

Early Researcher Awards Program

Round 18 Information Session
Spring 2024

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Land Acknowledgement

Please join me in a moment of reflection.



Today's Agenda

Welcome to our Early Researcher Awards (ERA) Round 18 Information Session.

Today's session will take approximately 45 minutes and we will provide you with a high-level overview of the ERA Program Round 18.

- We'll review the major components of the application process, such as, important competition dates, application review process, highlights of application guidelines, application submission process, and best practices.
- We will be responding to questions throughout the session using SLIDO.
- Since our time is limited, we ask that you keep questions high level versus project specific, which can be sent to ERA@ontario.ca or addressed with your institution's research office team.

Reminder:

Please refer to the [program guidelines](#) for further detailed information.

ERA Program Overview

- The ERA program was introduced in 2005 and has held seventeen rounds to date.
- The program helps early career Ontario researchers build their research teams.
- The goal of the program is to attract and retain the best research talent in all research disciplines.
- In Round 17, the Ministry received a total of 309 eligible applications of which 54 were awarded. The success rate was approximately 17%.
- Each award is a maximum of \$100,000 for eligible costs and must be matched by an additional \$50,000 from the researcher's institution.
- In addition, up to \$40,000 will be provided to the institution for eligible overhead costs.
- The funds are to be used over a **period of five-years** for eligible expenses for a research team.

What's New for Round 18!

- Expanded eligible interruptions to accommodate certain international advance degree interruptions as a result of credential recognition and licensure in Ontario.
- Added Intellectual Property (IP) resources, including a link to a course that is to be completed by a member of the research team over the duration of the project.
- Expanded section under *Research Security Requirements* with a series of questions and federal resources that can be used when completing the *Mitigating Economic and Geopolitical Risk Checklist* (a revised version of the checklist will be available in a few weeks).
- A new *Research Security Attestation Form* is currently being developed and will become part of the application submission process. More details and instructions will be shared with you in a memo later this summer and before the ERA application deadline. Candidates will be required to complete a *Research Security Attestation Form* along with the revised *Mitigating Economic and Geopolitical Risk Checklist*.
- Revised language for non-arm's length referees.

Program Requirement Reminders

- **Intellectual Property (IP)** – added details about the Ontario government’s first Intellectual Property Action Plan and links to Ontario’s intellectual property resources, as well as those available through other organizations, such as the Canadian Intellectual Property Office (CIPO).
- **Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)** – the Ministry is committed to making EDI a priority through the integration of EDI principles into ERA funding opportunities. The Ministry asks that the institution and principal investigator develop research talent criteria using these principles, and, where possible, use inclusive, unbiased, ungendered language throughout the application.
- **Canadian Research and Development Classification Codes (CRDC)** – continuing to use this new system to provide a common approach to classifying research across institutions and governments. It was published by Statistics Canada on October 5, 2020. The Ministry will contact Research Offices for corrections if errors are detected. To limit delays, please make sure the accurate codes are inputted.

Program Requirements Reminders (Cont'd)

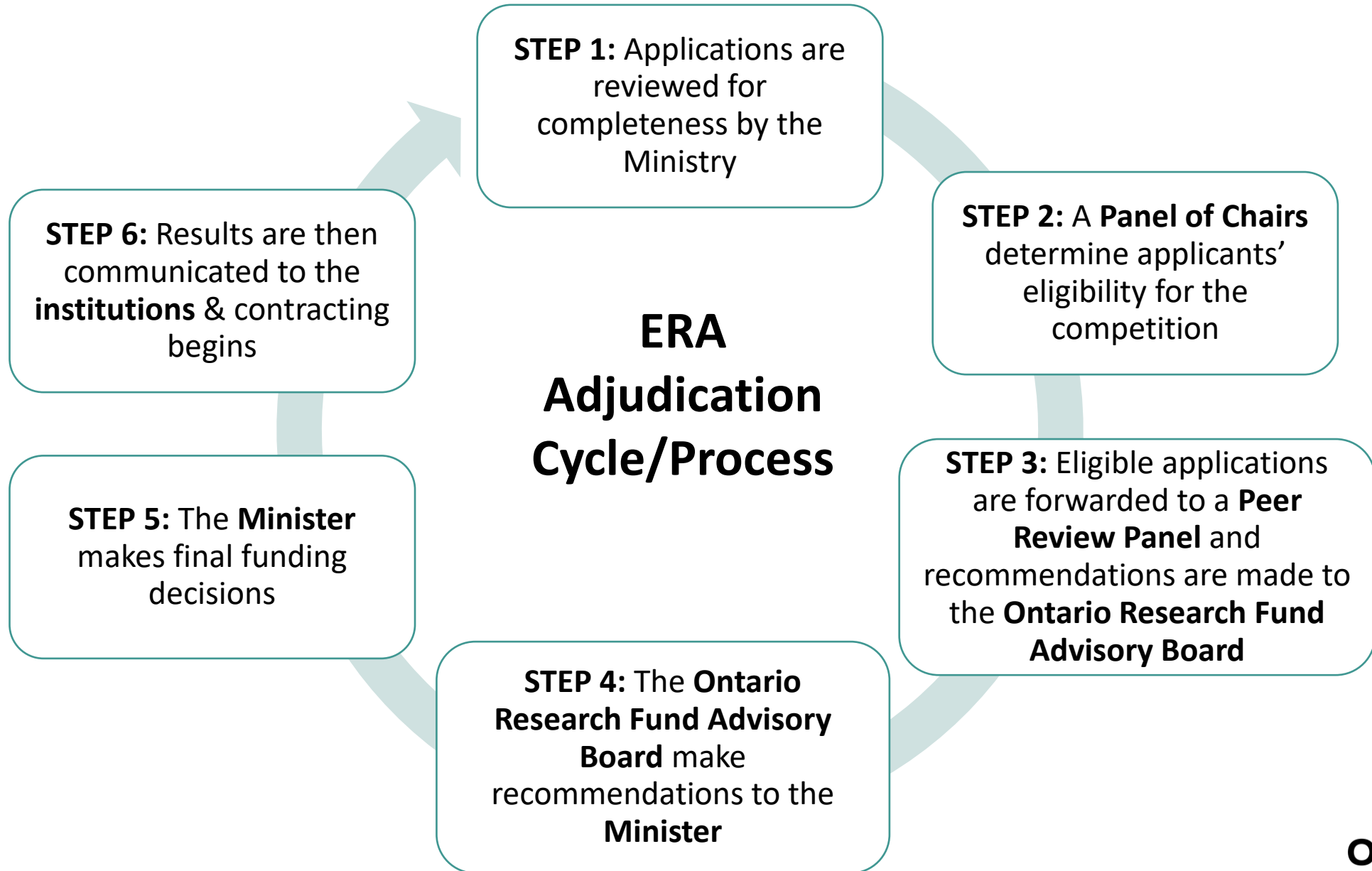
- **Research Security Requirements** – applicants are required to complete a *Mitigating Economic and Geopolitical Risk Checklist*. Note that this form has been revised since the last round.
- Institutions should assess proposals submitted for funding for potential economic and/or geopolitical risks using existing institutional resources, including those provided in the ERA Program Guidelines, as well as policies and processes to help researchers identify and manage economic and geopolitical risks. In addition, when filling the application consider any potential controversy or negative views that may result from any existing or planned association with all partners that may ultimately impact the reputation of Ontario.
- Candidates will be required to complete a *Research Security Attestation Form*. More information to be provided soon.
- If you have specific questions related to the security requirement, please direct your inquiries to: ERA@Ontario.ca or address them with your institutions research office team.

ERA Ministry Competition Key Dates

Activity	Estimated Dates
ERA R18 program launch/call for proposals	April 30 th
Information Sessions (3 virtual sessions)	May 15 th , May 16 th , and May 21 st
Complete applications are due to the Ministry	No later than Thursday, July 25 th by 5pm EST
Review panels – adjudication process	Fall 2024
Ontario Research Fund Advisory Board (ORFAB) review of recommended proposals	Winter 2025
Minister final funding decisions	Winter 2025
Decisions will be communicated to institutions and contracting will begin (TPAs)	Winter/Spring 2025

Please keep in mind your institution may have ‘internal deadlines’, but we must have all completed applications in by **5pm EST Thursday, July 25, 2024.**

Application Review Process



Application Review Process (Cont'd)

- Applications are assigned to one of nine review panels;
- The Ministry reserves the right to choose reviewers and to assign applications to an appropriate panel;
- There is no appeal of decisions, including decisions regarding the eligibility of the application;
- The ERA program is a discretionary, non-entitlement program; and
- Funding is awarded on a competitive basis.

Eligibility

The ERA program is open on a competitive basis to researchers who:

- are **full-time faculty or principal investigators (PI)** who, at the application deadline, are **based at an eligible institution** (adjunct positions **do not qualify**);
- have started their academic career on or after **January 1, 2018**;
- have completed their first Doctor of Philosophy, Doctor of Veterinary Medicine, Medical Doctor or Terminal degree on or after **January 1, 2013** anywhere worldwide (using the convocation date);
- have **not** already held an Early Researcher Award; and
- are **not** a Tier 1 Canada Research Chair

Researchers who were not successful in previous rounds may submit an application to this competition, provided they continue to meet all eligibility requirements.

Eligibility (Cont'd)

Let's talk about some eligible interruptions:

- Continued education required training, institution-approved medical leave, parental leave, and certain international advance degree interruptions as a result of credential recognition and licensure in Ontario are considered eligible interruptions, but **must be clearly** described in section 9.d. of the application form. It is extremely important to be very detailed in your explanation including dates for the interruption. Applications with interruptions will be reviewed by a Panel of Chairs to determine eligibility based on the information provided on the application form.
- Research associate positions, post-doctoral fellowships and time spent in industry **are not** considered eligible interruptions.
- The Ministry generally defines an independent academic research appointment as a position where a researcher is capable of independently publishing, supervising, and applying for funding on their own.

Let's take a moment while you send your questions using **slido**!



REMINDER: please keep ERA program questions high level, any project specific questions should first be discussed with your institution's research office.

Haven't answered your question?

Log into **slido** and ask!

1. Grab your smartphones or laptops
2. Open a web browser
3. Go to slido.com
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May 15, 2024

11:00am Session

slido event code: #Researcher24



May 16, 2024

1:00pm Session

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May 21, 2024

2:00pm Session

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Institution's Matching Contributions

Let's move on to discuss sources of matching contributions:

Revenues	Direct Costs	Overhead Costs	Total
ERA Program Funding	\$100,000	\$40,000	\$140,000
Institution's Matching Contributions	\$50,000	-	\$50,000
Total	Up to \$150,000	Up to \$40,000	Up to \$190,000

- Each award is a maximum of \$100,000 for eligible costs and must be matched by an additional \$50,000 from the researcher's institution.
- The Institution is responsible for ensuring that the institution's matching contribution is secured for the applicant prior to submitting the proposal to the Ministry.
- The intention of the ERA program is to leverage additional, **new** funding for early-career researchers, which means 'existing' funds you may already have for the project cannot be included.

Institution's Matching Contributions (Cont'd)

Let's talk about **eligible matching contributions**:

- Private sector contributions in cash; and
- University scholarships for undergraduates, graduate students and fellowships to post-doctoral fellows on the research team, as well as private or public sector contributions, deemed to be in-cash, are eligible.

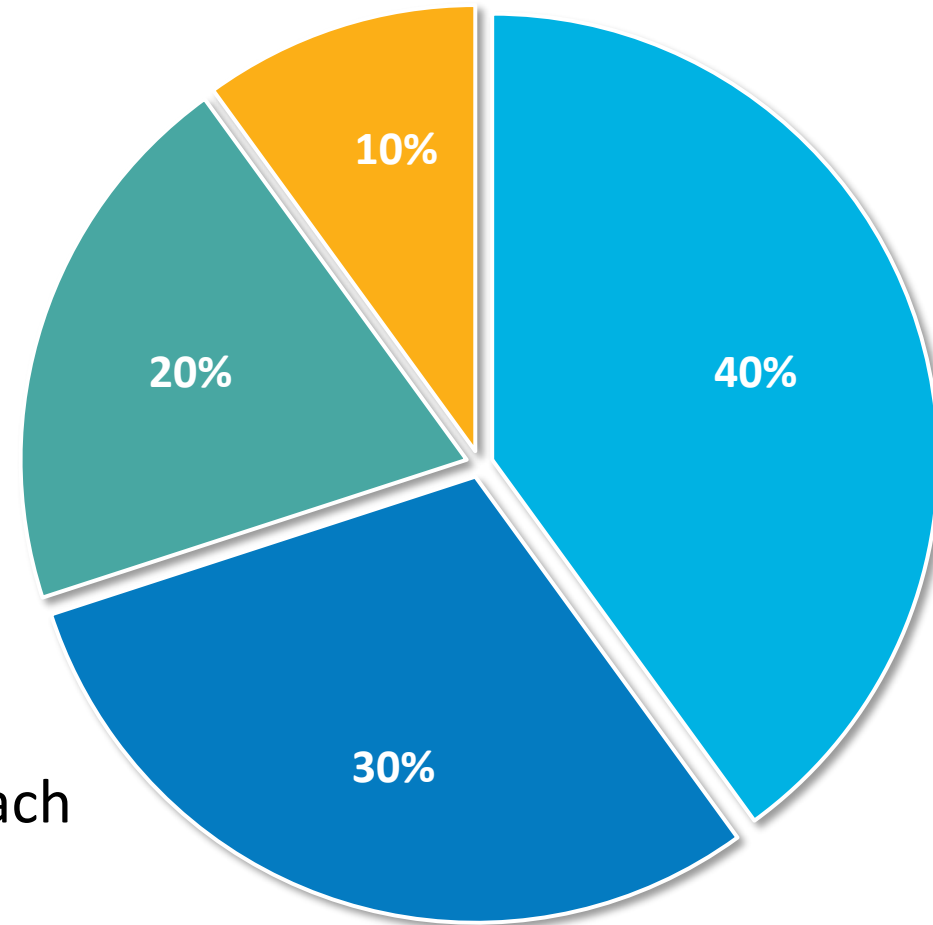
What are **ineligible matching contributions**:

- Any in-kind contribution;
- Teaching assistantships;
- Startup funds from the institution intended to assist newly appointed faculty members launch their research careers;
- Awards administered by federal granting councils such as Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council, Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council;
- Specific purpose grants received from Ontario government ministries and agencies, and funds leveraged by such grants;
- Funding received through Ontario Genomics or Canada Genomics;
- Ontario graduate scholarships as part of provincial program funding; and
- Ontario graduate fellowships as part of provincial program funding

Evaluation Criteria

The Early Researcher Award applications are evaluated on four weighted criteria.

- Excellence of the Researcher
- Quality of Research
- Development of Research Talent
- Strategic Value for Ontario



Over the next few slides, we will review each criteria in more detail.

Evaluation Criteria (Cont'd)

Excellence of the Researcher is *weighted at 40%* and is looking for:

- academic and employment record
- research grants and awards received
- publication record
- other areas of research productivity
- researcher's current and potential standing for excellence in the research field based on research plans and letters of reference
- independence from previous supervisor based on the publication record
- independent peer-reviewed funding

Reference letters and clear independence are essential when reviewing this category.

Quality of Research is *weighted at 30%* and is looking for:

- excellence of proposed research
- originality of proposed research
- clarity of research proposal
- relevance of methodology

Those who score highly in this section are very clear in their application such that a multidisciplinary panel would understand the proposal.

Evaluation Criteria (Cont'd)

Development of Research Talent is *weighted at 20%* and is looking for:

- development of research knowledge of members of research team
- skills development of team
- unique and leading-edge training
- past experience in HQP training
- clear demonstration of a commitment to Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) when developing the research teams.

Strategic Value for Ontario is *weighted at 10%* and is looking for:

- Commercialization benefits
- Economic benefits
- Societal and/or cultural benefits

Applicants are advised to add details to support the benefits, particularly to Ontario, in this section.

Youth Engagement and Outreach

- The Youth Engagement and Outreach is not adjudicated upon, but it is expected that you help promote and educate our youth in Ontario.
- Applicants are required to undertake youth outreach activities and may use up to \$1,000 of the funding provided by the Ministry. You may leverage something the institution already runs.
- Activities associated with youth outreach are to be undertaken during each year of the 5-year project and **clearly identified on your application**.
- Activities should be free and targeted towards high-school, middle school and elementary school students. In today's climate, virtual activities are acceptable.

Eligible Expenses

- Up to \$100,000 from the ERA Program Funding from the Province and the \$50,000 Institution's Matching Contribution will cover the following eligible direct costs for undergraduates, graduate students, post-doctoral fellows, research assistants, associates, and technicians carrying out the research:
 - salaries and benefits claimed in proportion to the time spent working on the project
 - essential and reasonable travel and expenses related to conferences, workshops or seminars – not to exceed full economy fares
 - essential and reasonable travel and expenses related directly to offsite research activities – not to exceed full economy fares
 - associated expenses related to the research team (excluding the principal investigator)
 - up to \$7,500 for discretionary expenses to be used to fulfill the objective of the program to build research talent and cannot be utilized to supplement the salary of the principal investigator
 - up to \$1,000 can be utilized to supplement the cost of Youth Outreach Activities for eligible expenses
- Applicants can budget up to, but not more than, \$40,000 towards eligible overhead costs, in-line with the institution's policy on overhead charges.

Ineligible Expenses

Funds received through this grant cannot be spent on:

- salary, benefits or expenses of the principal investigator (PI)
- the purchase of supplies or equipment
- the operation of equipment and facilities (e.g., rentals, etc.)
- salaries or expenses of individuals performing contract research
- salaries, benefits or expenses of visiting fellows
- salaries, benefits or expenses of ineligible team members
- travel and accommodation for recruitment purposes (e.g., for individuals being considered as possible members of the Research Team)
- any items or services not directly related to the project

Ineligible expenses for Youth Outreach are:

- 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
- honoraria or salaries for high school student co-operative education or summer high school student positions
- hospitality and catering costs at events

Let's take a moment while you send your questions using **slido**!



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Best Practices

Past review panels have stressed the importance of:

- Being actively involved in conducting research that has been supported by peer-reviewed funding (overlap is okay!). Applicants should explain what NEW research components would be covered by the ERA funding when the ERA research proposal is an extension of a research project supported by other grants.
- It is important that you demonstrate academic independence from previous supervisors.
- Evidence of publishing with students or student involvement in conference papers is extremely important.
- ERA panels are multidisciplinary, and the application will be reviewed by panel members that are within and outside of the applicant's specific field of research. So, it is important the content and language of the proposal is clear and understood by people outside of the applicant's field.
- Applicants are encouraged to link the proposal to the research milestones by describing specific roles and responsibilities of the Research Team.

Common Application Weaknesses that can be Avoided!

Application has not met the program criterion	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • failure to meet research excellence criterion • failure to demonstrate commitment to Equity, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) when developing the research teams • failure to demonstrate independence from previous supervisors
Too broad and lacks focus	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • proposed research lacks focus (numerous, unrelated or loosely related projects)
Lack of details	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • lack of detail in the Highly Qualified Personnel (HQP) plan • lack of detail regarding the Strategic Value to Ontario • failure to confirm that any experimentations will be acceptable on ethical and safety grounds abiding by policies and procedures that govern research integrity • failure to "make the case," i.e., to explain the steps that led to the proposed research concept
Difficult to understand	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • proposal contains technical jargon, and the content and language are not clear • simply 'cutting and pasting' content from one funding application to another without tailoring it for the ERA submission
Budget issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • lack of funds to complete the proposed research and Highly Qualified Personnel (HQP) training • sustainability is questionable beyond government funding • failure to provide a full five-year budget for the project
Formatting issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • failure to follow formatting instructions outlined in the guidelines • failure to keep Appendix B – proposal research to a maximum of six (6) pages, including appendices, excluding references • failure to attach all the required documents with the submission of the application package

Application Submission Requirements

The application package must include ALL of the following when submitting:

- **Document 1:** a completed electronic application including the embedded attachments appendices B, C and D.
- **Document 2:** a PDF of the electronic application along with appendix B, C and D saved together as one document.
- **Document 3:** a PDF of the completed **NEW** *Application Attestation Form* along with the **REVISED** *Mitigation Economic and Geopolitical Risk Checklist*.
- **Document 4 (required if e-signature is not available):** a PDF copy of the signature page signed by the VP of Research or any other signing officer with authority to bind the institution.
- To ensure continuity, consistency and open communication between the applicant and the program, all inquiries/discussions during the application, review and post-award processes are to be coordinated by the lead institution's named contact on the application and Ministry staff.
- Failure to follow the above-mentioned instructions will result in the application being deemed ineligible and removed from the competition.

How to Submit the Completed Application

Who?

- Institutional research offices are responsible for submitting the **electronic** package to the Ministry.

How?

- The research office will need to submit an electronic application to the Ministry (ERA@ontario.ca) via your organization's preferred secure cloud storage solution (File Transfer Protocol (FTP), Dropbox, Google Drive, etc.) no later than **5 pm on July 11, 2024**.
- Once you have set up the storage solution method from your end, send the necessary information (login and link) or direct access link to ERA@Ontario.ca.
- Ministry staff will access the storage drive and then confirm access has been granted. This step is mandatory and must be completed by the date mentioned above.
- The completed application packages must be uploaded to this secure storage solution on the application submission deadline date and time. The institution's research office is responsible for sending an email confirmation to ERA@Ontario.ca once all applications have been uploaded.

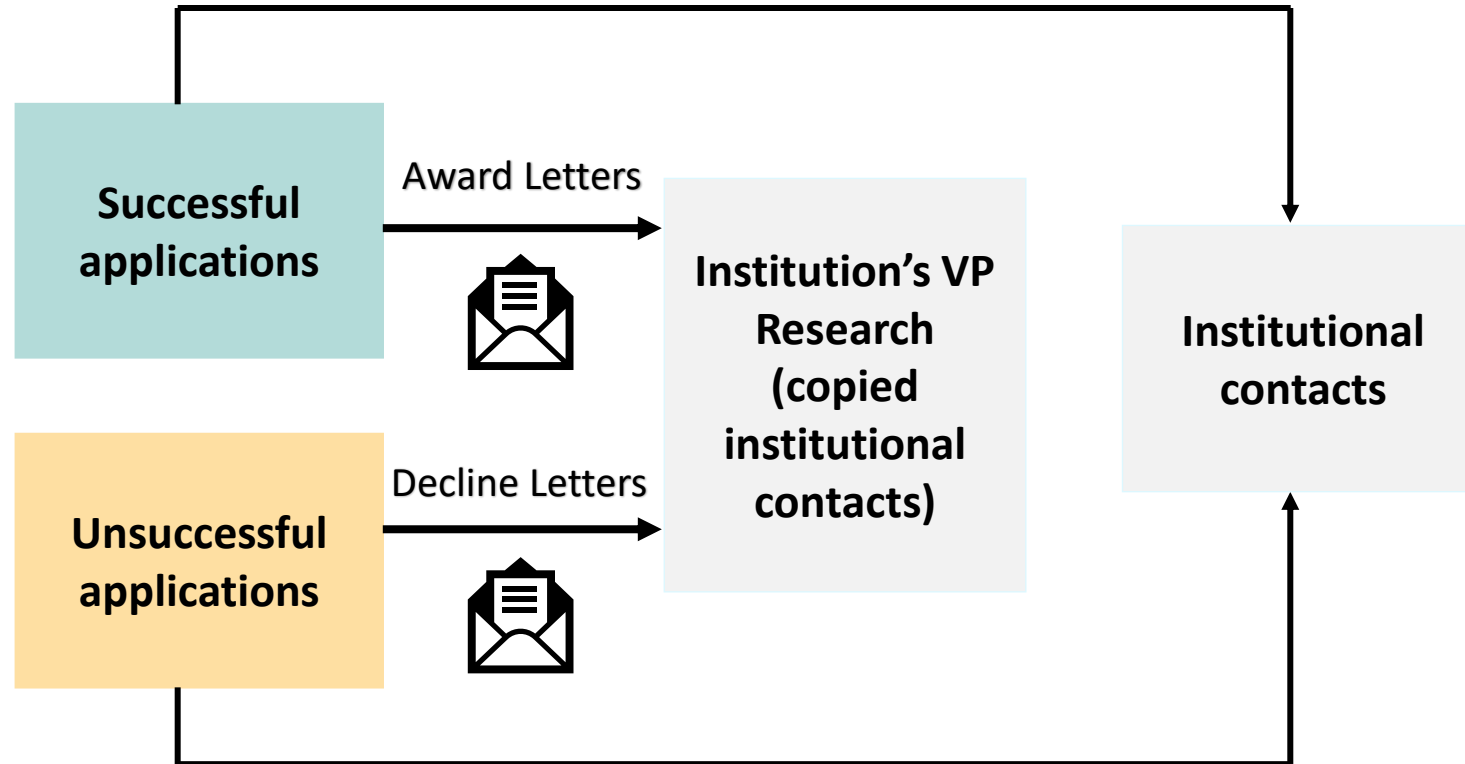
What?

- All documents listed on Slide 26 should be included in the **ONE application package**, not sent separately to the Ministry. The application should be a PDF accessible version, not scanned. Scanned reference letters are acceptable.

When?

- **Submit by Thursday, July 25, 2024 by 5:00 PM EST**
- **Late or incomplete applications will not be accepted!**

Funding Communication Process



Institutional contacts will also receive feedback for unsuccessful applications soon after, which can be relayed to applicants who are eligible to reapply.

Contact Information

Please contact the Ministry at

ERA@Ontario.ca

Program Guidelines and Application form can be found at:

<https://www.ontario.ca/page/early-researcher-awards>

Thank you.

This document is used for presentation purposes only. You must refer to the ERA program guidelines for complete program details.

Join the Q&A using slido.com

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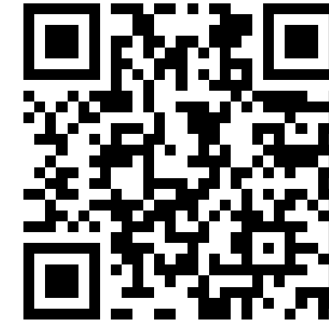
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May 21, 2024

2:00pm Session

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