Writing your Elevate Proposal

Who is the audience?
Your proposal will be reviewed by at least two external experts in the field(s) covered in the application. These reviewers will be active researchers who have been chosen to review your proposal because they are well qualified to make a judgment on the quality of the proposed research project. Therefore, you want to provide sufficient detail in your proposal to adequately convey to the reviewers that you have thought about this project and that you have the knowledge to carry it out. If your proposal is either misunderstood or misinterpreted, this is a clear sign it is poorly written. As the proposal writer, it is your task to clearly make the case for the value and feasibility of your research project.

What type of proposal is this?
This is a research proposal. Before beginning to write this application, make sure you clearly know what your research question is. This is not a consulting proposal or a proposal for a development project. You are not simply helping your industry/organization partner to achieve a task. You are looking to expand the knowledge base in an area that is relevant to your industry/organizational partner and the academic community. For more information about eligible research for Mitacs Elevate, see
https://www.mitacs.ca/en/programs/elevate/who-eligible/eligible-research

What is the format and style of the proposal?
Think about this proposal the way you would think about writing a scientific/academic article. The type of information, including citations and a reference list, that is appropriate in these types of articles isalso appropriate to include in this application. Keep your statements concise, clear and orderly. Abbreviations should be explained the first time they are presented, and jargon should be avoided as much as possible. Improper spelling, poor grammar and punctuation will appear unprofessional and sloppy. Do not rely solely on spell-check for proofreading to avoid these pitfalls.

The remainder of this guide provides information about information to be provided through the application portal and in specific sections of the proposal template.

Information to be entered via the application portal

- **Research area keywords**

Please include keywords describing your research area which are not already included in the title of your proposal. These keywords are important because they help us quickly and accurately identify appropriate reviewers for your proposal.

- **Research Abstract (approx. 200 words)**

The research abstract will be used to recruit reviewers. It must therefore clearly summarize the research proposed including background and problem, objectives, expected results and relevance for the intern(s) and partner organization(s). We suggest an approximate length of 250 words or 3,000 characters whichever comes first. Please note that abstracts that are too long will be truncated. Moreover, long abstracts have a deterring effect on reviewers and might delay their recruitment as well as the evaluation of your proposal.

- **Suggested reviewers**

Provide the names and contact information for 6 people who would be qualified to review your proposal. Reviewers are typically faculty members, but can also be PhD-level scientists doing research in industry or government agencies. "Arms-length" means that they must be from a different university, and that you and/or your supervisor and/or partner must not have collaborated with them in the last five years. You do **not** need to and should not contact these people yourself, simply provide their names and contact information.

Filling in the Mitacs Elevate proposal template (Word document)

Background Information (section 2.1; recommended 1 page, exclusive of references)
The background information describes the research context for your project. Describe the nature of the research problem to be addressed and why it is important. This section **must** contain references to past work on the subject you are investigating, as well as any holes or gaps in the research – in particular, it should identify the gap(s) that you plan to address in your fellowship. References to academic literature should be cited in the text in a style typical in your field and listed in section 2.10 (References); only list references that are cited within your proposal. After reading the background section, reviewers should understand the state of the art and knowledge gaps in the research area that will be addressed by the fellow, and be prepared to understand the objectives of the research project.

Proposed Research (section 2.2)
In this section, we ask that you describe the proposed research in detail. Make sure to include information about the objectives and methodology/experimental design covering the whole two-year period of the fellowship.

Objectives: The research objectives should follow directly from the background described in the previous section. Details should be provided for the overall objectives as well as any potential sub-objectives.

Methodology and experimental design: Furthermore, in this section you should describe the computational, field or laboratory techniques (as relevant to your discipline) that you will use in the implementation of all your objectives, as well as any equipment, procedures, or participants. For example, you might describe the experimental setup, what variables will be measured (and over what possible ranges), what are the controls, how data will be sampled, and how these data will be analyzed. If you will be conducting surveys or interviews, you should explain how many participants you will target, how you will select or recruit them, the length of the survey or duration of interview session(s), the design of the survey/interview questions, how the data will be analyzed, etc.

The methodology section is your chance to prove to the reviewers that you are well aware and knowledgeable about what you are proposing and why you are proposing it. Describe how the methods you will use are going to help you achieve the objectives of the project. If the methods are established, convince the reviewers that you are familiar with them and that the technology is available. If the methods are innovative, explain how they will offer an improvement.

Novelty: Also make sure to provide information about the novelty of your research (either in the knowledge that will be gained or any planned improvements to processes and products, etc.) throughout the text in this section.

As in the background section, citations to relevant literature should be included and references provided in section 2.10 (References).

Tips:
- Describing the methodology for each sub-objective makes it easy on reviewers to assess each section. It will also facilitate matters for the Timeline section.

- Provide enough detail to enable peer reviewers to evaluate the proposed methods and techniques. Include relevant references and citations to previous research in your field as needed.
- It is not necessary to use the entire three-page maximum for this section, but it is more common for reviewers to comment that applicants did not provide enough detail in this section than that they provided too much. Put yourself in the place of a reviewer who is not familiar with your planned study, and consider whether there is anything else you would want to see included in the proposal.
- Do not assume that reviewers will be familiar with all the terminology and current methodology. Avoid statements like "We will use standard techniques to measure the soil composition." Give detailed information about how the samples will be collected, exactly what techniques will be used, and what measurements will be taken.
- Your proposal should demonstrate that you:
  - Have an up-to-date knowledge of your field.
  - Understand the complexity of the subject and the methods you will apply.
  - Be sure to clearly describe how you plan to analyze the data you collect. The reviewers will be looking for this information.
  - Acknowledge any potential difficulties you foresee and how you might address them. There is always an element of uncertainty in a research project. Show the reviewers that you've thought about the uncertainties in your project and have some ideas about how you will adapt your approach if needed.

Project Milestones and Timeline (section 2.3)
The timeline is used to show which task(s) will be performed and when to achieve which objectives. The timeline should clearly link the key methodological steps with the specific objectives. We propose using a Gantt chart for clarity but other formats are also acceptable.

Expected Deliverables (section 2.4)
Every project includes the Mitacs Final Report and Mitacs survey as basic deliverables. Please also list any other expected deliverables of the project (publication, patent, prototype, report, conference,exhibit, etc.). Please note that we expect that the new knowledge gained through the proposed researchwill be publishable or disseminated in a format appropriate to the field, in addition to the benefits and outcomes for the partner organization.

Applicant Statement (section 2.5)
This section is your chance to highlight any particular achievements and background that will put you in a good position to be successful at completing the proposed research. Provide additional details and background to the information that is included in your CV. Note that reviewers will be asked to evaluate your productivity and achievements as compared to other researchers at the same career stage. Reviewers will also be asked to evaluate your commitment to the professional development and training offered by the Elevate program. Make sure to include information on what you hope to gain from participating in the Elevate program and provide any information about prior experiences that make you a suitable candidate.

Partner interaction, activities and relevance (sections 2.6 to 2.7)
It is expected that you will spend approximately 50% of your fellowship interacting with personnel from the partner organization, most likely at their site, or in the field, as appropriate to the project. The balance of the fellowship should be spent at the university. Variations from the 50% guideline are possible in certain cases, e.g., if a particular piece of equipment is only available at the university or at the partner site, you may spend more time at one location or the other. This should be justified in the space provided. Please include a detailed description of activities happening at the partner site that will account for 50% of the fellowship.

Project economic orientation (section 2.8, for submissions with an NFP organization ONLY)
All projects in collaboration with a not-for-profit (NFP) partner must demonstrate an economic or productivity orientation. Examples include creating new jobs, reducing costs of goods or services, or increasing productivity in a process or industry.
Examples of eligible research projects include:

- Examining the barriers to meaningful employment of blind Canadians
    - Anticipated research outcome: improved employment opportunities for an under-employed population
- Creating themed video games and apps for a theatre festival
    - Anticipated research outcome: festival gains new audience and attendance is increased
- Developing a pilot program that helps stroke victims return to work
    - Anticipated research outcome: implementation of the program to facilitate shorter recovery times and a faster return to the workplace

Relationship (if any) to past/other Mitacs projects (section 2.9)
This section applies if you have done an internship yourself in the past or if someone else working on your project within your research group has done a Mitacs Accelerate internship or Mitacs Elevate fellowship in the past. Please note the intern name and internship or fellowship title in this section (or Mitacs IT number if you know it) and explain in a sentence or two how the work being proposed for this fellowship relates to the previous work. If you or your group are currently submitting other applications to Mitacs Accelerate or Mitacs Elevate, please note that here, too.