Discovery Grant Application and Deliberation Process

A brief discussion

Components

1. CCV --- Excellence of Researchers
2. Proposal
3. HQP

All factors equally weighted.

Budget did not seem to have any impact, all were rated as Normal. Best not to ask too little.

Excellence of Researcher

Quality seemed to be an important issue, not necessarily the quantity of publications.

Best not to mix up workshops related to a top conference to the conference itself.

Committee members seemed to get upset if it is perceived that somehow the quality of a publication venue is being exaggerated. May be better to highlight the strong publications & justify some of the not so strong venues (if they are included).

Excellence of Researcher

Contributions to the research community, societies like IEEE, ACM etc. can be brought out.

Recognitions from various societies, adoption of technologies in industry can be highlighted.

Can mention citation counts of some of the important papers, though NSERC discourages committee members to make judgment based on these numbers. Thus, plain language description of how some research is making a difference and advancing science can be helpful.

Submission System

There were many problems in 2013-2014. I had sent a long list of complaints to NSERC based on the many emails I had received.

Any comments for 2014-2015?

Probably deficiencies can be summarized and sent to NSERC soon, so that things can be fixed before the grant submission date.

Proposal

A common mistake by many was outlining a project with well defined tasks solving a specific problem. This was considered a weakness.

What is expected is a "Program of Research," where some novel new directions are looked into over the long term, with some short term objectives that help in achieving this long-term goal.

Write up of Proposal

Readability of proposal is important.

Too many acronyms & buzzwords may not be helpful.

I suggest a professional English editor to provide some comments. You can then decide which of the comments are useful in improving the writing.

Components of the Proposal

Best to describe proposed techniques with some depth.

I could not get a clear answer on how the 5 pages should be split among the 5 sections that are to be included. However, proposals with not much details on the methodology seemed to be penalized.

Research Methodology

Having a few research topics to discuss may be better, since it is possible to go into more depth on each.

Best to demonstrate some research achievements in the areas of the proposal; i.e., something that looks like an entirely new area outside the expertise of an applicant can raise concern.

At the same time, the proposed research should look very novel not just an incremental improvement of work done in the past.

Changing Research Direction

We don't need to follow the research proposal line by line after funds are received.

Thus, if you are considering exploring a completely new direction it is possible to do so after a Discovery grant is received.

However, I am not sure if a completely new research direction that is unrelated to your recent or past research will get favorable reviews.

Details on Methodology

Technical details that bring out Novelty is important.

However, details like "I will use JAVA for … and C++ for … along with MATLAB Curve Fitting Toolbox for …" can make a proposal weak. Committee members are not looking for implementation details.

References

Best to cover other peoples work in these 2 pages.

Most of your own papers can hopefully be cited from CCV.

HQP

Details on how you trained each student can he helpful. Saying that you have a group meeting with 10 students once a week can be seen as negative.

A large number of students, about whom you know little about may not be positive.

Best to list what each student is doing after graduation.

Some sense of students moving along in their careers is considered positive.

Some people with big grants have a large number of students; thus, it may be better to clearly mention that students were trained mostly from the Discovery grant in case you are primarily dependent on this grant.