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

The objectives, requirements, and conditions for funding of the Research Grants can be found at
https://vista.info.yorku.ca/opportunities/research-grants/info/

In particular, successful research grants can contribute to meeting VISTA's 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

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, including a maximum of 5 pages for the research proposal section in particular. 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 and **must be aligned with the VISTA mandate to be eligible for funding.**

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 (maximum 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, including why the proposed research is novel and/or innovative.

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

Interdisciplinary and/or translational aspects
   1. Describe the interdisciplinary and/or translational aspects of the project (in terms of the objectives of the VISTA research grant program)

Description of the Research Team and the Partnership(s)
   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 establishes new partnerships.

Impact and Return on Investment
   1. The potential impact for the project on vision science and the success of VISTA
   2. 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 TriCouncil 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. **Equity & Diversity Considerations (1 page max)** - Please address the following questions:

1) Are sex (biological) considerations taken into account in this study proposal (Y/N)? Please explain how or why not.
2) Are gender (socio-cultural) considerations taken into account in this study proposal (Y/N)? Please explain how or why not.
3) Are diversity considerations taken into account in this study proposal (e.g., Racialization, Indigeneity, 2SLGBTQIA+, Poverty) (Y/N)? Please explain how or why not.

D. **Curriculum Vitae or Bios** - Please provide a recent CV for the PI and any CO-PIs/collaborators working on the project (any format acceptable).

E. **References (1 page max**) – One additional page may be included in the appendix for references.

F. **Suggested External Reviewers** – Please provide a list of up to five external reviewers that we may be able to contact. Please include:

1) Name
2) Affiliation/Institution
3) Contact information
4) Area of expertise

All reviewers should be arm's length from the Principal Investigator, Co-Investigators, and collaborative partners. Arm's length means that reviewers should not be chosen who are likely, or perceived to be likely, to be predisposed to view the proposal either positively or negatively. Reviewers should not be former supervisors/supervisees, advisors/advisees within the past 7 years, or close friends.

EVALUATION PROCESS AND CRITERIA FOR REVIEW

REVIEW COMMITTEE

All project submissions will undergo an arm's-length review. Each grant will be reviewed by a review sub-committee consisting of:

- Two members of the VISTA Research Committee, with the substitution of other Core Members if needed to balance area of expertise and avoid conflict of interest;
- One academic reviewer external to VISTA;

Reviewers will i) determine whether the proposal is of sufficient quality to receive funding; ii) rank the proposals; and iii) recommend which grants should receive funding in the current round.

- Reviewer may not be a PI, Co-Investigator, or partner on a grant in the given round;
- Reviewer will declare conflicts of interest;

EVALUATION CRITERIA

Pass/Fail Criteria:

1. Does the proposed research align with the VISTA mandate (Y/N)?
2. Have Equity & Diversity considerations (appendix C) been adequately addressed (Y/N)?

Weighted Criteria:

A. **Quality and originality of the proposal (30%)**
- The quality of the research design/methodology and rationale;
- The degree to which the proposed research is novel/innovative and its potential impact on vision science;
- The clarity and importance of the research question(s) and objectives.

B. **Feasibility and merit of the proposal (10%)**
- The degree to which the milestones are achievable within a one- to two-year period;
- The budget is realistic and appropriate for the proposed work.

C. **Interdisciplinary and/or translational aspects in terms of the VISTA mandate (20%)**
- 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 potential impact on clinical practice, knowledge translation, or commercial application.

D. **Potential return on investment (20%)**
- The proposed work will produce improvements in key VISTA performance indicators;
- The proposed research will help to secure larger and/or new sources of funding (i.e., research grants, industry contracts, commercial licenses, etc.).

E. **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 anticipated impacts and will lead to enhanced quality of research.

EVALUATION PROCESS

- The reviewers will review each application and provide a score out of 100. Scores will be weighted 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 Review Sub-Committee will meet to discuss the scores and associated rankings and make a determination on the final ranking of the applications. As such, the sub-committee may alter the rank of an application if discussion warrants it.

Results will be communicated approximately 6 weeks after the submission deadline.