

N SERC Discovery Grant mock review and information session

- Want more mock reviews? Videos of several past mock reviews are at:
 - <https://macroecology.ca/nserc>

Tips on preparing a NSERC Discovery Grant application (from a former Evaluation Group member)

- Plan ahead and check internal deadlines
- Make use of available resources, especially:
 - The Peer Review Manual:
 - http://www.nserc-crsng.gc.ca/doc/Reviewers-Examineurs/CompleteManual-ManualEvalCompletemanual_eng.pdf
 - The “Grid”:
 - http://www.nserc-crsng.gc.ca/doc/Professors-Professeurs/DG_Merit_Indicators_eng.pdf
 - HQP FAQ Document:
 - http://www.nserc-crsng.gc.ca/doc/Professors-Professeurs/FAQ_Evaluation_HQP_eng.pdf
- Read other successful applications
- Ask colleagues or your Research Services office for feedback on your application
- NSERC hosts webinars and provides extensive information on their website

AKA “the Grid”

DISCOVERY GRANTS MERIT INDICATORS

The Merit Indicators should be used in conjunction with the Peer Review Manual, which outlines how reviewers arrive at a rating.

	EXCEPTIONAL	OUTSTANDING	VERY STRONG	STRONG	MODERATE	INSUFFICIENT
Excellence of the Researcher	Acknowledged as a leader in terms of research excellence, accomplishments, and service.	Research excellence, accomplishments and service are far superior to others.	Research excellence, accomplishments, and service are superior to others.	Research excellence, accomplishments, and service are significant .	Research excellence, accomplishments, and service are reasonable .	Research excellence, accomplishment, and service are below an acceptable level .
	Contributions presented in the application are of the highest level of quality .	Contributions presented in the application are of high quality .	Contributions presented in the application are above average in quality .	Contributions presented in the application are of good quality.	Contributions presented in the application are of reasonable quality.	Contributions presented in the application are limited in quality.
	Impact and importance of the work is clearly evident and groundbreaking .	Impact and importance of the work is clearly evident and influential .	Impact and importance of the work is clearly evident .	Impact and importance of the work is evident .	Impact and importance of the work is somewhat evident .	Impact and importance of the work is not clearly evident .
Merit of the Proposal	Proposed research program is clearly presented, is extremely original and innovative and is likely to have impact by leading to groundbreaking advances in the area and/or leading to a technology or policy that addresses socio-economic or environmental needs.	Proposed research program is clearly presented, is highly original and innovative and is likely to have impact by contributing to groundbreaking advances in the area, and/or leading to a technology or policy that addresses socio-economic or environmental needs.	Proposed research program is clearly presented, is original and innovative and is likely to have impact by leading to advancements and/or addressing socio-economic or environmental needs.	Proposed research program is clearly presented, is original and innovative and is likely to have impact and/or address socio-economic or environmental needs.	Proposed research program is clearly presented, has original and innovative aspects and may have impact and/or address socio-economic or environmental needs.	Proposed research program, as presented lacks clarity , and/or is of limited originality and innovation .
	Long-term vision and short-term objectives are clearly defined .	Long-term goals are clearly defined and short-term objectives are well planned .	Long-term goals are defined and short-term objectives are planned .	Long-term goals and short-term objectives are clearly described .	Long-term and short-term objectives are described .	Objectives are not clearly described and/or likely not attainable.
	The methodology is clearly defined and appropriate .	The methodology is clearly described and appropriate .		The methodology is described and appropriate .	The methodology is partially described and/or appropriate .	The methodology is not clearly described and/or appropriate .
	The application clearly demonstrates how the research activities to be supported are distinct from those funded (or applied for) by other sources.					The application does not clearly demonstrate how the research activities to be supported are distinct from those funded (or applied for) by other sources.
Training of Highly Qualified Personnel	Past training is at the highest level in terms of the research training environment provided and HQP contributions to research.	Past training is far superior to other applicants in terms of research training environment provided and HQP contributions to research.	Past training is superior to other applicants in terms of the research training environment provided and HQP contributions to research.	Past training compares favourably with other applicants in terms of the research training environment provided and HQP contributions to research.	Past training is modest relative to other applicants in terms of the research training environment provided and HQP contributions to research.	Past training is below an acceptable level in terms of the research training environment provided and HQP contributions to research.
	Most HQP move on to highly impactful positions that require skills gained through the training received.	Most HQP move on to impactful positions that require skills gained through the training received.	HQP generally move on to impactful positions that require skills gained through the training received.	HQP generally move on to positions that require skills gained through the training received.	Some HQP move on to positions that require skills gained through the training received.	HQP rarely move on to positions that require skills gained through the training received.
	Training philosophy and research training plans are of the highest quality: highly appropriate, clearly defined and expected to produce top quality results in terms of the overall approach and specific projects for HQP; challenges related to equity, diversity and inclusion specific to the institution and field of research are clearly described; and specific actions to support the recruitment of a diverse group of HQP and an inclusive research training environment are clearly defined .	Training philosophy and research training plans are far superior: highly appropriate, clearly defined and expected to produce high quality results in terms of the overall approach and specific projects for HQP; challenges related to equity, diversity and inclusion specific to the institution and field of research are clearly described; and specific actions to support the recruitment of a diverse group of HQP and an inclusive research training environment are clearly defined .	Training philosophy and research training plans are superior: highly appropriate, clearly defined and expected to produce quality results in terms of the overall approach and specific projects for HQP; challenges related to equity, diversity and inclusion specific to the institution and field of research are described; and specific actions to support the recruitment of a diverse group of HQP and an inclusive research training environment are defined .	Training philosophy and research training plans are: appropriate and clearly defined in terms of the overall approach and specific projects for HQP; described in terms of challenges related to equity, diversity and inclusion specific to the institution and/or field of research; and defined in terms of specific actions to support the recruitment of a diverse group of HQP and/or an inclusive research training environment.	Training philosophy and research training plans are: partially appropriate and partially defined in terms of the overall approach and specific projects for HQP; partially described in terms of challenges related to equity, diversity and inclusion specific to the institution and/or field of research; and partially defined in terms of specific actions to support the recruitment of a diverse group of HQP and/or an inclusive research training environment.	Training philosophy and research training plans are: not appropriate and not clearly defined in terms of the overall approach and specific projects for HQP; inaccurate or not described in terms of challenges related to equity, diversity and inclusion specific to the institution and/or field of research; and not appropriate or not described in terms of specific actions to support the recruitment of a diverse group of HQP and/or an inclusive research training environment.

Tips on preparing a NSERC Discovery Grant application (from a former Evaluation Group member)

- Follow the instructions
- Don't leave sections blank; use all the space you are given (but respect page/word limits), including the Additional Information on Contributions section
- Check that the information in your CCV is consistent with what you say in the application (e.g., number of HQP, number of pubs, etc.)
- Don't discuss publications, presentations, HQP, etc. that fall outside the 6-year window; only exception is if a publication (or software program, etc.) has had a significant impact on the field over the past 6 years, then you can discuss it as a contribution, but don't abuse this exception
- If you have had an eligible leave/delay (e.g., parental leave, medical leave, etc., but not sabbatical), briefly explain how it has impacted your research, service, and/or training
- If you have done significant outreach (e.g., public talks, media interviews, etc.) or service (e.g., academic society positions, journal editorial board positions, etc.), be sure to include it on your CCV
- Write your proposal to appeal to a broad cross-section of scientists in the field; your proposal will likely be read by evaluation group members with a mix of expertise
- The proposal is supposed to have some literature review, but don't spend multiple pages of the 5-page proposal reviewing the literature
- NSERC Discovery Grants support a *research program* in the natural sciences and engineering; your proposal should describe more than a small number of narrowly construed or disconnected projects

Tips on preparing a NSERC Discovery Grant application (from a former Evaluation Group member)

- Training of HQP is often the most difficult to evaluate of the three criteria
- Training of HQP has two parts, not necessarily weighted equally: 1) your training history over the past 6 years and 2) your training plan for the next 5 years
- Your HQP's achievements over the past 6 years are your achievements: describe both the skills and the awards, publications, and positions they obtained thanks to your training
- NSERC, and the Evolution and Ecology Evaluation Group specifically, take a fairly broad view of what it means for a trainee to go on to a highly skilled position, but it helps if you provide context
- Your training plan is more than just a summary of how many HQP you plan to have and what projects they will do. It should articulate *your approach* to training HQP. How will you mentor HQP? What hard and soft skills will HQP acquire, and how? What plans are in place for co-supervision or collaboration, if needed? Etc.
- Equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) is an important consideration, and now part of the evaluation of your HQP training plan. Simply reporting the gender breakdown of your HQP is not enough; articulate a plan to recruit and support diverse HQP—the more specific and thoughtful your plan is, the better
- NSERC's philosophy is that HQP training *at all levels* is valuable, from undergraduate students through to postdocs and research associates; speak to all levels that you train
- A lot of HQP training plans are boilerplate. Explain what makes the HQP training you provide unique