

1. **Interdisciplinarity** (refer to the “Interdisciplinarity Definition & Explanations” SPARC resource for details, available on [SPARC’s NFRF CWL Resources webpage](#))
 - *Ensure that interdisciplinarity (crossing over at least two Tri-Councils, per NFRF definition) comes across as a **constitutive and necessary feature of the proposed project, team composition and mentorship approach.***
 - *Is interdisciplinarity a **core facet** or is it simply an ‘add-on’? (It should be the former.)*

TIPS: (a) Integrate interdisciplinarity into the project (i.e., project design) from the start. (b) Reframe your research question to demonstrate how your project crosses disciplines (i.e., Tri-Council mandates) to provide impact. Use all team members, including Collaborators, to brainstorm/consider integrated research questions that are well outside peoples’ usual comfort zones. (c) Highlight novel interdisciplinary techniques instead of jargon/buzzwords.

NOTE: Social scientists on the panels were wary of instances in which it seemed as though the ‘social science component’ was tacked on, rather than integral to the conceptualization of the project.
 - *Could this project be **funded by one Tri-Council**? (If yes, it’s not eligible for NFRF funding.)*

TIPS: (a) Demonstrate how the nature of the problem itself requires a multi-pronged, interdisciplinary approach for transformative success. (b) Describe how the multi-faceted nature of the problem/challenge requires a unique team comprised of world-leading experts from a range of different disciplines that otherwise would have not come together.
 - *Is this a **group of projects** that could each be funded by a different Tri-Council? (If yes, it’s ineligible.)*

TIP: Propose integrated studies/methods which require cross-Tri-Council funding rather than siloed ‘sub-projects’ which each separately align with an individual Tri-Council.
 - *Purposefully communicate your concept to the multidisciplinary review panel (composed of national and international members with broad expertise) using **accessible examples.***

TIP: Be cognizant of the fact that reviewers from outside your discipline may not understand the complexity and novelty of your proposal. As such, craft statements which clearly and simply describe the challenging, innovative and novel elements of the proposed work to avoid having your project judged as less impressive or innovative simply because reviewers don’t understand the challenges and innovations you’re proposing.
 - *Emphasize how the novelty and uniqueness of your proposal requires NFRF Transformation funding, specifically because its **complexity (i.e., interdisciplinarity) exceeds** existing individual Tri-Council competition criteria and their standards of risk-tolerance.*

TIP: For proposals that risk veering heavily towards a single Tri-Council mandate, articulate how the proposed research and related research question(s) is/are also firmly rooted in the mandate of (at least) a second Tri-Council.
2. **Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (including Early Career Researchers)**
 - ECR Section
 - *Describe how the opportunity presented by participating in/contributing to the project will **benefit ECR career development** (similar to benefits which would be accrued by PDFs and graduate trainees).*
 - *Demonstrate NPI/Co-PI/team commitment to meaningful engagement and mentorship to **benefit the careers of ECR team members.***

TIP: Provide details of your proposed mentorship/leadership development structure, referencing your high-level governance/management structure as needed.

NOTE: Full details of ‘team coordination/integration’ and ‘management plans’ are not formally required until the Full Application stage; however, you can lay some groundwork in this section at the LOI stage.
 - EDI Section
 - *Speak meaningfully as to how EDI considerations have been/will be **realistically integrated/implemented** throughout the project – in team composition, in training, mentoring and education, in stakeholder engagement/participation, etc.*

Please do not share beyond UBC community, thank you.

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TIPS: (a) Consider EDI when framing the research question(s). **(b)** Include stakeholder communities, individuals with lived experience and/or end users in project conception and design.

- *Demonstrate your ‘EDI fluency’ and consider **new ways of addressing/incorporating** EDI principles.*

TIPS: (a) Build on the UBC details and hyperlinks provided in the SPARC-annotated NFRF Best Practices in EDI in Research Guide (available on [SPARC’s NFRF CWL Resources webpage](#)) to articulate the EDI challenges in your research environment. **(b)** Refer to the “EDI Overview, Observations & Prompts” SPARC resource (available on [SPARC’s NFRF CWL Resources webpage](#)) for further ideas. **(c)** Brainstorm ideas with team members/colleagues. **(d)** Receive SPARC feedback on your well-developed draft LOI (or work with your local grant support) between Monday, December 6 and Friday, December 17.

- *Be aware that some teams may **lack diversity because of the homogeneity** of the research field(s).*

TIPS: (a) Make sure you’ve including enough fields to be interdisciplinary. **(b)** Acknowledge the recognized lack of diversity, outline how you will educate yourself about the barriers that have generated this disparity, then describe your plan to address these barriers.

- *If appropriate, ensure that EDI-relevant elements are embedded into the research questions and design.*
- *Demonstrate that **EDI considerations are central** to your governance/management plans.*

TIP: Include statements about how your project governance structure/management plan will ensure that EDI considerations are integral to project development and delivery.

NOTE: Full details of ‘team coordination/integration’ and ‘management plans’ are not formally required until the Full Application stage; however, you can lay some groundwork in this section at the LOI stage.

3. High Risk

- *Consider high risk in terms of the **novelty of your approach** (a required section in the 10-page Research Proposal).*

TIPS: (a) Explain how your proposed project, approach and assembled expertise are **novel** rather than simply an extension of existing approaches or the next logical step in an established line of inquiry that is fundable through conventional channels. **(b)** Describe how your undertaking is positioned/designed to be truly transformative. **(c)** Make your project’s novelty and world-leading elements clear with summary statements that are accessible to the multidisciplinary review panels.

- *Keep the “**high risk/high reward**” proposition central to your proposal (even though NFRF separates them).*

TIPS: (a) Here, highlight the high risk dimension of the proposed project – that the effort constitutes a leap rather than an incremental step in the status quo (e.g., “we’re taking a risk/chance that has the potential to lead to higher reward if successful”).

- *High risk is often associated with low feasibility, yet feasibility is another key criterion being assessed, so there’s an **inherent challenge** in creating a project which sufficiently addresses both criteria.*

TIPS: (a) Connect the high risk of your project back to its capacity for real and significant transformation. **(b)** Describe your project challenge as unanswerable without an interdisciplinary approach, and a budget and timeline of the scale provided by this funding opportunity. **(c)** Consider how this Transformation funding enables your team to do something that you wouldn’t otherwise be able to do (e.g., pursue novel research questions, partner with unexpected new collaborators). **(d)** Demonstrate why the team you’ve assembled is the ideal one to successfully address this challenge.

4. High Reward

- *Consider high reward in terms of the **anticipated transformation/change/impact of your project** (a required section in the 10-page Research Proposal).*

TIP: Describe how and why your project is transformative?

- *Why should your project be one of the approximately six projects funded across Canada?*

TIPS: (a) Highlight how, at the end of six years, Canada will be considered world-leading in the proposed interdisciplinary area of research. **(b)** If relevant, describe how the results will have a global impact.

- *Clearly articulate short-, medium- and long-term project goals.*
TIPS: **(a)** Demonstrate that you will have measurable outcomes in six years. **(b)** Consider defining your long-term goals in terms of how you plan to extrapolate your project deliverables/process. **(c)** Consider identifying the challenges associated with implementing research outcomes and overcoming them with integrated team members who can move these finding into the appropriate sector/end user. **(d)** Describe the significant impact of your project results (e.g., greatly improves quality of life for a patient/family/community population). **(e)** Present a clear plan for measuring your research outcomes and their impact.
- *Keep the “high risk/high reward” proposition central to your proposal (even though NFRF separates them).*
TIPS: **(a)** Here, highlight the high reward – that the project aims to shift/disrupt a paradigm within society/government, will lead to a potential breakthrough, has the potential to significantly alter/improve current practices and/or impact large and diverse communities and/or numerous fields/applications (e.g., “we will establish Canada as world leader in this specific area”). **(b)** Consider whether there are stories, topics, etc. related to your project which are already in the public domain and may influence panel discussion pertaining to high reward. If there are potential ‘positive influencers’, can you leverage them in your application? If the opposite situation exists, be sure to address these issues directly so that you remain in control of your narrative.

5. Feasibility

- *Consider feasibility in terms of the **plan and the ability of your team to execute the activities**.*
TIPS: **(a)** Discuss potential barriers to uptake which might prevent implementation/integration of your research findings and outline your plans for addressing/mitigating these challenges. **(b)** Provide high-level project/team governance details to ensure feasibility.
NOTES: **(a)** Feasibility is a required section in the 10-page Research Proposal and also incorporates GBA+, as relevant to the proposed project. **(b)** Full details of governance/management plans are not formally required until the Full Application stage; however, you can lay some groundwork at the LOI stage.
- *Clearly state and distinguish between scientific and policy questions/issues. If policy change is required to achieve the outcome, is there a timeline for various policy changes that would make the project feasible?*
TIPS: **(a)** Describe the policy-related questions/issues as well as the policy-related outcomes, in cases where the scientific questions/issues are well-defined. **(b)** Detail the scientific questions/issues in cases where the policy dimension is most prevalent. **(c)** Ensure your assembled team of experts cover all scientific and policy areas relevant to the challenge in order to achieve the desired transformative outcomes.

Concept Weaknesses

- Research question is unclear.
- Risk is poorly considered.

Common Concept Strengths

- Project has been **adapted to target a social or economic need**, rather than simply selecting/identifying a social/economic need and ‘force-fitting’ it to a fixed project.
- Project clearly **exceeds the minimum** eligibility requirements to **demonstrate national competitiveness**.
- Project represents a **timely area of research** (e.g. First Nations land rights, environmental impacts of consumer goods, recovery from spinal injury, changing health diagnoses and outcomes).