

General research funds procedure

Parent policy

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Purpose

The purpose of this procedure is to provide detailed guidance on the establishment, disbursement, identification, transfer, management and use, and reporting of General Research Funds (GRFs) to ensure compliance with all relevant funder and Bow Valley College policies, procedures, guidelines, and definitions (e.g., researcher); and contractual agreements with funders.

This procedure applies to any GRF established according to the General Research Funds Policy.

It includes separate GRFs holding unspent funds in trust from expired or terminated Social Science and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) and Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada (NSERC) funded projects.

It includes GRFs holding unspent funds from other funders of Bow Valley College research.

This procedure may be amended from time to time as funder and Bow Valley College policies, procedures, and guidelines related to GRFs are introduced or modified.

Scope

This procedure applies to all members of the College community who conduct research under the auspices and authority of the College and apply to use a GRF to fund research projects. It is applicable to all who receive research funding through a GRF, as well as those responsible for the administration, financial management, disbursement, and reporting of GRF.

Compliance

Employees (including contractors) and learners are responsible to know, understand, and comply with Bow Valley College procedures, and any other documentation that relate to their position, employment, or enrolment at the College.

Procedures

- **Establishment of GRFs**
 - GRFs may be established for each granting agency and funder that allows unspent funds to be transferred to a GRF.
 - Separate GRFs will be established and maintained for SSHRC, NSERC, other funding bodies, and/or as per contractual partnership agreements to hold in trust unspent funds from eligible expired or terminated grants:
 - A separate NSERC GRF;
 - A separate SSHRC GRF;
 - A separate Bow Valley College GRF. This GRF holds pooled unspent funds from other funders who allow funds to be pooled;
 - Separate funder – specific GRFs. These GRFs hold unspent funds from other funders who do not allow funds to be pooled.

- **Identification of funds to be transferred to a GRF**
 - Three (3) months prior to the end date of a GRF eligible award, Academic and Research will ask the Lead Researcher if they want to seek an extension, or if the project is completed. Academic and Research will then inform Finance of the project status.
 - Where funder policies allow unspent funds to be kept by the College and flexibility exists in whether or not the funds must be transferred to a GRF, the applicable Dean/Director where the original grant was awarded and the Special Advisor, Academic and Research will recommend for the approval of the Vice- President, Academic for the funds to be transferred to a GRF or otherwise expended in compliance with funder expectations.
 - If funds are to be transferred to a GRF, Finance will work with the funder to complete the transfer.
- **Transfer of funds to the GRF**
 - Transfers to the NSERC and SSHRC GRF are authorized and monitored by the agencies under specified conditions.
 - Transfers will be considered if:
 - The amount to be transferred corresponds to the definition of residual balance,
 - The institution has completed the annual reconciliation of active awards by submitting the Statements of Account, and
 - The institution has spent at least 50% of the opening balance of its GRF during the current year.
 - Exceptions to the transfer of funds to a GRF are as follows:
 - In the case that the residual funds do not come from a program eligible for a GRF, in which case reimbursement is required.
 - In the case that the institution has not spent 50% of the opening balance of NSERC and/or SSHRC GRFs, new transfers are put on hold, and the institution must demonstrate a tangible need for additional funds. If no rationale is provided, a reimbursement is required.
 - Bow Valley College will review the College information on the NSERC/SSHRC Grants and Scholarships Administrative Portal (GSAP) to ensure the data provided to the College by NSERC/SSHRC and posted to the GSAP is accurate and the permissions received from NSERC/SSHRC are accurately reflected in the GSAP. The GSAP will be reviewed by Academic and Research in mid- to late- November and mid- to late- May.
 - Transfer of unspent funds to a GRF established under the authority of or by contractual agreements with other funders are subject to the terms and conditions established by these funders regarding transfer eligibility, disbursement, use and reporting of GRF funds.
- **Application for and disbursement of funds**
 - Eligible applicants must be Bow Valley College employees who meet the requirements of the original funder for a given GRF.
 - The proposed research project should align with one of the research strategic areas and engage minimally one learner and an external partner to solve the respective partners problem/s.
 - Applicants must submit a full proposal using the appropriate forms created by the Bow Valley College Research Grants Committee (RGC).



- For research conducted by Bow Valley College employees, the completed application must be reviewed and approved by the applicant's supervisor and Dean/Director of their department before submission. Approval will be determined by obtaining all required signatures indicated on the application form.
- All GRF applications will be reviewed by the Bow Valley College RGC or sub-committees constituted by the RGC. Funding for all projects will be granted on the merits of the proposal as measured against the criteria for any given GRF.
 - All GRF proposals recommended for funding will be forwarded to the Vice-President, Academic for approval.
- Priority for GRF funding will be given to projects aligned with the College's strategic priorities and research goals, as updated from time-to-time. In addition, the committee may reserve a portion of funds to support researchers and programs that have not previously received GRF funding to encourage capacity building across the College. Where applicants have received previous GRF funding, only those who have demonstrated achievement in their approved deliverables will be considered for future GRF funding.
- The maximum grant amount for each project from a GRF will be established annually by the RGC for each GRF. Grants may be provided for the entire proposal or a portion of it.
- All the funding for GRF funded projects must be used exclusively for the approved project.
- Where no funder agreement, policies, or procedures exist, unused funds will be returned to the GRF from which they were awarded.
- **Management and use of funds**
 - The Finance Department is responsible for the fund management of the GRF.
 - The President or his or her authorized delegate is responsible for authorizing expenditures in accordance with the requirements and conditions of the grants and with the College's and the funder's policies. No other party may initiate or authorize expenditures without the President's or his or her delegate's written delegated authority. Records of delegated authority shall be kept on file.
 - Funds shall be used at all times in accordance with funder and Bow Valley College policies, procedures, and guidelines, and contractual agreements with funders.
 - Eligible expenses are determined by the policies and requirements of the source of the GRF.
 - NSERC and SSHRC GRF eligible expenses are outlined in the Tri-Agency Guide on Financial Administration. It is the responsibility of the Lead Researcher, with guidance from Finance and Academic and Research, to ensure that GRF funds are used to cover eligible expenses associated with the direct costs of research and that all expenses charged to the GRF are authorized by the person responsible for the GRF or his or her authorized delegate.
 - Eligible expenses for other funders are determined by their policies and/or contractual agreements with the College.
 - Where funders place no restrictions on the use of GRFs, funds shall be expended in accordance with Bow Valley College policies and procedures, and any criteria established by the College.
- **Reports**
 - Bow Valley College will report on the status of each GRF in accordance with the requirements of each funder, as enumerated in their policies or contractual agreements with the College.
 - For NSERC and SSHRC, Bow Valley College must submit a Statement of Account (Form 300 or 301) to each agency for each GRF annually for the period of April 1 to March 31. The deadline to submit the Form 301 for the GRF is June 30, the same

date as the annual reconciliation of active grants. This annual GRF reconciliation exercise allows the agencies to track incurred expenses and accumulated balances. It is also used to authorize or not authorize transfers to the GRF of the upcoming fiscal year.

- Where funders do not provide reporting guidelines, GRF annual reconciliation and reporting will follow the Bow Valley College fiscal year.
- **Bow Valley College Research Grants Committee (RGC)**
 - The Bow Valley College RGC shall comprise five members selected from continuous Bow Valley College employees.
 - The Special Advisor, Academic and Research will be the Chair and a permanent member of the RGC.
 - Four term members will be appointed by the Vice-President, Academic in consultation with the Special Advisor, Academic and Research, and other stakeholders, to meet the diversity of interests and balance the strategic priorities of the College.
 - Term members will serve for a maximum of two years. For committee continuity, no more than two members' terms of service will terminate within a six-month period.
 - The Research Associate will provide administrative support to the Committee and will serve as a non-voting member.
 - The committee may seek expert consultation in certain areas on an *ad hoc*, non-voting basis to assist with the review of some applications.
 - The RGC may constitute sub-committees and review boards as required to enable the efficient and effective review of applications and awarding and disbursement of GRFs.

Definitions

Bow Valley College employee:

Refers to any individual employed by BVC (i.e., exempt, faculty [under the BVC Faculty Association], and staff [under the Alberta Union of Provincial Employees]).

Funder:

Any person or organization who provides funding to the College in support of research. Examples of a funder are granting agencies (such as NSERC and SSHRC), federal or provincial departments, foundations, donors and persons or organizations having research contracts with the College.

General Research Fund:

A General Research Fund (GRF) is a special account opened as a trust account under the authority of the President of the College (and authorized delegates by the President), into which the unspent funds of expired or terminated grants are transferred with the authorization of the granting agencies. (Tri-Agency http://science.gc.ca/eic/site/O63.nsf/eng/h_5429D5A5.html)

Lead researcher:

The person who has primary responsibility for the intellectual direction of the research or research-related activity and assumes administrative responsibility for the grant. In the case of teams or formal partnerships, the Lead Researcher is understood to be responsible for the overall leadership of the team or partnership. Lead researcher is an umbrella term that covers those employed by the Tri-Agency, such as applicant, principal investigator, and project director.

Learner:

Any person registered in a program or course delivered by the College.

Management:

The continuous operational management of individual grants on a transactional or regular basis including the responsibilities of employees within specific functions related to the management of grants as part of their role within the College (e.g., authorized representative reviews transactions for eligibility, finance processes transactions and reviews for eligibility). Functions such as Internal Audit are not involved in daily management. (Adapted from: Tri-Agency Collaborative Information Gathering Tool glossary).

Tri-Council or Tri-Agency:

Refers to the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR), National Sciences and Engineering Research Council (NSERC), and Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC).

Tri-Agency Guide on Financial Administration (TAGFA):

Describes the use of funds derived from Tri-Agency sources and delineates eligible and ineligible expenses. It guides the use of funds for all awards made from NSERC and SSHRC GRF.

Unspent funds:

The remaining balance of a research fund, after the project has been completed with all terms and conditions met, all revenue fully received, and all direct and indirect expenditures related to the project incurred. A specific example of unspent funds is *residual balance* that the Tri-Agency defines as “an amount corresponding to 50% or less of the allocated grant. Any higher amount is deemed to be an unspent grant and a reimbursement is required.” (Tri-Agency: http://science.gc.ca/eic/site/063.nsf/eng/h_5429D5A5.html)

Data sheet

Accountable officer

The Executive Team member responsible for the Academic Division

Responsible officer

Special Advisor, Academic and Research

Relevant dates

Approved	Board of Governors: BOG181125-08
Effective	November 25, 2018
Next review	November 2026
Modification history	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Accountable and Responsible Officer updated 5-25-2023 Rebranded 2021 Housekeeping January 2024
Verified by	Office of the President, May 2023*
Revision Number	Rev. 01 – (January 2024)

Related policy

General research funds policy #500-3-4

Associated policy(ies), procedure(s), and guideline(s)

Delegated signing authority policy and procedure #100-2-5

Ethical conduct for research involving human participants policy and procedure #500-3-2

Expense claim procedure #100-1-3

Hospitality event expense policy #100-1-9

Integrity in research and scholarly activity policy and procedure #500-3-3

Purchasing policy #100-1-2

Sustainable procurement procedure #100-1-2

Travel expense policy #100-1-8

Related legislation

Tri-Agency Guide on Financial Administration (2023)

(http://www.nserc-crsng.gc.ca/Professors-Professeurs/FinancialAdminGuide-GuideAdminFinancier/index_eng.asp)

Tri-Agency Guidelines for the General Research Fund

(http://www.science.gc.ca/eic/site/063.nsf/eng/h_5429D5A5.html?OpenDocument)

Tri-Agency Framework: Responsible Conduct of Research (2021)

(<https://rcr.ethics.gc.ca/eng/framework-cadre-2021.html>)

Attachments (optional)

N/A