

RESEARCH PROJECT REVIEW GUIDELINES (2009)

1. NEW PROPOSALS

The application process involves the submission of a Full Proposal Application Form. Before completing the form, applicants should carefully read the ArcticNet Evaluation Criteria (Appendix A) as well as the ArcticNet Strategic Framework available on the Research Section of the ArcticNet website (www.arcticnet.ulaval.ca). The onus is on the applicants to address the evaluation criteria explicitly.

Once funded, research projects and associated budgets are assessed annually through in-depth progress reviews (see item 2).

The Network strives to ensure that its decisions are fair and objective and that they are seen as such. No committee member with a conflict of interest may participate in the review process (Appendix B).

1.1. Call for Proposals

Based upon recommendations from the Research Management Committee (RMC), the Board of Directors (BOD) identifies priorities on which the Network will solicit Proposals for new research projects. The Call for Proposals is announced through the Network website and university Research Offices and is distributed to the Arctic research community.

1.2. Review of Full Proposal Applications

Full Proposals (FP) must be completed using the **ArcticNet Full Proposal Application Form** posted in the Research section of the ArcticNet Website.

The ArcticNet Administrative Centre receives the proposals and verifies them for completeness. The proposals are then forwarded to the Research Management Committee.

1.2.1. Review Procedure for the Research Management Committee

In preparation for the review, all RMC members are expected to read all the material (Full proposals, CVs, Letters of support) to allow a comprehensive assessment of each application. Each proposal is allocated to a first and second reader.

During the meeting

The evaluations proceed according to the agenda prepared by the RMC Chair. Based on his/her evaluation, the first reader provides an in depth review and presents the project to the committee. The second reader and the committee are then given the opportunity to provide their comments on the project, both positive and negative. The external reviews (when applicable) and overall envelope of funds available for distribution are taken into consideration in these discussions.

Following the general discussion, the Chair seeks a consensus to place each proposal into one of two categories: a) proposal recommended for funding or b) funding not recommended. For proposals recommended for funding, the committee proposes a funding level.

If the total recommended funding exceeds the total allocated budget, the committee may adjust proposed budgets to meet the preliminary funding allocations.

1.3.2 Preparation of the confidential reports

After discussing each application, the committee's consensus comments (strengths and weaknesses) will be noted in point form. The lead applicant for each project may request this report from the ArcticNet Executive Director.

1.4. Funding Recommendation, Decision, and Notification

Based on the Research Management Committee's counsel, the Scientific Director will present the proposed approved projects to the Board of Directors for approval.

A Notification of Award will be sent to successful applicants. While proposals may include a multi-year budget for approval, funding is awarded on a yearly basis subject to progress review (see below). Awards may be granted with conditions, which will be communicated to the applicant by the Research Management Committee.

Successful applicants are required to sign an Acceptance of Award. This document will specify any revisions to the research plan that are requested by the Research Management Committee and specify conditions of participating in ArcticNet.

Applicants not recommended for funding receive a letter from the Executive Director on behalf of the Committee indicating the results of the review. If appropriate, this document will encourage the applicants to participate in other relevant Network activities.

2. ANNUAL REVIEW OF FUNDED PROJECTS

Even though many research projects are funded for more than one year, funds are awarded on an annual basis with projects and associated budgets subject to an annual progress review prior to renewal.

The progress of each funded project is monitored on an on-going basis with an annual in-depth review. Each Project Leader completes an ArcticNet Research Project Progress Report detailing the year's progress including major accomplishments, impediments to progress or change in direction. The Report must also include a description of work planned for the next year, including the approach to be taken, a description of the research team including relevant partnerships and a listing of specific project milestones.

Each project is also required to report on the status of its budget for the current year, explaining any deviation from its funded budget proposal and budget justification. A justification is also required if the project expects to carry over funds to the following year's budget that exceed 20% of its current annual budget.

2.1 Review of Research Project Progress Reports

The ArcticNet Administrative Centre receives the Progress Reports, verifies them for completeness and compiles them in a single document. The compiled Progress Reports are then forwarded to the Research Management Committee. The Network strives to ensure that its decisions are fair and objective and that they are seen as such. No committee member with a conflict of interest may participate in the review process (Appendix B).

2.1.1. Review Procedure for the Research Management Committee

The Research Management Committee will evaluate each Progress Report according to the Original Project Proposal & Budget.

In preparation for the review, all RMC members are expected to read all the material (Progress reports and Original Proposals) to allow a comprehensive assessment of each project. Each report is allocated to a first and second reader.

During the meeting

The evaluations proceed according to the agenda prepared by the RMC Chair. Based on his/her evaluation, the first reader provides an in depth review and presents the report to the committee. The second reader and the committee are then given the opportunity to provide their comments on the project, both positive and negative.

After comments are received from the committee, the Chair seeks a consensus to place each project into one of three categories: a) projects recommended for continued funding at the requested level, b) projects recommended for continued funding conditional on addressing concerns identified by the RMC and, c) projects that should be terminated.

2.1.2 Preparation of the confidential reports

After discussing each Progress Report, the committee's consensus comments will be noted in point form. The Project Leader for each project may request this report from the Executive Director.

2.2. Funding Recommendation, Decision, and Notification

Based on the Research Management Committee's (RMC) counsel, the Scientific Director will present the research program to the Board of Directors (BOD) for final approval.

A Notification of Award, including the major comments from the RMC in point form, will be sent to the Project Leaders of renewed projects. While proposals may include a multi-year budget for approval, funding is awarded on a yearly basis subject to progress review.

Renewed projects are required to sign an Acceptance of Award annually. This document will specify any revisions to the research plan that are requested by the RMC and specify conditions of participating in ArcticNet.

Awards may be granted with conditions, which will be communicated to the Project Leaders of renewed projects by the Executive Director on behalf of the RMC and BOD.

Projects not recommended for renewal receive a letter from the Executive Director on behalf of the RMC and BOD indicating the results of the review. If appropriate, this document will encourage the applicants to participate in other relevant Network activities.

APPENDIX A – EVALUATION CRITERIA FOR NETWORK RESEARCH PROJECTS

1. Relevance to ArcticNet’s overall objectives and Strategic Framework

- Extent to which the proposed research contributes to one or more of ArcticNet’s Integrated Regional Impact Studies (IRISes) and Assessments as identified in the Network’s Strategic Framework.
- Fit with research priorities identified in the Call for Proposals.
- Value added to ArcticNet by the proposed project.
- Extent to which the proposed research contributes to the overall objectives of the Network.

2. Merit of the research

- Excellence, focus and coherence of the research program and research team.
- Project leader’s leadership experience and competence to direct the research program.
- Achievements of the researchers and their ability to contribute to ArcticNet’s research program.
- Originality.
- Anticipated significance.
- Clarity of long and short-term objectives.
- Suitability of proposed methodology.
- Feasibility within the project timeframe.
- Adequacy of both physical and human resources needed to support the proposed research.
- Incorporation of traditional knowledge.
- Projects follows guidelines on responsible research and ethics.

3. Contribution to the training of highly qualified personnel (HQP)

- Number of HQP in relation to project budget.
- Training strategy that promotes multidisciplinary and trans-sectoral research approaches, and encourage trainees to consider the economic, social and ethical implications of their work.
- Potential to expose students to practical aspects of Arctic research in academic, industrial, northern, government and NGO sectors.

4. Networking

- Indication of a networking approach to the research, with two-way interactions between researchers and Network partners.
- Potential for linkages with other Network research and research by non-Network agencies.
- Partnerships with Northern and Inuit organizations and communities in the research.
- Adequacy of research team interaction to achieve successful integration of researchers, students, and partners in the research and knowledge exchange activities.
- Optimization of resources through the sharing of equipment and research facilities, databases and personnel.
- Presence, nature and extent of contributions from the private sector and federal, provincial, and territorial agencies.

5. Knowledge Exchange

- Indication that the knowledge exchange activities are planned as an integral aspect of the project, will involve active and innovative approaches, and are designed to deliver new knowledge and tools in ways that can be readily utilized by partners.
- Evidence of partner involvement and user networking in developing and delivering the knowledge exchange plan.
- Potential for knowledge exchange extending beyond the research team and partner collaborators to other Network partners, and to other research and user communities.
- Adequate resources to accomplish the plan are included in the project budget.

6. Budget

- Justification for the level and duration of funding requested vis-à-vis the stated objectives and milestones.
- Appropriateness of the overall budget, which includes funds requested from the Network and the cash and in-kind contributions from other sources.
- Leverage of ArcticNet funds by cash and in-kind contributions from other sources.

APPENDIX B - CONFLICT OF INTEREST

The Network will strive to ensure that its decisions are fair and objective and that they are seen as such. No committee member with a conflict of interest may participate in the review of a proposal.

Conflict of interest occurs whenever a committee member:

- is the Project Leader or a Co-Investigator on the proposal.
- is at the same department as the Project Leader on the proposal.
- is a relative or close personal friend of the Project Leader on the proposal.
- has had long-standing scientific or personal differences with the Project Leader on the proposal.
- is in a position to gain or lose financially from the outcome of the project.
- feels, for any reason, that she/he cannot provide an objective review of the proposal.

Any committee member who has such a conflict in regard to a proposal must declare a conflict of interest and leave the room for the duration of discussion and decision on that proposal. The Chair is responsible for resolving any areas of uncertainty.

A copy of these guidelines is sent to all members of the External Scientific Reviewers, along with the proposals they are asked to review.