

2026 SSHRC Explore Competition Overview

Available Funding

Maximum \$10,000 per grant.

Purpose

SSHRC Explore Grants:

- Support social sciences and humanities researchers/scholars with modest research project funding requirements.
- Allow for small-scale innovation and experimentation by providing funding to undertake a stand-alone research project or to conduct pilot work towards a larger SSHRC grant application.
- Enable researchers to hire students at any level to participate in their research projects, thereby contributing to their professional development.

Submission Deadline

Monday, February 23, 2026 at 12:00 p.m. (noon) EST. Late or incomplete applications will not be accepted.

Eligible

Tenured or tenure-track members of the Toronto Metropolitan Faculty Association are eligible to apply. [Emerging researchers/scholars](#) and established researchers/scholars are encouraged to apply and will be reviewed against the weighted criteria as set out in the review procedures below. Priority will be given to:

- Emerging researchers/scholars.
- Researchers/scholars who are moving in a new SRC direction.

The subject matter of the project or activity must be consistent with SSHRC's mandate.

Not Eligible

You are not eligible to apply for this competition if you:

- Were previously awarded a SSHRC Explore Grant within the last two calendar years (2024 or 2025) or are holding SSHRC Explore funds in an extension year.
- Have any internal or external funding for any SRC activities proposed for funding in the SSHRC Explore proposal. This means that proposals must be independent of, but can

be built upon or related to, existing or past funded work. There must, however, be no duplication of funding.

- Proposals should not overlap in any way with an application to the Strategic SRC Initiative Fund.
- Co-applicants on the same project cannot each apply for, or receive, separate SSHRC Explore funding.

Review Process

The SSHRC Explore Review Committee will assess the submitted applications and recommend a ranked list to the Vice President, Research and Innovation (VPRI) for approval and dissemination of funds.

How to Apply

Download and complete the [Application Package](#). Please see the Application Guidelines below for full details.

Submit application online via the university's [Research Information System \(RIS\)](#). Applications will not be accepted via email.

Information Session

Wednesday, January 21, 2026 from 11:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. EST.

In this session we will review the application process and requirements. [Sign up for the information session](#) to receive the Zoom link.

OVPRI Contact

Internal SRC Funding and Awards

Email: srcfunding@torontomu.ca

2026 SSHRC Explore Competition Application Guidelines

Submission Deadline

Monday, February 23, 2026 at 12:00 p.m. (noon) EST.

Applications submitted to RIS after this deadline will be considered late and will not be accepted by the system.

Funding Available

The maximum amount of funding that will be granted per award is \$10,000.

You will not be penalized if your budget request is less than the maximum amount.

Description

The SSHRC Explore Grant provides external funds to eligible Toronto Metropolitan University (TMU) faculty members pursuing research/scholarship in the social sciences and humanities.

The purpose of the SSHRC Explore Grant is to:

- Support social sciences and humanities researchers/scholars with modest project funding requirements.
- Allow for small-scale innovation and experimentation by providing funding to undertake a stand-alone research project or conduct pilot work towards a major SSHRC grant application.
- Enable researchers to hire students to participate in their research projects, thereby contributing to their professional development.

Foundational to SRC activity at the university are the principles of equity, diversity, inclusion (EDI) and access. Together, these principles underscore our commitment to and expression of social justice and are essential to our integrated approach to SRC activity as they cross-cut the university's strategic SRC themes and objectives and contribute to inclusive excellence.

As outlined in [the Tri-Agency Statement on Equity, Diversity and Inclusion](#), we are “acting on the evidence that achieving a more equitable, diverse and inclusive Canadian research enterprise is essential to creating the excellent, innovative and impactful research necessary to advance knowledge and understanding and respond to local, national and global challenges.”

The incorporation of an EDI strategy in funding applications is strongly encouraged. For more information, please refer to [EDI Considerations in the Research Process](#). Learn more about [equity, diversity, inclusion and access at TMU](#).

Eligibility

Eligible

Tenured or tenure-track members of the Toronto Metropolitan Faculty Association are eligible to apply. [Emerging researchers/scholars](#) and established researchers/scholars are encouraged to apply and will be reviewed against the weighted criteria as set out in the review procedures below. Priority will be given to:

- Emerging researchers/scholars.
- Researchers/scholars who are moving in a new SRC direction.

The subject matter of the project or activity must be consistent with SSHRC's mandate.

Not Eligible

You are not eligible to apply for this competition if you:

- Were previously awarded a SSHRC Explore Grant within the last two calendar years (2024 or 2025) or are holding SSHRC Explore funds in an extension year.
- Have any internal or external funding for any SRC activities proposed for funding in the SSHRC Explore proposal. This means that proposals must be independent of, but can be built upon or related to, existing or past funded work. There must, however, be no duplication of funding.
- Proposals should not overlap in any way with an application to the Strategic SRC Initiative Fund.
- Co-applicants on the same project cannot each apply for, or receive, separate SSHRC Explore funding.

Ethics Approval

TMU research is governed by policies and practices that ensure the protection of research participants, researchers (faculty, students and staff members), the university and the public. These policies and practices cover research involving humans, the use of animals, controlled goods and hazardous materials, among others.

All funded or unfunded research involving humans, animals or controlled goods undertaken at the university's facilities and conducted by university faculty, students and staff is subject to university review and approval prior to the disbursement of any funds.

For more information, please visit the [TMU research ethics website](#).

SRC Integrity

As set out in [Policy #118 – Scholarly, Research and Creative Activity \(SRC\) Integrity Policy](#), TMU expects that all members of the university (including faculty, staff and students), as well as those who are not members of the university but who are conducting research on university

premises or using university resources, will observe the highest standards of SRC integrity in the conduct of their SRC activities.

Review SRC integrity values and principles in the [SRC Research Integrity Training Modules](#) and/or the [SRC Reference Guide for Research Integrity](#).

Term of Award

SSHRC Explore funds will be awarded for a period of one year. Projects must commence within three months of the award of funding.

Extensions will not be permitted except under extraordinary circumstances. Unused funds at the end of the grant period will be automatically returned to the OVPRI.

Acknowledgement

Recipients of a SSHRC Explore grant must acknowledge SSHRC support for their research-related activities in all outputs. The following wording is suggested:

“This research [or activity] has been supported by a Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada Explore Grant.”

Reporting Requirements

Recipients of a SSHRC Explore grant must submit a report within three months of completion of the project or one year after the release of funds, whichever comes first. Recipients will receive information about how to complete the online report.

Application Requirements

1. Please download and complete the [Application Package](#). This package must be completed and uploaded in order to be deemed eligible for review.

This fillable PDF form consists of the following sections:

- a. **Cover Page** (max. 1 page)
- b. **Abstract** (max. 100 words)
 - i. The abstract should be free of technical jargon and clearly describe the proposal and its potential impact.
- c. **Proposal**
 - i. **Project Description** (max. 1500 words)
Applications should describe the project in enough detail to allow informed assessment by the SSHRC Explore Review Committee members. Since not all committee members will have an intimate

knowledge of the subject matter of all proposals, the proposal must avoid jargon and highly technical content.

The project description must include:

- **Objectives** – The specific nature and objectives of the proposed SRC project.
- **Context** – A brief literature review to situate the proposed project and, as appropriate, its theoretical approach. The context should also include the project's relevance, potential impacts and/or contributions to the respective field of study.
- **Methods** – The methods to be employed, and any related data collection, analysis and data management strategies.
- **Timeline** – The time period within which the work will be undertaken.
- **Optional** – Visual items such as timelines, graphs and imagery may be uploaded to your GAF separately as an appendix (maximum of two pages of appendix items)

- ii. **Knowledge Mobilization and Anticipated Outcomes** (max. 500 words)
There should be a clear indication of the expected outcome(s) of the proposed SRC project (e.g., publications, presentations, preliminary stage of a large project, community engagement initiatives/outreach, etc.), including any relevant student/HQP training. As appropriate, proposals should indicate how the SRC project will prepare the applicant for future externally funded opportunities.

- iii. **List of References** (max. 1 page)

- d. **Budget and Budget Justification** (space provided on application form)
An itemized budget explaining the relationship of the funds requested to the proposed SRC project.

Note on eligible expenses: Funds can be used only for research-related costs that are allowable under SSHRC and institutional guidelines. Expenses must conform to the university's guidelines regarding pay and benefit rates. Please refer to the [financial services website](#) for guidance.

Note on RA/GA salaries: Please see the [details on Research Assistant and Graduate Assistant remuneration](#) on the Human Resources website.

2. **Updated Common CV (CCV)**

Please submit your updated CCV. If you cannot provide a CV in CCV format, please submit your updated OCGS CV. See "Curriculum Vitae (CV) in the OCGS Format" on the [Faculty Affairs website](#).

Please highlight in yellow any key contributions related to your proposal.

Application Submission

Log in to the university [Research Information System \(RIS\)](#):

1. Under “Grant Authorization Form (GAF),” select “New GAF.”
2. Select “Internal OVPRI Programs.”
3. From the Internal Program drop-down list, select “2026 SSHRC Explore.”
Note: If you select the wrong program, your application will not be considered.
4. Check your appointment status. Only TFA members are eligible to apply.
5. Upload the following application documents as two separate PDF documents:
 - a. Completed [Application Package](#) (1 PDF document).
 - b. Updated Common CV (or OCGS CV) (1 document).
6. When the application is ready to submit, click the “Submit for Approval” button before the deadline.

The screenshot shows the 'Research Information System' interface. On the left is a navigation menu with items like 'HOME', 'Grant Authorization Form (GAF)', 'New GAF', 'Unsubmitted GAFs', 'Submitted GAFs', 'Co-Investigator GAFs', 'Sign Co-Investigator', 'Review GAFs', 'Research Account Profiles (RAPs)', 'RESEARCH PORTAL', 'PRE-RELEASE PROTOCOLS', and 'FACULTY GRANTS'. A yellow box labeled '1' points to the 'New GAF' link. The main content area has a header 'Welcome OVPRI!' and a note: 'This application form is for external sponsors and OVPRI programs only. To apply for Faculty Grants like Travel and Seed Grants, please go to Faculty Grants tab.' Below this, there are radio buttons for 'External Sponsor' and 'Internal OVPRI Programs'. A yellow box labeled '2' points to the 'Internal OVPRI Programs' option. Below the radio buttons is a dropdown menu for 'Internal Program:' with '2025 Indigenous SRC Distinction Fund' selected. A yellow box labeled '3' points to this dropdown. Further down is the 'Researcher's Information' section. It includes fields for 'Researcher's Last Name:', 'Researcher's First Name:', 'Phone:', 'Fax:', 'Email:', 'Appointment Status:', 'Faculty of primary appointment:', 'Department of primary appointment:', and a checkbox 'Is this project associated with a Faculty based Centre or Institute?'. A yellow box labeled '4' points to the 'Appointment Status:' dropdown, which is set to 'TFA'. A red text box with an arrow pointing to the 'TFA' option says 'Only TFAs are eligible to apply'. To the right of these fields is the 'OVPRI' section with a text input '552792', an email input 'researcher@torontomu.ca', and two dropdown menus for 'Vice President Research and Innovation' and 'Office, VP Research & Innovation'.

The completed application must be submitted by February 23, 2026 at 12:00 p.m. (noon) EST. Late or incomplete applications will not be accepted.

Review Procedures and Selection Criteria

Committee Structure

The SSHRC Explore Review Committee normally consists of two TFA faculty members recommended by the Associate Deans, Research from the Faculty of Arts, Faculty of Community Services, Faculty of Engineering and Architectural Science, Faculty of Science, Lincoln Alexander School of Law, the Ted Rogers School of Management and The Creative School. The Associate Vice-President, Research and Innovation will chair the committee. The

recommended ranked list will be forwarded to the VPRI for final approval and dissemination of funds.

Preparation for Review

The Review Committee will be guided by:

- [SSHRC EDI in the research enterprise](#).
- [SSHRC Guide to addressing EDI in applications](#).
- For a project which falls under [SSHRC's definition of Indigenous research](#), the [Guidelines for the Merit Review of Indigenous Research](#) and [Chapter 9 of the TCPS2: Research Involving First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples of Canada](#) (as required).

Selection Criteria

Applications will be reviewed using the following criteria and will be weighted with regard to emerging versus established status:

1. Challenge – Aim and Importance

- Originality, significance and expected contribution to knowledge.
- Appropriateness of the literature review.
- Appropriateness of the theoretical approach or framework.
- Appropriateness of the methods/approach.
 - Quality of training and mentoring to be provided to students, emerging scholars and other highly qualified personnel, and opportunities for them to contribute.
 - Potential influence and impact within and/or beyond the social sciences and humanities research community.

Emerging scholar scoring: 50%

Established scholar scoring: 40%

2. Feasibility – The Plan to Achieve Excellence

- Probability of effective and timely attainment of the research objectives.
- Appropriateness of the requested budget and justification of proposed costs.
- Quality of knowledge mobilization plans, including effective knowledge dissemination, knowledge exchange and engagement within and/or beyond the research community.
- Strategies and timelines for the design and conduct of the activity/activities proposed.

Emerging scholar scoring: 20%

Established scholar scoring: 20%

3. Capability – The Expertise to Succeed

- Quality, quantity and significance of past experience and published and/or other

SRC-related outputs of the applicant, relative to the applicant's respective stage of career (i.e., emerging scholar versus established scholar).

- Consideration of EDI-focused measures in research practice and design.

Emerging scholar scoring: 30%

Established scholar scoring: 40%

Emerging Researcher/Scholar

For the purpose of this funding opportunity, the following definition of an emerging researcher/scholar will be used.

An emerging researcher/scholar is someone who has not yet had the opportunity to establish an extensive record of SRC achievements but is in the process of building one. To identify themselves as an emerging scholar, the applicant must meet at least one of the following criteria:

- Have completed their highest terminal degree no more than seven years before the competition deadline (TMU considers only the date of completion of the first terminal degree).
- Have held a tenured or tenure-track academic appointment for less than seven years total at any institution.

The emerging researcher/scholar window can be adjusted for all eligible approved leaves. Professional leaves (e.g., training, sabbatical, administrative) are not credited.

Communication of Results

Applicants will be informed of the competition results via email in late April 2026. Reviewers' comments will be shared anonymously with applicants after the results have been announced.

Additional Guidance and Resources

The following questions are designed to guide applicants toward preparing a successful application. This list is for personal use only and is not included as part of the application package.

- Have you confirmed on the cover page whether or not you are an emerging scholar?
- Have you indicated whether your project has an Indigenous focus?
- Have you indicated whether your SRC activity involves humans, the use of animals, controlled goods or hazardous materials?
- Does your application address EDI considerations in the research process?
- Have you explained how your students/HQP will benefit from these funds?

EDI Considerations in the Research Process

Below are some guiding questions for incorporating EDI considerations into your SRC planning and development. These questions have been drawn from the [NSERC guide on](#)

[integrating equity, diversity and inclusion considerations in research](#). More information and examples can be found on their website.

Planning

- Is your research team diverse? How do you recruit your team members?
- What proactive measures have been/could be put in place to ensure there is wide diversity in the pool of applicants for your research team?
- Is your research topic relevant to the community/communities that you aim to understand or include?
- Have you/should you meaningfully consult and engage communities and community members?

Research Questions

- Do your research questions reflect EDI principles?
- Does your literature review address relevant EDI considerations?
 - What keywords could be used in your literature review to gain deeper and broader knowledge of who might, or might not, be impacted by or contribute to the research?
 - Are certain diversity factors and/or intersections known to affect the phenomenon of interest?
 - What are the relevant knowledge gaps? Have previous studies failed to adequately incorporate relevant diversity factors and/or omitted investigating their intersections?
- How will your research questions and the subsequent findings from your study apply to the needs or experiences of various groups? Who benefits from the findings and/or product developed? Have you considered which populations may experience significant unintended impacts (positive or negative) as a result of the planned research?
- Who should be consulted about the needs and wishes of the group under study (study participants and/or users)?
- What contextual factors are relevant and important, and what may be overlooked without a conscious, intersectional integration of these considerations?
- Have you made assumptions regarding certain diversity factors? Are these based on empirical evidence?

Design of the Study

- Is a research agreement required to begin your work?
- Who are your research participants? Where and how will you recruit?
- Will members from the population/community of interest be invited to help shape the objectives of the study?
- Which diversity factor(s) could be embedded to strengthen the study? Why would you consider or not consider these factors and their intersections?
- What is your position relative to the context of the research problem or the subjects themselves? What biases related to identities, privileges and power imbalances could

impact the study? How will they be mitigated?

- Does the proposed research follow relevant protocols and/or best practices on how, why and by whom research is to be conducted, or with regard to relevant or impacted communities and how knowledge is accessed and shared?
- In projects that involve a First Nations, Inuit or Métis research site or community, have you determined which Indigenous government or community has jurisdiction over or interests at the research site? Have you engaged the community, considered their research priorities and interests in the co-production of knowledge (even if you are from the community)? Are there opportunities for reciprocity in the design of the study such that both the community and the researcher benefit?

Methodology and Data Collection

- How will you collect data? Are question categories inclusive?
- How will you obtain information for each diversity factor under consideration? How will privacy be protected?
- How will you ensure that the research participants reflect the diversity categories that are included in the research design?
- If the analysis is based on existing data sets, is there potential for bias due to the cultural and/or institutional contexts in which the data were generated?
- For Indigenous-focused research, how will data collection, monitoring, usage, ownership and access be determined? Are you using established guides for/by Indigenous Peoples (including [Chapter 9 of the TCPS](#), [OCAP principles](#), [Guidelines for the Merit Review of Indigenous Research](#), [REB: Guidelines for Research Involving Indigenous Peoples in Canada](#), etc.)?
- How will bias be monitored, mitigated and recorded?
- Do EDI considerations impact relations between those conducting the research and those participating in it in ways that affect data collection? How will this be identified and mitigated?
- Does your proposal consider the different forms of support required (e.g., financial, logistical, cultural, linguistic) to ensure that the individuals or communities involved in the research are able to meaningfully participate in it?
- Have you created a [research data management plan](#)?

Analysis and Interpretation

- Where appropriate, have you:
 - Presented your data, disaggregated by diversity factors?
 - Evaluated whether diversity factors and/or their intersections have an impact on outcomes?
 - Statistically tested your data to determine whether the magnitude of effects is different for each diversity factor and their intersections?
- If diverse groups are involved in the research, will they have the opportunity to participate in the interpretation of the data and the review of research findings before

the completion of the proposed research?

- If the results are inconclusive, will they be reported in a disaggregated format for future studies?
 - Are you applying the findings of your research to the population as a whole when your method and design were in fact limited to certain groups?
 - Did you report the diversity factor(s) used in the study to ensure that experiments are reproducible and findings are not over-generalized? Have you considered including this information in the title, abstract or keywords?
- If relevant diversity factors were not included in the study, did you acknowledge that it is a limitation of the study? Did you discuss the implications of the lack of such analyses on the interpretation of the results?

Dissemination of Results

- Are you reporting back to communities? In what format(s)?
- What are you giving back to communities and/or individual study participants?
- What means of dissemination will be most effective in reaching those who will use and/or could benefit from the findings?
- How will inclusivity be integrated into dissemination? Will accessible formats be used? Will anyone who took part in the research receive a summary of the research findings and/or be invited to a presentation about the work?
- Does the dissemination plan consider the appropriate language(s) depending on the group(s) identified?
- Does the dissemination material take into account gender-sensitive and inclusive communication (e.g., gender-neutral language or unbiased content)?
- Are the dissemination strategies the product of collaborative efforts with a diversity of input or have they been envisioned in a narrower focus?