

Overview

The budget workbook. You are being asked to fill out a spreadsheet with information related to your budget request for the coming year, and a three-year budget projection (next year and the two years after that). The workbook has four spreadsheets in it. Only the white cells in the first spreadsheet (BUDGET REQUEST) can be modified. All of the other cells and the three other spreadsheets are read-only.

Sections of the spreadsheet. There are four sections to the spreadsheet. The first has information about you, the projects in which you are involved, and your collaborators on those projects. The next three sections are budget estimates for the next three years. Budget estimates are requested for each project itemized according to the standard categories used by the NCE. For each year the spreadsheet will automatically compute a total estimate for each project, a total estimate for each category summed over all projects, and a grand total, which is the amount you are requesting for that year.

Percentages. There are two additional columns that have percentages. The first (PERCENT) is the portion of your annual budget requested in each category. To the right is a second column (TARGET) that is the “ideal” percentage for the total research expenditures across the entire network. These are rough guidelines. Individual network investigators are not expected to match each of the targets.

Section 1 (identification)

Each GRAND researcher is asked to complete a budget request for his/her own funding allocation. Collaborating Researchers are herein referred to as “Collaborating Network Investigators” and the current Network Investigators are herein referred to as “Principal Network Investigators”. This simply reflects a change to the name of the classes of researcher, but it should allow for Collaborating Network Investigators to receive their funding allocation directly. All other requirements related to and distinctions between the two classifications of researcher remain in place. Therefore, PNIs will submit their own budget requests, and CNIs will submit their own separate budget requests (albeit in consultation with the PNIs with whom they collaborate). In this document, references to “Network Investigators” are generally intended to include both PNIs and CNIs, in the absence of an indication to the contrary.

Line 1. All network investigators should enter their name in the format “Last, First” on the first line. This is how we know who is requesting the money. Most people should go to one of the two tabs (PNI LIST and CNI LIST) that have lists of names and copy-paste your name. This avoids problems if the database has a different version of your name than what you usually use. (If the name in the list is not what you prefer, please use it anyway but notify us and it will be changed for the future.)

Line 2. Starting in column A and working to the right, fill in the acronyms for all of the projects in which you are involved. Projects can be in any order, but don’t leave blank columns between projects. There is a tab (PROJECT LIST) that has all of the project acronyms. Copy-and-paste from that so the acronyms are correct. This will facilitate automatic processing of the budget request forms.

Lines 3-5. These lines are only filled out by Collaborating Network Investigators. PNIs can leave them blank. For each project you listed, enter at least one (on Line 3) and up to three (using Line 4 and then Line 5) Principal Network Investigators with whom you are collaborating on the project. CNIs can only request funds for projects on which they collaborate with a PNI who is on the project. If there is no PNI with whom you collaborate on that project, do not list the project and do not request funds for the project.

Section 2 (2011-2012 budget request)

Apportion your estimated expenses according to the projects that will incur the expense. We realize that you are only estimating costs and that when actual expenditures are made they might be attributable to multiple projects. Give it your best shot. The total across projects for each category is what is most important, but the distribution within projects will be considered. Projects whose total budget exceeds \$150,000 summed over all Network Investigators on the project may be asked to reduce expenditures. Similarly, projects whose total budget falls below \$75,000 may be deemed below the threshold for making a significant contribution to GRAND and may be wound down or cancelled.

Lines 9-12. This is the most important part of your budget. About 80% of your funds should be spent here for almost all Network Investigators. This is “HQP”, which is short for “training of highly-qualified personnel”. Much of the NCE Program’s funding is justified in terms of its impact on training future employees for Canadian companies and future academics who will train the generations that follow. The percentages for the various categories (like all of the percentages) that are in Column J are rough guidelines. Summed over the entire network these are our target percentages for each category. Can you deviate? Yes. But have a good reason for it. If your totals for these lines are about 80% of your request, that is likely to be OK, but the NCE Program’s expectations are that graduate students will be the bulk of HQP, postdocs are next (in terms of dollar amounts), undergraduates next (as research assistants), and technicians and other personnel are lowest priority.

Lines 14-16. This is for minor items. In general GRAND does not fund large equipment requests. We expect other sources of funding to provide that.

There are strict limits on buying personal computers or communications devices (anything you would like to see under your tree at Christmas is probably on the restricted list). Explicit permission is required from the Research Management Committee for each these items. Most Network Investigators will not have large requests in these categories.

Lines 17-18. A modest amount of funding is available to support miscellaneous expenses in support of GRAND research, including user fees or other costs of doing research at your institution.

Lines 20-21. Support for Network Investigators or HQP to travel between GRAND sites, or to engage with partners in the receptor community, or present results of the research at conferences are eligible expenses. The budget is limited (see the target percentages). What counts is the total travel request, not the category.

Line 22. Every Network Investigator is advised to budget up to a total of \$2000 (across all projects) to support his/her travel and HQP travel to the GRAND annual conference.

Some central subsidies are provided, but the subsidies will not cover all of the costs. Principal Network Investigators are expected to attend the annual conference each year.

Section 3 (2012-2013 budget request)

This is similar to Section 2. It is the estimated expenses for each project for the second year of the three-year request. For many researchers the entries will be identical to the amounts for the previous year. In some cases there may be different amounts requested, especially if you are changing the focus of your research contributions to GRAND. If you expect to no longer be working on a project, do not request funds for that project. If you expect to begin working on a project for which funds were not requested in the previous year, enter the appropriate amounts in the column for that project.

Section 4 (2013-2014 budget request)

This is similar to Section 3. It is the estimated expenses for each project for the third year of the three-year request. The instructions are the same as for Section 3.

Tips for developing your budget

Every Network Investigator will be expected to consult with the other researchers on the projects in which they are engaged to develop a set of budget estimates that when summed over the project accurately reflects the needs of the project. This cannot be done without collaboration. If your projects team has not had a discussion of budget, you should initiate one.

In all cases every Network Investigator should confirm with the Project Leader that he/she is a member of the project team. This is especially true when seeking to join a project in which you have not previously been involved, but it applies to every project.

Collaborating Network Investigators will each require at least one Principal Network Investigator who is part of the project team to be listed in Section 1 of their budget request for each project in which the CNI is engaged. It is prudent to confer with that PNI in advance of submitting a budget. The PNI may be asked to confirm that the amount requested is appropriate, and that the PNI concurs with the request. If collaboration is underway with multiple PNIs on a project, list up to three in decreasing order of expected collaboration activity.

A good guide for most Network Investigators is that their current budget, which is for 15 months, should be scaled by 80% (to reflect a 12-month budget) and used as the basis for future requests (PNIs should consider their current budget allocation to be net of any amounts administered for CRs in the current year). Increases are possible. So are decreases. The net change possible in the total funding available is essentially zero. We have a fixed budget each year for five years, with modest room for adjustment as circumstances change. So if someone receives an increase, someone else has to receive a decrease. What should matter to most researchers is that the total funds allocated to the projects in which they are engaged are adequate for the proposed research.

Individual budget allocations are made based on the contributions expected from each researcher to each project, and of course on the need for funds to enable those contributions.