

## **SNAPP Application Review and Evaluation**

- Panel members provide critical assessment and constructive written feedback on applications, participate in rating applications, and vote during the peer-review panel meeting. Each application is reviewed by two lead reviewers.
- All information contained in applications submitted to the Committee, reports made by reviewers, and review panel discussion is strictly confidential.
- All reviewers must read and agree to abide by SSMIC's Conflict of Interest Policy prior to viewing any application information.
- Reviewers are expected to be fair and reasonable and to understand and take into account the particular context of each application.

### **a) Before the review panel meeting**

- Project staff can review one draft submission from applicant(s) before a final submission. Staff can provide comments about application completeness. Any comments from project staff about the applicant(s) production, business or marketing plans should be kept to a minimal. Project staff can provide referrals to agencies or resources that will help with business decision-making.
- On a monthly or bimonthly basis during application in-take periods, project staff will prepare a number of applications for the Committee to review. Applications will be completed for the review panel. Project staff will compile the project title, a short synopsis of each application with the type of equipment that is being sought, the sector of the new product (food products, agricultural products) and the location of the farm or business.
- The Chair assigns two lead reviewers to each application.
- The lead reviewers will independently complete a thorough review, prepare written comments and assign an initial score for each application. At the same time, the rest of the panel members familiarize themselves with all the applications (reading all the synopses of applications), except those for which they are in conflict. If a conflict of interest exists between a member of the Committee and the applicant(s), that member must adhere to the SSMIC Conflict of Interest Policy.

### **b) Review panel meeting**

- Before the review begins, panel members will acknowledge any conflict(s) they have with any application(s). The panel member in conflict will leave the room when that application is being discussed.
- To ensure consistency, panel members use a common scale, ranging from "1 to 5" or "1 to 10" (1 being low and 5/10 being the highest) Reviewers are encouraged to use the full range of scores.
- The two lead reviewers summarize the application's major strengths and weaknesses with their initial score averages displayed to the rest of the review panel. A third reviewer is enlisted when the point spread of an application is greater than 20 points.

- The chair leads the panel's discussion, inviting participation from all members.
- The lead reviewers will have the opportunity to revise their initial scores based on the panel's discussion. An agreement is reached between the lead reviewers to arrive at a consensus score.
- If the overall score from both lead reviewers is below 65%, the application is rejected.
- After scoring is final, the target investment is established. This is based on overall program investment compared to what is available per intake and what is needed for future intakes (if applicable).
- The list is sorted, and a short list threshold is set. This short list threshold is established by the reviewers (with a min. threshold of 65%). Any application under that threshold is declined.
- The scoring threshold is determined based on the following factors:
  1. Level of regional representation in current and overall intakes. Ideal representation is 15% per region.
  2. Funding allocated to date. Panelists will consider what has been funded in previous intakes and how many intakes are anticipated over the course of the program.
  3. Depending on the scope of applications, the ability to fund future projects will be considered.
  4. Representation of all funding streams.
  5. Funding available for each intake.
- In some cases, there are multiple review meetings. If there are multiple meetings, the scores are ranked each time and all funding decisions are made at the final review meeting.

### **c) Funding Decisions**

- The rating given to each application during review is used to generate a ranked shortlist of applications. The threshold of this short list is at the discretion of the panel. The panel makes its funding decisions to Recipients on the basis of this list.
- The review panel may require additional information from an applicant on the short list, for clarity and to make a final decision. The additional information should be limited to items such as; missing documents such as additional clarification of information given, business registration paperwork, project budget, collaboration agreement or quotes. The application is put into a "conditional approval" status until sufficient information is obtained.
- Successful Recipients are notified of the outcome of the review process after completion of the review panel meetings and approval by FedNor. The list is reviewed by SSMIC's Executive Director.
- Recipients are required to sign an agreement with SSMIC to adhere to the SNAPP program conditions, which states they will submit proof of purchase of eligible purchases prior to the Project Completion Deadline which is identified for each intake period in the program guide.

- If eligible and successful Recipients do not sign the agreement with SSMIC or do not adhere to the program conditions, the SSMIC may reassign funding to other Recipients or to the next fiscal period with the funders approval.
- Funded and non-funded applicants receive notification detailing the funding decision. Reviewer reports are available upon request. A list of the successful applicants is published on RAIN's website.
- Funding must be evenly distributed among each of the regions (at least 15% for each region). The remaining 40% of total project funding is to be allocated to projects that have scored and ranked to ensure high quality and high impact.
- If an application scores below 65%, it will be rejected. If the application scores above 65%, but if the score is lower than other applications and all funds are distributed for that intake period, it would also be rejected. The rejected applications would receive a notification saying that if they wish to resubmit, they are free to do so in subsequent intake periods. Applicants that are rejected will be notified shortly after a review panel meeting. Once an application is submitted to the review panel, it is final, absolutely no revisions. There are no revisions from the Committee within an intake period.
- The distribution of each region's funds (15%) per intake period is at the discretion of The Committee.
- Comments and scores can be made available to applicants (rejected or approved) after the intake period

**d) Confidentiality**

- All applications are reviewed by the SNAPP Review Committee. SNAPP Review Committee members are anonymous, and their identities or affiliations will not be disclosed at any time.

**e) Appeals**

- An appeal of a SNAPP funding decision must be based on a compelling demonstration of a procedural error in the review of the application. An appeal process does not entail a re-assessment of an application.
- Errors are departures from SNAPP's policies and procedures, and may include:
  1. an undeclared or unaddressed conflict of interest; or
  2. a failure by SNAPP staff to provide required information to the review committee.
- Appeals must be submitted in writing within 30 days of receipt of the decision letter. The onus is on the applicant to demonstrate that a procedural error was made in the review of the application.
- If an appeal is made, The Committee will meet to assess the appeal and information available. Based on the meeting and whether there is sufficient funding at that time a decision is made. Decisions made by The Committee on appeals are final.

- Applicants will be notified of the outcome of the appeal review after completion of the meeting and approval by FedNor (if the appeal is successful).