

VISTA Research Grant Application Guidelines

Background

In 2016 York University was awarded a seven-year Canada First Research Excellence Fund grant entitled “Vision: Science to Applications (VISTA)”. Funds have been allocated for a research grant program open to Core Members of the VISTA research group. Two Requests for Proposals will be released on an annual basis, and will normally fund three applications per call at a maximum of \$50,000 per award. Deadlines for each call for this competitive program are published on <https://vista.info.yorku.ca>

Research Objectives

The mandate of VISTA is to advance visual science through research that spans computational and biological perspectives and results in real-world applications. To this end, the research grant programme will focus on funding that promotes the goals of the VISTA award. In particular, there will be an emphasis on proposals that embody **interdisciplinarity** (i.e. a biological and computational focus) and an engagement with **VISTA partners**, both established and new. Proposals building on new and existing partnerships will be prioritized.

In particular, successful research grants can contribute to meeting VISTAs goals and key performance indicators related to:

- Collaborations with industry and external research organizations
- Research combining biological and computational approaches
- Research with a translational focus

Conditions of Funding

1. Only core VISTA members may be Principal Investigators. Associate members may act as a co-investigator;
2. The duration of each grant is a maximum of 2 years for a total of \$50,000. Applicants may also apply for one year of funding with the potential to reapply for a second year;
3. The funds are meant to enable faculty members to initiate research or creative projects that build on current research programs or that are innovative in their approach. They should enhance faculty members’ ability to apply for funds from external sources for larger-scale initiatives;
4. The program is not intended to provide continuing support for ongoing research/creative projects or to serve as a substitute for external funding. The intent of CFREF is not to replicate existing funding, but to provide an opportunity to secure new and/or greater sources of funding, or perhaps move in a different direction;
5. The project must be in collaboration with an external partner (academic, public or private sector) and must involve at least 2 VISTA Core/Associate members (including the PI);
6. All manuscripts arising from the projects must be submitted to Innovation York at innovationyork@yorku.ca for Intellectual Property (IP) review prior to final publication;
7. CFREF funding must be acknowledged in professional communications, publications, presentations and conference materials as follows: **“This research was undertaken thanks in part to funding from the Canada First Research Excellence Fund.”**

Proposal Guidelines

1. A Notice of Intent must be submitted by the posted deadline and should include:
 - a. Proposal Title
 - b. Names of Principal Investigator, Co-Investigators, and collaborative partners
 - c. A list of 5 key words
2. The deadline for proposal submission will be posted on the VISTA website and will be strictly enforced.
3. Proposals must use 11-point Arial font or equivalent, with a minimum of one-inch margins on all sides.
4. Page limits should be adhered to as listed below, in particular a maximum 5 pages for the research proposal section. Any additional pages may be deleted prior to review.
5. All submissions must include a signature (digital or scanned) from the Principal Investigator, all co-investigators and partners and must include the following statement:
“I agree to collaborate on the proposed project as outlined in this application. I have contributed to its development and have reviewed the final draft prior to submission”.
6. Please submit proposals to applyvista@yorku.ca.
7. Each proposal should address all sections described below.

GENERAL INFORMATION (*standard form, not included in proposal 5-page max*)

Please include a cover page with the following information:

1. Project title;
2. Name, title, and institutional affiliation of principal investigator (project leader);
 - a. List of names, titles and institutional/industry affiliations of any additional investigators or collaborators. CVs of PI and all co-investigators should be included in the appendix section;
3. Signature (digital or scanned) of the Principal Investigator, collaborators and partners.

RESEARCH PROPOSAL (*5 pages maximum in total*)

Project Description - Approach/Methodology/Objectives (3 pages)

- A. Please provide a lay summary of the research question, objectives, approach, relationship to the goals of VISTA, and expected outcomes/ impact of the proposed project. This summary may be used for public communications and thus should be targeted for the layperson. (300 words max)
- B. Describe the proposed research approach/methodology.
 1. Clearly state the research question being proposed, the rationale for the proposed research, and the objectives of the project;
 2. Describe the design of the research project and rationale, including why the proposed research is novel and/or innovative;

Project Milestones (1 page)

1. Demonstrate realistic milestones that are achievable within a one- or two-year time period, including research ethics approvals, as appropriate.

Description of the Research Team and the Partnership(s) (1 page)

1. Describe the skills/experience of the proposed project team and the value-added for proposed collaborations and partnership(s);
2. Describe how the research builds on established partnerships, or enables the establishment of new partnerships.

Potential Impact and Relevance to VISTA mandate (1 page)

This section should clearly describe the project's potential impact within the mandate of VISTA.

Please address:

1. The potential impact for the project on vision science in terms of new breakthroughs, innovation in industrial application or clinical practice, or knowledge translation/application;
2. How the project is relevant to the VISTA mandate as defined in the research objectives section of this RFP;
3. Explain whether this work will lead to subsequent external funding and indicate the potential source(s).

APPENDICES (not included in the 5-page max proposal):

- A. **Tables & Figures (2 pages max)** - Two additional pages may be included for tables/figures. Please note that any additional pages beyond two may be deleted prior to review.
- B. **Budget & Budget Justification** - Please provide a brief but specific budget that includes the levels of salary support, research trainee support, research equipment and materials, and other expenses. In addition, if any partner funding will be used towards the research project, please indicate the level of both in-kind and cash contributions anticipated. Present a clear rationale for the proposed expenditures. If the funds will be flowing to multiple sites, provide a clear breakdown of where the funds will be flowing.

Please note that:

- Personnel funding levels should be consistent with the applicant's institutional minimum and maximum limits for research staff and trainees; trainee stipend amounts should be consistent with the higher of either the applicant's institutional minimums or minimums recommended by Tri-Council Policy;
 - Grant funds cannot be used to provide matching funds for VISTA Graduate Scholarships or VISTA Postdoctoral Awards;
 - Proposed expenditures should be consistent with CFREF's [guidelines on eligible expenditures](#);
 - Indirect costs shall not be considered eligible for this program;
 - A list of eligible expenses is provided as a guide. For any questions related to the eligibility of research costs, please contact adminvista@yorku.ca;
 - Budget categories should follow the categories listed in the list of eligible expenses. Please provide a breakdown by category and per fiscal year, ending March 31st.
- C. **Curriculum Vitae or Bios** - Please provide your most recent NSERC or CIHR common CV.
 - D. **References (1 page max)** – One additional page may be included in the appendix for references.

Evaluation Process and Criteria for Review

REVIEW COMMITTEE

All project submissions will undergo an arm's-length review process by a 5-person Review Sub-Committee that includes the following:

- Three members from VISTA Research Committee, with the substitution of other Core Members if needed to balance area of expertise and avoid conflict of interest;
- Of the above reviewers, at least one should have expertise in computational vision, and one should have expertise in biological vision;
- Two academic reviewers external to VISTA;
- Review Sub-Committee members may not be a PI, co-investigator or partner on a grant in the given round;
- Review Sub-Committee members will declare conflicts of interest.

EVALUATION CRITERIA

- Quality and originality of the proposal (40%)
 - The quality of the research design/methodology and rationale;
 - The degree to which the proposed research is novel and/or innovative;
 - The potential impact on vision science in terms of new scientific breakthroughs, clinical practice, knowledge translation or commercial application;
 - The clarity and importance of the research question(s) and objectives.
- Feasibility and merit of the proposal (20%)
 - The degree to which the milestones are achievable within a one to two year period;
 - The degree to which the proposed research is interdisciplinary (incorporates methods and/or outputs from multiple disciplines - e.g. visual neuroscience, computer vision, computational arts and design, humanities);
 - The budget is realistic and appropriate for the proposed work.
- Alignment with VISTA mandate and return on investment (20%)
 - The proposed work is aligned with the VISTA mandate;
 - The proposed research will help to secure larger and/or new sources of funding (i.e. research grants, industry contracts, commercial licenses, etc.).
- Quality of the research team, relevance and quality of the partnership (20%)
 - The research team is appropriate for the proposed work;
 - The partnership is relevant for the proposed work and associated impacts and will lead to enhanced quality of research.

EVALUATION PROCESS

- The Review Sub-Committee members will review each application and provide a score out of 100 based on the above-noted criteria;
- Once all applications are scored, the average score for each application will be calculated and assigned an initial rank by the VISTA Admin Team;
- The Research Committee will meet to discuss the scores and associated rankings and make a determination on the final ranking of the applications. As such, the Research Committee may alter the rank of an application if discussion warrants it.

NOTE: For statistical purposes only, applications will also be evaluated in the context of the VISTA Equity Plan, which requires representation from designated groups in the categories of gender and visible minorities, aboriginal persons and persons with disabilities.

Results will be communicated 6 weeks after the submission deadline.