



4. Activities for November

4.1 Orientation Session (Part 2) for New Evaluation Group (EG) Members

An orientation session is held in the fall for new EG members with the EG chairs, and program officers. The purpose of this session is to prepare new members for the competition by informing them of important NSERC policies and EG practices, and to give them an opportunity to ask questions. The program officer and the EG chair will present information on the following topics:

- **Competition Cycle** – An overview of the timetable of the Discovery Grants competition, with information on the responsibilities of EG members at different points in the cycle. Also covered will be the role of the program officers, program assistants and EG chairs.
- **Conflict of Interest** – NSERC’s guidelines on conflict of interest, with tips on how to avoid potential conflict of interest situations.
- **Confidentiality** – Discussion on topics members that should and should not be discussed during tenure as an EG member during informal interactions.
- **Discovery Grant Programs and the Review Process** – An overview of the criteria and review procedures, including what to look for in various sections of the Discovery Grant application and the Personal Data Form; the use of referee reports, and the preparation of Messages to Applicants.
- **Calibration Session** – A mock review of select applications led by the section chairs. The objective of this session is to familiarize members with the competition process and the Discovery Grants Merit Indicators to have agreement and consistency among members on interpretation and use of the ratings.
- **Workload and organizing the review activities** – There is a large volume of material to review and handling it efficiently can save a lot of time and aggravation. Group chairs and section chairs will provide members with advice.

4.2 Assignment of Applications

4.2.1 General Principles

Applications are initially assigned to an EG according to the information submitted by the applicant. Program officers and/or members flag Form 180s where the full application

(Form 101 and Form 100) is required to assign it to an EG. These cases are discussed with the section chairs at the Executive Committee Meeting. Each member is responsible to assess the applications assigned to them

Fiction	Fact
Applicants apply to an EG.	Applicants apply to NSERC. As part of the application process, they will indicate which EG they believe is best suited to review their applications. NSERC verifies application assignments in consultation with members, section chairs and group chairs. Assignments are made on the basis of providing the best possible peer review.
An EG is expected to review applications in terms of their importance to the EG disciplinary themes.	Reviewers are expected to review an application in the context of its absolute Merit within the NSE.
An EG may reject an application because it does not fit within its disciplinary themes.	A member should advise NSERC if they think that an application may be improperly assigned or would particularly benefit from a joint review.

4.2.2 Executive Committee Meeting

A meeting with all group and section chairs (Executive Committee members) is held in the fall and is often in conjunction with the Second Orientation Session.

The objectives of this meeting are:

- **to verify the assignment of applications**– Section chairs determine if a joint review is necessary and, if so, they determine which members will be involved. Section chairs confirm the initial assignments arranged by program officers.
- **to discuss policy and procedures** – Section chairs are informed of policy and procedures which will assist them in guiding members through the calibration session and through competition. It is important to ensure consistent use of the merit indicators in the evaluation of applications, and to reliably enforce policy between sections.

4.2.3 Late Identification of inappropriately assigned applications

Any problem with assignment of applications should be brought to the program officer's attention immediately. Flagging such applications to the attention of the program officer, even during the competition session, is better than having it come to light when the application review begins. The early identification of an inappropriately assigned applications allows the opportunity to ensure a fair and thorough assessment.

4.2.4 Incomplete Applications

The onus is on the applicant to provide sufficient information, addressing the selection criteria, to allow peer assessment. Should NSERC staff determine, in consultation with the EG chair, that the information provided is insufficient, then NSERC may reject the application from the competition.

4.3. Assignment of Reviewers for Research Tools and Instruments (RTI)

RTI Grant applications are reviewed in different ways, depending on the type and number of applications and on the practices of the EG. The selection criteria are the same regardless of the mechanics used for the assessment. In some cases, the EG may form a section that reviews all RTI Grant applications on behalf of the EG. In other EGs, the applications are assigned to EG members as reviewers based on their areas of expertise, and all EG members participate in the deliberations. Normally, each EG ranks each application, and the number of awards depends on the budget available each year.

The program officer will inform members of the process and will explain each participant's role. Members may be asked to evaluate RTI Grant applications and to submit ratings, rankings and/or partial funding recommendations ahead of the competition meetings.

Section [7](#) contains a detailed description of the review of Research Tools and Instruments Grant applications.