Recommendations for Referees
Supporting Applicants to the Early Researcher Awards Program

This document was drafted by Queen's University Research Services to aid referees writing letters of support for the Early Researcher Awards Program (Ontario). Please note that letters are due by October 2nd, 2019. If you have any questions or would like to have a draft of your letter reviewed, please contact Dr. Jennifer Chen at jc290@queensu.ca.

Your letter will be reviewed by a multidisciplinary committee that includes individuals without expertise in your field. Therefore, please avoid technical language, and explain any field-specific acronyms or abbreviations for the committee.

Please address your letter to:

ERA Selection Committee
Early Researcher Awards Program
Ministry of Economic Development, Job Creation and Trade
Research, Science and Strategy
2 Queen Street East 3rd Floor
Toronto, ON M7A 1N3

Please confirm your relationship to the candidate (former supervisor, etc or arm's length):

• Please indicate that you are providing a letter of support for <name of candidate>, and briefly describe the nature of your relationship, including how long you have known the candidate and/or their work.

• If you are an arm's length referee, please note that you have never collaborated or published with the candidate (if you have, please indicate that it was X number of years ago, that you are not actively collaborating and that there is no conflict of interest), and that you are not and have never been a colleague. To ensure that there is no doubt regarding the arm's length nature of your relationship, please state clearly that you are confident that you can offer an unbiased opinion of their work and proposal.

• N.B: Please do not overstate your familiarity with the candidate, as this may negatively impact the eligibility of your letter – a frequent criticism of unsuccessful applications is that reference letter writers were not sufficiently "arm's length".

Please comment on the candidate and their proposal in the following four categories (you may wish to use these as topic headings in your letter to aid reviewers):

1. **Excellence of the Candidate**:
   • Please tell the reviewers what in your opinion makes the candidate stand out from other early career researchers in your discipline: the reviewers are looking for evidence of excellent independent research, with a high degree of originality, significance and impact
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• Please comment on the candidate’s national and/or international reputation and their potential standing: successful candidates are expected to have already established a reputation in their field as independent researchers and have evidence of a high likelihood of improving their standing based on their records (for example, high impact publications or projects, participation in your discipline's societies, conferences, invited talks, high profile or significant public outreach)

• If relevant to your discipline, please comment on the candidate’s funding and publishing records: successful candidates will have superior records when compared to their peers.

• Please highlight any other relevant information that in your opinion indicates the substantial/exceptional contributions made by the candidate to your field (especially but not limited to those made as an independent researcher),

2. Quality of the Proposed Research
• Please evaluate the proposed research, including its originality/vision, strengths/excellence of the proposal quality, and relevance of the methodologies – your letter will play a vital role in the scientific review of the application, given that the selection committee is multidisciplinary.

• Please provide an assessment of the potential impact of the research in terms of its contribution to knowledge transfer, social and/or economic benefits (this may be separate from or combined with Section 5).

3. Development of Research Talent/Highly Qualified Personnel (HQP)
• Please comment on the high quality of the training plan and environment for the trainees involved in the proposed research; successful applications will clearly outline how training is unique and leading edge

• If applicable, please comment on the candidate's track record of high-quality training.

4. Strategic Value to the Province of Ontario
• Please comment on how the proposed ERA research has exceptional strategic value to the Province of Ontario in one or more of the following categories.
  o economic benefits
  o knowledge transfer
  o enhancement of the province’s profile in the global academic community
  o social/cultural benefits
  o other

Please email an electronic copy of the signed letter (on letterhead, if appropriate) to Queen’s University Research Services at earlyresearcheraward@queensu.ca by Wednesday, October 2nd, 2019.