

Ontario Tech University SSHRC Small Grants (SSG) Program – 2026 Competition

SSHRC Explore Grants

SSHRC Exchange Grants

Deadline: Monday, January 19, 2026

Overview

On behalf of Ontario Tech University, the Office of Research Services applied for, and received, funds from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) Institutional Grant program. These funds are intended to support research activities undertaken by SSHRC-eligible researchers with the goal of strengthening research capacity in the social sciences and humanities. More specifically, these funds will be used to support research activities that will enhance the research programs and expertise of Ontario Tech researchers, leading to the development of competitive applications to national SSHRC programs.

The SSHRC Institutional Grant funds will be awarded to Ontario Tech researchers in SSHRC-eligible disciplines through the SSHRC Small Grants (SSG) program in two streams (**new values for 2026 competition**):

- **SSHRC Explore Grants** – up to **\$10,000** for small-scale innovation, experimentation, and pilot research
- **SSHRC Exchange Grants** – up to **\$5,000** for small-scale knowledge mobilization activities

The total number of grants awarded in each stream will depend on the total funding available and the number of quality applications submitted in each stream.

For applicant eligibility, grant terms and conditions, and application instructions, see detailed guidelines for each competition stream below.

Adjudication Process

Applications will be reviewed by a **multi-disciplinary Selection Committee** comprised of:

- Two or three faculty members in SSHRC-related disciplines
- One faculty member at-large
- Office of Research Services representatives (non-voting)

All committee decisions are subject to the approval of the Vice-President, Research and Innovation or designate. There is no process to appeal the SSHRC Small Grants competition results.

Achieving a more equitable, diverse and inclusive research enterprise at Ontario Tech University is essential to creating the excellent, innovative and impactful research necessary to advance knowledge and understanding, and to respond to local, national and global challenges. As such, the SSHRC Small Grant Selection Committee will be required to undergo [unconscious bias training](#) prior to application review. Please consult SSHRC’s pilot [Guide to Addressing Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Considerations in Partnership Grant Applications](#) for more information.

SSHRC Small Grant Detailed Guidelines and Application Instructions

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Questions?

Amber Zapletal, Grants Officer
Office of Research Services
amber.zapletal@ontariotechu.ca

SSHRC Explore Grant

Description

SSHRC Explore Grants are intended to support research activities undertaken by SSHRC-eligible researchers with the goal of strengthening research capacity in the social sciences and humanities. More specifically, these funds will be used to support research activities that will enhance the research programs and expertise of Ontario Tech researchers, leading to the development of competitive applications to national SSHRC programs.

SSHRC Explore Grants:

- support social sciences and humanities researchers with modest research funding requirements at any stage of their career;
- allow for small-scale innovation and experimentation by providing funding to develop a research project or to conduct pilot work; and
- enable researchers to hire students at any level to participate in their research projects, thereby contributing to the students' professional development.

Explore Grants will provide up to \$10,000 to Ontario Tech faculty members to conduct research activities that lead to stronger SSHRC grant submissions with broad impact in social sciences and humanities.

Amount: Up to \$10,000 (New for 2026)

Duration: One year (April 1, 2026 – March 31, 2027)

Please note: the total number of awards will depend on the funding available in any given year.

Applicant Eligibility

- The SSHRC Explore Grant call is open to all Ontario Tech faculty who are SSHRC-eligible researchers in accordance with [SSHRC eligibility guidelines](#), except for those listed below under “**exclusions.**” Applicants can be at any stage of their career; however, priority will be given to [emerging scholars](#) in the current competition.
- Eligible researchers may only apply to one SSHRC Small Grant stream, either Explore or Exchange, in the 2026 competition.
- Postdoctoral fellows are eligible to apply as Principal Applicant, provided they meet all other eligibility criteria and are affiliated with Ontario Tech for the duration of the grant, **and provided that their salary is not paid from a tri-agency grant. Postdocs whose salary is paid from a tri-agency grant are not eligible to hold the SSHRC Explore Grant as the Principal Applicant and will have to apply via their supervisor.** (Please contact [Amber Zapletal](#) if you are a postdoctoral fellow interested in applying for the Explore Grant to confirm your eligibility prior to applying.)
- There must be no duplication of funding for the project from other sources, internal or external.

Exclusions:

- If you were awarded a SSHRC Explore Grant in the last two years (grant start dates in 2024 and 2025), then you are not eligible to apply for SSHRC Explore in the current round.
- Researchers who hold an active SSHRC Insight Grant or Insight Development Grant as the Principal Applicant are not eligible to apply. If SSHRC funding was applied for, but the result is still pending on the SSHRC Explore competition deadline, you are eligible to apply for and hold an Explore Grant, provided there is no duplication of funding for the same activities.
- Adjunct Professors and students are not eligible to apply.
- Visiting fellows/scholars are not eligible, nor are the costs incurred for their travel and residency.

Eligible Expenses

Explore Grants can be used to fund research activities in seed/pilot projects including:

- **Student training:** Funds to support undergraduate and graduate student research assistantships.
- **Technical personnel or professional services:** Funds for technician, translator, graphic designer, etc.
- **Travel:** Funds to support research-related travel to gather data or meet with partners.

- **Other:** Costs associated with survey development or administration, use of specialized research equipment, purchase of data sets, small equipment, software to support the research activities, supplies not normally provided by the University, etc.

Budget requests must also comply with [the Tri-Agency Use of Grant Funds Guidelines](#) and all university policies.

Please note: Honoraria/research participant compensation for anyone who is eligible to hold Tri-agency funds is *not an eligible expense* for SSHRC Explore Grants.

Please note: Open-access journal fees and conference travel are *not an eligible expense* for SSHRC Explore Grants. Requests for knowledge mobilization funding (including open-access, conference travel and event funding) must be made through the SSHRC Exchange Grant program.

Conditions of Award

- **For projects requiring REB approvals (NEW FOR 2026):** All awarded applicants must provide evidence of REB submission by June 1, 2026. Failure to provide evidence of REB submission will result in the award being cancelled and funds will be returned and reallocated to other projects.
- Grant recipients must acknowledge SSHRC support for their research.
- All funds *must be spent* by the grant end date (March 31, 2027). Any remaining funds will be returned to the Office of Research Services to be used in subsequent SSHRC Small Grant competitions.
- To be eligible for future SSG funding, Explore Grant recipients must apply for an external SSHRC grant within two years of the awarded grant start date.
- Grant recipients are required to complete a one-page report due one month after the grant end date, explaining how the funding strengthened their project and will enable them to prepare a competitive application to an external SSHRC grant program in a timely manner. Information in these reports is used by the ORS for reporting on the SSHRC Institutional Grant and future SSHRC Institutional Grant applications.
- Grant recipients will be asked to serve on future Ontario Tech SSHRC Small Grant selection committees.

How to Apply

1. Complete your application form, proposal, budget and budget justification. *Please refer to the application form and instructions attachment for details on what information to include in each section.*

- a) Application Form (1 page). Obtain required signature.
- b) Proposal (4 pages) see application form for detailed instructions.
 - Project description (2 pages)
 - Work plan with timeline (1 page)
 - References (1 page)
- c) Budget and budget justification (2 pages)

2. Prepare your CV (no page limit): [SSHRC CV](#), or [SSHRC CCV](#) format preferred, but not required.

3. Submit your application, proposal, budget and your CV (as one combined PDF) by email to amber.zapletal@ontariotechu.ca by Monday, January 19, 2026, at 5 p.m.

Evaluation Criteria

The Selection Committee will use the following criteria and scoring scheme:

- **Challenge (60%)** – The aim and importance of the proposed research
 - Originality, significance and expected contribution to knowledge
 - Clarity of objectives
 - Appropriateness of the literature review
 - Appropriateness of the theoretical approach or framework
 - Appropriateness of the methods / approach
 - Quality of [training and mentoring plan](#), including EDI considerations

- Potential influence and impact of the research within and/or beyond the academic research community, including potential to secure future external funding
- **Feasibility (20%)** – The plan to achieve excellence
 - Probability that the objectives will be met within the timeline proposed
 - Demonstrated need for funds and suitable proposed use of funds: adequate funds not held or funds held but cannot be used to support the activities described for specified reason; appropriateness of requested budget and justification of proposed costs
 - Appropriateness of the research design and strategies for conducting the activity/activities proposed
- **Capability (20%)** – The expertise to succeed
 - Quality, quantity and significance of previous research experience and published and/or creative outputs of the applicant(s) relative to their roles in the project and their respective stages of career
 - Evidence of contributions to the development of students and emerging scholars; Support for new faculty members and emerging scholars
 - Potential of the applicant to make future contributions and secure external grants

In the evaluation of Explore Grants, *the committee will be encouraged to prioritize applications from [emerging scholars](#).*

SSHRC Exchange Grant

Description

SSHRC Exchange grants are meant to support research dissemination and knowledge mobilization activities that will enhance the research programs and expertise of Ontario Tech researchers and advance their careers.

SSHRC Exchange Grants:

- support the organization of small-scale knowledge mobilization activities, such as workshops and seminars, to encourage collaboration and the dissemination of research results both within and beyond the academic community; and
- allow researchers to attend or present their research at scholarly conferences and other dissemination venues that align with SSHRC’s mandate to advance their careers and encourage the exchange of ideas and research results at the national and international level.

Exchange Grants will provide up to \$5,000 to Ontario Tech faculty members to disseminate and mobilize knowledge in the social science and humanities. Proposed events can involve face-to-face or virtual interaction.

Amount: Up to \$5,000 (New for 2026)

Duration: April 1, 2026 – March 31, 2027

Please note: the total number of awards will depend on the funding available in any given year.

Applicant Eligibility

- The SSHRC Exchange Grant call is open to all Ontario Tech faculty who are SSHRC-eligible researchers in accordance with [SSHRC eligibility guidelines](#), except for those listed below under “**exclusions.**” Applicants can be at any stage of their career; however, priority will be given to [emerging scholars](#) in the current competition.
- Eligible researchers may only apply to one SSHRC Small Grant stream, either Explore or Exchange in the 2026 competition.
- Postdoctoral fellows are eligible to apply as Principal Applicant, provided they meet all other eligibility criteria and are affiliated with Ontario Tech for the duration of the grant, **and provided that their salary is not paid from a tri-agency grant. Postdocs whose salary is paid from a tri-agency grant are not eligible to hold the SSHRC Explore Grant as the Principal Applicant and will have to apply via their supervisor.** (Please contact [Amber Zapletal](#) if you are a postdoctoral fellow interested in applying for the Explore Grant to confirm your eligibility prior to applying.)
- There must be no duplication of funding for the project from other sources, internal or external.

Exclusions:

- If you were awarded a SSHRC Exchange Grant in the last two years (grant start dates in 2024 and 2025), then you are not eligible to apply for SSHRC Exchange in the current round.
- Researchers who hold an active SSHRC Grant (Insight Grant, Insight Development Grant, Partnership Development Grant, Partnership Grant,) as the Principal Applicant are not eligible to apply. If SSHRC funding was applied for, but the result is still pending on the SSHRC Exchange competition deadline, you are eligible to apply for and hold an Exchange Grant, provided there is no overlap in funding for the same activities.
- Adjunct Professors and students are not eligible to apply.
- Visiting fellows/scholars are not eligible, nor are the costs incurred for their travel and residency.

Eligible Expenses

Exchange Grants can be used to fund knowledge dissemination and mobilization:

- **Conference (or other dissemination venue) travel or virtual participation:** transportation, accommodation, registration fee, subsistence costs (max. 4 days) for applicant and/or graduate students. Travel assistance is provided for participation in national and international scholarly conferences for which the applicant is giving a paper or making a poster presentation, leading a workshop, giving a keynote address, etc.

- **Small-scale knowledge mobilization event:** RA salary, professional/technical services (website development, IT support for event, translation, webinar software etc.), video production costs, event space and supplies, participant incentives, etc.

Events can be in person or virtual.

Priority for travel-funding requests will be given to (in descending order):

1. Invited presentations such as a "keynote address" at a major or annual conference.
2. Papers selected by an academic panel at a major or annual conference.
3. Regular presentations at a major or annual conference.

Applicants awaiting confirmation of participation from the conference organizers, at the time of application, can indicate this on their application forms. Funding may be awarded conditionally until the applicant submits confirmation of their role in the conference.

Budget requests must also comply with [the Tri-Agency Use of Grant Funds Guidelines](#) and all university policies.

Please note: SSHRC Exchange Grants must be used for the specific knowledge mobilization request that was approved by the adjudication committee. Research costs are not eligible under the SSHRC Exchange Grant. Requests for research funds must be made through the SSHRC Explore Grant program.

Conditions of Award

- **Grant recipients must acknowledge SSHRC support for their research.**
- **All funds *must be spent* by the grant end date (March 31, 2027).** Any remaining funds will be returned to the Office of Research Services to be used in subsequent SSHRC Small Grant competitions.
- Grant recipients are required to complete a one-page report due one month after the grant end date, explaining how the funding strengthened their project and will enable them to prepare a competitive application to an external SSHRC grant program in a timely manner. Information in these reports is used by the ORS for reporting on the SSHRC Institutional Grant and future SSHRC institutional grant applications.
- Grant recipients will be asked to serve on future Ontario Tech SSHRC Small Grant selection committees.

How to Apply

For travel funding, complete the application form, significance statement, presentation abstract, evidence of acceptance, budget and budget justification and combine into one PDF. *Please refer to the application form and instructions attachment for details on what information to include in each section.*

1. **Application Form (1 page)** with signatures.
2. **Significance of conference for your research** (no more than 100 words)
3. **Presentation abstract**
4. **Evidence of acceptance**
5. **Budget table**
6. **CV (no page limit):** [SSHRC CV](#), or [SSHRC CCV](#) format preferred, but not required.

For knowledge mobilization funding, complete the application form, proposal, budget and budget justification into one PDF. *Please refer to the application form and instructions attachment for details on what to include in each section.*

1. **Application Form (1 page)** with signatures.
2. **Proposal (2 pages)**
3. **Budget table (1 page).**
4. **CV (no page limit):** [SSHRC CV](#), or [SSHRC CCV](#) format preferred, but not required.

Submit your application, proposal, budget and your CV (as one combined PDF) by email to amber.zapletal@ontariotechu.ca by Monday, January 19, 2026, at 5 p.m.

Evaluation Criteria

The Selection Committee will use the following criteria and scoring scheme:

- **Challenge (60%)** – The aim and importance of the endeavor
 - Clarity of the stated objectives and defined scope of the [knowledge mobilization](#) activity
 - Evidence of the quality and significance of the research results to be disseminated, including a clear delineation of a well-defined body of knowledge to be disseminated
 - Quality, innovativeness, and appropriateness of the knowledge mobilization activity, including effective dissemination, exchange, as well as engagement with stakeholders, where applicable
 - Evidence of the quality and significance of the event, its scope and potential contribution, including the degree event attracts appropriate participants
 - Likelihood of influence and impact within and/or beyond the immediate research community
- **Feasibility (20%)** – The plan to achieve
 - Probability that the objectives of the activity will be met within the timeline proposed
 - Appropriateness of the requested budget and justification of proposed costs
 - Demonstrated need for funds: adequate funds not held or funds held but cannot be used to support the activities described for specified reason
- **Capability (20%)** – The expertise to succeed
 - Quality, quantity and significance of previous research experience and published and/or creative outputs of the applicant(s) relative to their roles in the project and their respective stages of career
 - Evidence of previous knowledge mobilization activities and of impacts on professional practice, social services and policies, etc.

In the evaluation of Exchange Grants, *the committee will be encouraged to prioritize applications from [emerging scholars](#).*