

**Q: Does this have to be similar to discovery type grants where the focus is on exploratory/discovery research and less on translational research?**

A: Both Discovery Grant and Horizons welcome fundamental and applied research.

**Q: NSERC Discovery Grant has several evaluation groups that are close to the interface with CIHR (Genes/Cell and Biological systems); can you distinguish between these and DH?**

A: For 1501 and 1502, they are close. But for Discovery Grant, you need to be within those two and not have health. But for Horizons, we are looking at the interface with CIHR. E.g. if submitted under 1501/1502 and rejected because of overlap with other agencies, Horizons might be a better fit.

### **Selecting the appropriate agency/program**

**Q: What is the difference between the Tri-Agency interdisciplinary review committee vs. a joint-review by NSERC Discovery Grant Evaluation group? I'm not familiar with the latter.**

A: For the Tri-Agency Interdisciplinary Peer Review (TAIPR) Committee, they review applications that span across 2 of the 3 tri-agencies. Evaluation Groups have the ability to review interdisciplinary projects within NSERC. For example, if you are interdisciplinarity across engineering and computer science, those

are interdisciplinary projects that can be reviewed within the Discovery Grant program, and not eligible for Horizons. Horizons must include aspects of health, wellness, social sciences, and/or humanities. The interdisciplinarity cannot be teased out of Horizons projects

**Q: What is the main difference between NSERC Discovery Horizons and NFRF grant as both are encouraging interdisciplinary project?**

A: The major difference is the need to show high-risk, high-reward. Horizons is ok with discovery research, the type similar to what is funded in Discovery Grants, sound and fundamental/applied research. High-risk, high-reward is not required.

**Q: Can there be overlap between TAIPR applications and NFRF applications? Both competitions are open right now.**

A: There can be overlap, but they cannot be the same. As per the requirements, applicants are not allowed to submit same/very similar/almost identical applications to more than one agency.

**Q: Which Research Council is best suited for Higher Education Pedagogical Research? e.g. Mathematics Education.**

A: That would be SSHRC, who fund education research. Science education research is suitable for TAIPR, but apply thru SSHRC Insight Grant.

**Q: Is Scholarship of Teaching and Learning Projects suited for the NSERC Discovery Horizons.**

A: SSHRC is the appropriate agency for that.

#### Selection Criteria

**Q: Could you please clarify if EDI needs to be addressed in LOI? If so, in which section?**

A: That is not in the criteria of the LOI stage.

**Q: What are the weights of the evaluation criteria (novelty, impact, interdisciplinarity, etc.)?**

A: LOI stage, 4 criteria have equal weight.

At the full application stage, they aren't equally weighted

**Q: How will the LOIs be evaluated? Are they sent out for peer review or NSERC decides which LOIs will progress to the full app stage?**

A: NSERC Peer review committee evaluating based on criteria on website.

#### Review

##### Committee Structure

**Q: Is the composition of the evaluation committee known for the Discovery Horizons?**

A: The list from last year will be released very soon on the committee website. This is published after the peer review.

**Q: I am a bit confused about whether these LOIs will be evaluated by the TAIPR committee or an NSERC committee?**

A: LOI is reviewed by NSERC-only committee, and those invited to applications go to TAIPR. If you apply through SSHRC Insight Grant or CIHR Project Grant, these go directly to the TAIPR committee. Choosing which program to apply to depends on the dominant area of research.

**Q: Do the specialists reviewing the LOIs have some expertise outside of NSERC relevant research?**

A: Yes. We have been recruiting people with expertise across NSE, and outside NSERC.

**Q: How do faculty get on this TAIPR committee? Is there a form to fill out to request being on the committee?**

A: If you would like volunteer, we invite you to reach out to [Horizons@nserc.crsng.gc.ca](mailto:Horizons@nserc.crsng.gc.ca) email.

**Q: Should the descriptions of the project be written at a level for an expert or for a more general audience? That is, how close are the experts expecting?**

A: The TAIPR committee relies broad experience within the three agencies. And the LOI stage has reviewers in a field. We rely a lot on the external reviewers. It is important that the application be tailored to the reviewers on the committee. For an interdisciplinary committee, there is a wide range of expertise. It shouldn't be tailored to experts within an area.

### **Review Process**

**Q: What is the overall rating (high, medium, low) that LOIs must have to advance considering the different criteria?**

A: Last year, only those that rated high in all criteria advanced.

**Q: Are ECRs, either as the primary applicant or co-app, considered in the evaluation process? And if so, how?**

A: They are not. They are all welcome to be applicants or co-applicants, but there is no preference given to any groups.

Q: For last years Horizon LOI, no feedback was provided as to why the LOI was not successful. It would have been nice, in order to improve the LOI for this year.

A: Because of the volume received, it wasn't feasible to give feedback. Likely the same this year.

Q: Why do applications not go straight to the TAIPR committee like the SSHRC/CIHR competitions then the submission can also be Sept as they are?

A: The reasons why we are having a two-stage competition has something to do with the number of applications we receive. For Horizons, it is a *pilot-within-a-pilot*, and was open to all, the decision was made to have the LOI phase to deal with the volume of applications. But this may change in the future.

### **Competition Details**

#### **Applicants/Team composition**

**Q: Are there disadvantages to not having any co-applicants? e.g., a sole PI applying?**

A: Absolutely not. All are welcome.

**Q: Should all applicants be at Canadian institutions, or are international collaborations permitted?**

A: If there is a need to include international collaborations, then it is eligible. But they need to be eligible to hold NSERC funding. If they are not eligible, they can be added as collaborators and not co-applicants

**Q: Do collaborators have to be eligible to hold NSERC grants?**

A: No

**Q: Is it possible for 1 applicant to be part of two LOIs? If both LOIs are invited for a full application, this applicant is replaced by another applicant on 1?**

A: You cannot have your name on two LOIs, at the same time.

**Q: If a researcher does not do NSE related work (but in social sciences) and they will focus on NSE research for this project, can they be a co-applicant?**

A: Yes

**Q: How important it is to identify collaborators at the LOI stage?**

A: That depends on if it helps demonstrate one of the criteria at the LOI stage. If it does, then yes. But is it absolutely necessary? No. You can add them after the LOI stage.

**Q: Can you provide more details about what criteria a collaborator from outside NSE must meet?**

A: Collaborator can be anyone (international, community based focused, NGOs) who is contributing to the research. Co-applicant must be able to hold research funds. Postdocs cannot be a collaborator if they are supervised by the applicant/co-applicant; in that case they are HQP.

**Q: Does the co-applicant have to be a recipient of an NSERC grant when they apply?**

A: No.

#### **Success rates**

**Q: What % of applicants are selected at the LOI stage to move on to the full application stage?**

A: For the first competition, we received 842 LOIs. Invited over 60, and received 55 full applications.

**Q: What has been the success rate in the last application round?**

A: 10/55

**Q: 10 successful projects out of 842 LOIs seems like a very low success rate. Can you comment on this and how does it compare to the SSHRC and CIHR intakes?**

A: Yes, it was a two-stage competition and had a low success rate. The intakes were different. SSHRC and CIHR had much lower intakes. 20 funded through TAIPR, 3 from Project Grant, 7 from Insight Grant and 10 from Horizons. Insight Grant received less full applications than Horizons.

**Q: Does NSERC have an idea of how many LOIs will be accepted?**

A: The number of LOIs invited will be invited in line with the number of applications we can fund. Likely 60 something.

#### **CV**

**Q: What is a narrative style CV?**

A: As opposed to the CCV where you enter a list of information (publications, etc.), that won't be a necessity here. We are not expecting to see a list of publications, but rather key publications that would be of interest for the proposed research activities.

Horizons is a test of the use of a narrative-style CV. This allows people to provide more context of their contributions, and focus on the impact and quality of contributions, rather than a list.

Instructions will be on the website. Similar to other sections in other NSERC programs (e.g. past contributions to HQP, Most Significant Contributions).

**Q: Do you need CV for the LOI?**

A: No

**Q: Is a narrative CCV like a Form 100 or 100A?**

A: Yes and no. Some aspects of F100 that were narrative, and those might show up on the narrative CV.

**Q: Why not using the CCV like most other grants?!**

A: This is a pilot to test out a new method of CVs, partly in response to comments about CCV.

**Q: Can we still submit a CCV with an impact statement (instead of a narrative CV)?**

A: There will be instructions posted at the full application stage

**Q: Will the new CV attachment be part of the main application now and eliminate the CV locking/finalizing problem on submission to the Research Office?**

A: Changing CV type won't resolve that, but we are trying to resolve the problems from last year.

**Q: Was the decision to move away from CCV and to the narrative style CV to accommodate a more diverse range of experiences in career interruptions and continuity?**

A: That is one of the advantages of narrative style CVs.

#### **Budget**

**Q: Are collaborators considered for the amount of \$\$ granted, if the application becomes successful?**

A: No. Collaborators do not have access to funds. Only applicants and co-applicants.

**Q: For the Discovery Grant, the amount awarded to successful grants only vaguely correlates with what is requested. Is it the same for Horizons?**

A: No. Discovery Grant uses the binning system. In Horizons, applications are rated but are funded based on the requested budget. They can be instances where the committee can request a change to the budget.

**Q: Where budgets revised/reduced for projects that were successful/funded?**

A: In general, we try to fund the requested amount. Committees may make a recommendation to remove items, if found not to be appropriate.

**Q: Is there a minimum duration for NSERC Horizon?**

A: No. We've seen a range from 3-5 years, nothing shorter. But there is no minimum.

**Q: Is the \$50K the minimum amount that can be requested per year? Or are lower amounts acceptable?**

A: It's up to \$50K, so you can ask for lower amounts. But it depends on the size of your team. No minimum, and can vary by year.

#### **General questions**

**Q: Does NSERC track the success rate of women and ECR who apply, like CIHR?**

A: We know how many were successful or not.

**Q: Do we have access to last year's list of Discovery Horizons grants recipients?**

A: It will be publicly announced in the coming weeks, but the date is not known. Soon.

**Q: Is there any information that can't change between LOI and application stage?**

A: You can add/remove applicants and co-applicants. But they are two different documents, so there are changes to be expected. But the objective and aims should be the same, as is the interdisciplinarity of it.

**Q: When will LOI applicants be notified about success/failure?**

A: Mid-August

**Q: The funding period is up to 5 years. Does the LOI need to reflect that time horizon in proposed summary/objectives?**

A: Not necessarily. In the LOI you need to focus on the questions asked (e.g. interdisciplinarity). The length of the project is not necessary at the LOI stage, but at the full application stage.

**Q: Does the application also have the EDI component?**

A: Yes. This is across all NSERC programs, in the application stage.

**Q: Does NSERC have a resource defining what is "in NSE"? Some disciplines span agencies (e.g., biomedical sciences/engineering, design)**

A: [https://science.gc.ca/eic/site/063.nsf/eng/h\\_FEE7261A.html?OpenDocument](https://science.gc.ca/eic/site/063.nsf/eng/h_FEE7261A.html?OpenDocument)  
[https://www.nserc-crsng.gc.ca/nserc-crsng/policies-politiques/addendum-addenda\\_eng.asp](https://www.nserc-crsng.gc.ca/nserc-crsng/policies-politiques/addendum-addenda_eng.asp)

**Q: Can you change the title submitted in the LOI when you submit the full application?**

A: The system will allow you to change it. Nothing against it. As long as the research activities in the LOI are in the full application.

**Q: Clearly there is great uptake for Interdisciplinarity if you had 842 LOIs - yet you funded only 10 - why is there not more funding allocated?**

A: We were pleased at the popularity last year. This is in the pilot stage, so there is limited funding available. There is a commitment to review the program and TAIPR, and make decisions on how they continue in the future. For now, we are limited. Keep that in mind.

**Q: Will researcher delays (e.g. COVID, medical, etc.) be taken into consideration like in the DG applications?**

A: There is a section to discuss delays, within the application. We invite you to explain impact. We don't explain researchers to divulge medical/personal information. It is sufficient to say your research was impacted, and discuss the impact.

**Q: Do you need to have preliminary results?**

A: Not necessarily. Horizons is in the Discovery suite, so it can be exploratory

**Q: Considering the character limits of the LOI, do we need to use references?**

A: No need for an exhaustive list. A few papers could be listed, but it isn't needed.

**Q: Why not reduce fund duration and size and select more applications? What's the rationale behind it?**

A: That is the rationale why we moved to the change to funding/size of team. But this is a pilot year.

**Q: You mentioned this was a pilot program; how many years will the program be piloted? Is there the potential to increase future funding given the high demand?**

A: We hope so. We don't know how long it is a pilot program.

**Q: Is there any information that can't change between LOI and application stage?**

A: If your proposed research varies widely between the LOI and application, we caution against that. If they change direction substantially, then they will not fare well at the full application stage.

**Q: Is it advantageous to involve indigenous people and communities to get NSERC Discovery Horizon grant?**

A: No. We simply state that research involving indigenous people and communities is encouraged, but not given an advantage.

**Q: Is there a specific number of successful LOIs per institution/province/ECRs/underrepresented groups, etc.?**

A: No. Everyone is welcome. There is no set number.