
Prioritized Big Research Inventory

Key messages – Q&A format

How do we define big research?

Big research can also be thought of as institutional-level research projects. These projects represent a valuable opportunity for the University of Regina to contribute to the community locally, nationally and potentially internationally. They can have significant research outcomes, impacts, and benefits to society and the economy. They are also typically larger, more complex, and therefore riskier than the smaller research projects the University is familiar with (e.g. most Tri-Agency funded projects).

Securing funding for big research requires significant time and effort for planning and for turning a good research idea into a fundable research project. This effort often includes involvement of units beyond the researcher or research team such as the Research Office, Human Resources, Information Services, Facilities Management, University Advancement and Communications, Financial Services, and others. And, if the quest for funding is successful, big research projects require more time and effort to manage effectively.

Institutional-level or big research projects generally have the following characteristics but they don't necessarily require them all:

- Are 1 year or greater in duration;
- Have a budget of \$1 million or greater;
 - A useful budget threshold is provided by the Signing Authority / Approval Authority Registry: Research grants/contracts where the value, pro-rated on an annual basis, is greater than \$500,000 and less than \$25 million requiring approval from both the Vice-President (Research) and the President.
- Involve stakeholders (e.g. funders, partners, collaborators, suppliers) external to the UofR;
- Involve multi-disciplinary stakeholders internal to the UofR (faculties, departments, and supporting units);
- Are medium to high risk due to their size and complexity;
- Have a medium to high degree of executive visibility; and
- Have the potential for a high degree of strategic and/or research impact.

What is the Vice-President (Research) proposing to do concerning big research?

The Vice-President (Research) is proposing to develop an inventory of research projects or programs that currently or at some time in the future include a submission for funding at the scope and scale of an institutional-level research project.

Further, the inventory will be prioritized. The details of the prioritization model and criteria have not been fully fleshed out yet but will include elements such as strength of alignment with UofR strategy, impact, risk, and readiness.

What is behind the need to develop this inventory now?

Historically, we have waited for a call for proposals for big research funding and then scrambled to prepare a complete, quality submission under a tight timeframe and resource constraints (e.g. CFREF, CERC, CFI Innovation Fund). Overall, this approach has been challenging; often not successful; and has led to research project management problems when the project is funded.

The foresight provided by an inventory of projects will allow us to be better prepared when calls for proposals are issued and will no doubt enable higher quality submissions. Some calls are cyclic and predictable. As an example, we are anticipating the next call for CFI Innovation Fund proposals to come in 2022. Other calls are not predictable and often come with short windows for submission preparation. It is perhaps the unanticipated calls where the inventory may prove most valuable.

Also, precedent has been established whereby funders are asking for this type of prioritized list. The University of Calgary and the University of Saskatchewan are providing Western Economic Diversification Canada (WED) with prioritized lists of projects for potential funding. Now, WED is requesting a similar list from the University of Regina.

How and when will the inventory be developed?

Beginning immediately and extending to early January, the Vice-President (Research) is seeking expressions of interest from researchers who are interested and willing to participate in this exercise. A single-page narrative describing your research project / program and whether you are planning now or in the future to develop a big research grant proposal is all that is required.

Throughout the Winter 2020 semester, the Research Office will consult with researchers who have expressed interest on their research project / program and will support development of their project brief to be submitted for prioritization and inclusion on the inventory.

In May and June 2020, a committee appointed by the Vice-President (Research) will prioritize submissions and develop the inventory. The exact make-up of the committee has not been determined at this time but it should include administrative support functions as well as research and executive leadership.

In June, the prioritized inventory will be communicated and socialized both internally and externally upon request (e.g. WED).

Is this a one-time only activity?

No, the intention is to update and refresh the inventory on a semi-annual basis. Intake periods will be established where researchers will be encouraged to submit new research projects/programs not yet represented within the inventory or to update a project/program that is already part of the inventory. (For example, an existing brief may be updated to reflect a higher degree of readiness such as securing a partner who has committed to provide matching funds.)

Going forward, the optimal timing for the semi-annual intake periods will be determined and communicated.

How will the inventory be used?

The primary use for the inventory will be as a tool to assist with proactively planning for future institutional-level research funding opportunities. The goal is to ensure no one is caught by surprise when we embark on one of these funding opportunities. A second goal is to reduce the crunch on time and resources we have historically experienced.

As mentioned previously, having the inventory will allow us to respond to requests from WED or other funders if required.

What's in it for the researcher?

Researchers get the support required to develop good research ideas into fundable research projects or programs. This is accomplished through effective working partnerships between the researcher and the numerous resources who support the research enterprise. The goal is to create quality, fundable research submissions to the mutual benefit of the researcher and the UofR.

What's in it for the University of Regina?

The VPR, Deans and University of Regina leaders including leaders of those areas who are frequently called upon to support big research projects are informed about which big research candidates match which funding opportunities **and when** so that they can provide input to the process and use that information to plan ahead to the extent possible. The goal is to use that foresight to most effectively deploy scarce and limited resources. Ultimately, a successful researcher is also a success for the institution.

How does a researcher become a part of this initiative?

A researcher becomes part of this initiative by submitting their expression of interest: a single-page narrative describing their research project or program and the status concerning any current or planned big research grant submissions.

You can submit your expression of interest to the Research Office (Research.Office@uregina.ca).

Who do I contact for more information?

If you have questions or require more information, please contact:

- Research Office (Research.Office@uregina.ca) or
- Consultant, Research and Development (Raymond.deschamps@uregina.ca).