Budget Building Tips for SSHRC Grant Applications
(Updated July 2019)

General Tips:

- Be sure to create a realistic budget that includes all justifiable expenses for completing the proposed research activities and dissemination plans.

- Some funding agencies allow you to change the budget after the grant is awarded (e.g. SSHRC, NSERC and CIHR) but the submitted application is evaluated, nevertheless, on the merits of the budget as reasonable and well-thought through.

- Unjustified or ineligible expenses in the budget may result in your budget request being reduced. If the review committee reduces the budget by 30% or more, the feasibility score decreases significantly. Unexplained expenses can also give the impression that the applicant is not competent to manage the project, which also lowers the feasibility score.

Typical Costs: (Please see the Tri-Agency Guide for the Use of Grant Funds for a list of ineligible items and further information about eligible expenses not included here.)

1. Students and Other Personnel Paid Through Grants:

   - **Student Research Assistants (RAs):** Medium sized grant requests ($20K to $200K) usually pay for 1-2 Canadian graduate students. If you want to fund more students, make a case for it. A budget with 2 students doing the same work will be less likely to be funded than a proposal with 2 students with different job descriptions. Large-scale projects (with budgets greater than 200K) typically fund more than 2 student RA’s, however, detailed information must be provided in the Roles and Responsibilities and Student Training sections about the work to be accomplished by student personnel.

     - Hourly rate varies across disciplinary fields. It is recommended that grant applicants discuss RA hourly rates with the Department Business or Finance Officer to determine the going rate in the proposed area of research.

     - Average rates include: $15 - $20 for undergraduate RA’s; $25 to $45 for Masters Students; $25 to $55 for Doctoral students. The total cost should include 4% vacation pay and 10% benefits.

     - Flat rate stipends can also be used, e.g. PhD for one year: $15,000. However, an hourly rate with the anticipated number of hours more effectively demonstrates the value and amount of work involved.

     - Undergraduates can also be hired through the Work-Study program. The university’s cost sharing policy has the central university paying 70% of the costs and the PI charging 30% to the grant at minimum wage for up to 200 hrs in the fall/winter term. Be sure to note the university’s contribution in “Funds from Other Sources.” Click here for information about how to create a Work Study job posting.

     - Post-doctoral fellows are a rare but eligible expense for operating grants and they are increasingly common in larger partnership-type grants. Regardless, they should be well-justified with a compelling explanation that addresses the need for this advanced level of education, research skill and experience.
• **Non-Student Salaries:**

  • **Project Managers:** Although salaries or stipends for research project administrative support is generally ineligible, one exception is for large team grants or partnership grants where a project manager or coordinator is needed. The salary range for project managers varies widely, with recent positions being in USW pay bands from 8 to 12 (hiring rates of about $49,000 - $62,000). If the project manager will be conducting data collection or analyzing data as well as coordinating the team, the pay band can be higher. Add 25% for benefits to any staff-appointed positions requested and include annual increases as per the USW collective agreement.

  • Large-scale partnership grants may be eligible to apply for $100,000 matching funds from the VPRI to support a project manager through the **Major Recent Projects Management Fund**. The applicants division must match the VPRI funding.

  • Transcribers, editors, tech support such as website developers or other personnel hired on a sporadic basis should be listed under Technical/Professional Services.

2. **Travel expenses for research field trips, archival work and conferences (research dissemination)**

**Airfare and Hotel:**

- Be sure to justify each trip in relation to your research and/or dissemination objectives.
- Expenses for conference travel in year one of the grant may be questioned because it is generally assumed that research results will not yet be available.
- The need for more than one field trip to the same location should be explained.
- The prices for airfare and hotels do not need to be exact but they should be reasonably accurate.
- You can include travel costs both for your own travel and for graduate students who will accompany you. As a rule of thumb, we usually see no more than 1 domestic and 1 international conference per year with 1 student brought along to each.
- If you know the location of the conference, include it and be sure your prices are appropriate. If the exact location is not known, estimate based on a general location (i.e. West Coast US).
- You may also cover the costs of travel for co-applicants and collaborators for research meetings or to jointly present findings.
- It is reasonable and appropriate to stay in the conference hotel when attending the conference. Budget the actual price if known and an approximate price if not known. For research trips, you may want to economize. Typically, $220/night is common in the developed world and considerably less can be expected in developing countries.

**Ground Transportation:**

- Car rental is a reasonable expense if necessary for the research. If you are using your own car for research travel, you may be reimbursed $0.54/km.
- Taxis to and from the airport: assume about $100 - $200 per trip. Train travel is also an option. Include actual fare prices or estimates in your budget.
**Per Diem:**

- For meals and incidentals while traveling, you may submit your receipts for actual meal expenses (not including alcoholic beverages) or submit for the per diem without receipts if the funding is from a federally-funded grant. You may not charge alcohol to the grant. In budgeting, ask for the per diem for short-term travel and provide realistic estimates for longer-term fieldwork. Within Canada, you may ask for $55 per diem; for travel outside of Canada, you may be reimbursed for up to $75 per diem. The rates for individual meals are:

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<td>Dinner</td>
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3. **Other costs:**

- **Equipment, e.g. computers, special software programs** – a brief explanation should be included in the Budget Justification for why a computer and/or software program purchase is necessary.

- **Translation and/or transcription costs** – be sure to provide an accurate quote. Rates vary depending on the level of expertise, from $1.50 to $2.50 (Canadian) per recorded minute.

- **Special consultancy costs** – the reason for the consultant’s expertise should be explained in the description of the team and/or in the detailed description.

- **Website development:** Websites designed for dissemination of research results cost approximately $3,000 - $5,000. Custom websites that include an intranet for team collaboration will cost $16,000 - $30,000 depending upon the functionality sought. Maintenance fees for updating websites should also be included in the long-term planning for the dissemination of the project results. Maintenance fees might include hourly paid student RA work, further website developer fees or specialized software upgrades.

- **Open access publishing fees** – be sure to include the names of the potential open access publishers or platforms in the grant proposal Knowledge Mobilization or Expected Outcomes sections. Publishing company open access costs range considerably, even as high as $8,000 depending on the journal. Open access repositories provided through the UofT library are generally without costs to the researcher. For more information about how to publish open access and obtain publisher fee quotes click here.

**For Grant Programs Requiring Matching Funds:**

1. Undergraduates Research Assistants be hired through the Work-Study program. The university’s cost sharing policy has the central university paying 70% of the costs and the PI charging 30% to the grant at minimum wage for up to 200 hrs in the fall/winter term. The university’s contribution can be included in “Funds from Other Sources” as unconfirmed matching funds. Click here for information about how to create a Work Study job posting.

2. Requests for cash and in-kind contributions can be made to the applicants’ home and affiliated academic units. In-kind contribution may include: use of classrooms, meeting spaces and offices, and administrative
support from office staff. A signed letter of support from the academic unit is typically required by funding agencies to provide evidence of confirmed cash and in-kind contributions.

3. Requests for cash to match the cash support provided by the applicant’s home academic unit can be submitted to the Faculty of Arts & Science Vice-Dean Research and Infrastructure. Available funds are contingent upon the number of requests and restrictions relative to the annual budget allowance for matching funds in a given year. Email requests should include information about the funding agency and program for which an application is being prepared, the title of the grant project, the reason why support is being requested, and the amounts that have been secured as cash contributions from the applicant’s home and affiliated departments. Letters of support will automatically be provided for approved requests for cash support.

4. In-kind contributions with monetary value:
   i. Administrative support – proportional amount relative to time and salary, e.g. 5% of the administrator’s total time for 10 weeks = 5% of their normal salary for 10 weeks.
   ii. Space that is normally rented but which is given for use at no cost to the researcher can be an in-kind contribution valued at the rental rate.

5. Student U.T. Fellowships: Researchers can claim the UT Fellowship portion of graduate funding packages for graduate student research assistants who work on the project. The student’s UT Fellowship is considered to be a cash contribution from the University towards the research project. Consult with your unit’s Business Officer to determine the amount your graduate students are receiving in UT Fellowship funding.

6. Other sources for Matching Funds include: cash and in-kind contributions from partnering academic institutions and other organizations, industry partners, participating community groups, and participating academic units at the PI’s or Collaborators’ institutions.

Budget problems to avoid:

- Surprise expenses in the budget section, the reasons for which were not explained or addressed in the Project Description (Methodology) and Knowledge Mobilization sections.
- Miscalculations and ineligible expenses.
- Post Docs and PhD’s hired on the grant without a rationale which speaks to the need for their level of expertise in relation to the work they will undertake in support of your research.
- Padded budgets – best to create a realistic budget that includes and justifies all anticipated expenses.
- Overly lean, un-thought-through budgets, e.g. including the development of a webpage in the Knowledge Mobilization plan without including in the budget the cost of its creation or a maintenance plan beyond the project’s duration.