OCUL New Initiatives Fund Terms of Reference

Scope and Mandate

The OCUL New Initiatives Fund (NIF) was established in 2012 to provide financial support for "significant strategic actions or rapid responses to a changing technology environment" (OCUL Financial Framework, 2012).

The NIF is primarily used to support major strategic initiatives and essential priorities that align with OCUL's Strategic Plan, vision, and mission, and that will have impact for all OCUL member libraries in support of their teaching, learning and research priorities. The NIF can also be used to address certain unanticipated needs such as those resulting from rapid technological changes, requirements to upgrade infrastructure, or to support short term staffing needs. NIF can be used to hire staff to support proposed new projects and initiatives, but not to replace existing positions or add ongoing staffing capacity. Ongoing staffing needs for OCUL and Scholars Portal must be requested and approved by OCUL Executive and Directors as part of the annual budget process.

NIF is not intended to support anticipated and ongoing operations for OCUL and Scholars Portal core services, social events or requests to support community or committee meetings where the purpose is solely to conduct community/committee business. Requests to fund catering at meetings or events will not be supported.

A minimum balance of $100,000 is required in NIF in any given year to ensure fund viability and OCUL Members will contribute a minimum of $100,000 per year to the fund. Annual allocations of fund will consider already approved allocations for multi-year initiatives. Such allocation should not deplete the fund and thus restrict the funds use for new projects in future years. This minimum balance and minimum annual contribution should be reassessed on a regular basis to consider inflationary impacts. Annual contribution to NIF may increase as part of the OCUL/Scholars Portal Budget process.

Eligibility

Proposals may be submitted by Scholars Portal, OCUL Communities, OCUL Committees (standing or ad hoc), Subcommittees, Working Groups, Task Groups, and other entities that are part of the OCUL governance structure. Proposals generated by a unit or entity that are not part of the OCUL governance structure must have a relationship, connection, or partnership with OCUL as a whole or with an entity that is part of the OCUL governance structure and should align with OCUL's strategic priorities. All applications must have endorsement of the chair/moderator of the committee, community or group.

Application for Funding Process

Applicants are asked to submit a 5-page (maximum) Business Case summarizing the initiative and outlining the proposed budget. Templates for the Business Case and budget are provided by OCUL.

Interested applicants are asked to submit their proposal to ocul@ocul.on.ca. The Executive Director will provide any necessary feedback and will present the proposal to the OCUL Executive Committee for consideration and adjudication.

Each fiscal year, there will be a call for proposals in August with a one-month deadline to submit application. Application process will align with OCUL's annual budget planning cycle and applicants are encouraged to plan ahead for future projects.

Applicants may apply for one-time, short-term projects (duration of 12 months/1 year up to 3 years). Multi-year projects shall not exceed 36 months/3 years, and normally will not exceed $100,000 per annum. Funds must be spent within the fiscal year they are allocated (May-April). A request for funding for a longer term or ongoing projects must be submitted and approved as part of the OCUL or Scholars Portal annual budget process. Funding for larger initiatives may be considered on a case-by-case basis.

Requests for funding continuation must follow the application process below and must adhere to the NIF terms of reference. Applicants are encouraged to consider the long-term implications and sustainability of the proposed initiative and clearly state if there is the possibility of a need for ongoing funding from the membership or elsewhere. NIF is not intended to serve as long term funding source for ongoing projects that require base funding (for example infrastructure upgrades or service life cycle renewal).

The application for NIF funding should include the following components, which will provide the basis for the decision on whether the proposal is supported:

1. A description of the initiative, the corresponding OCUL strategic priorities, outcomes, and benefit to OCUL member libraries.

2. A detailed budget for the initiative including the timeline for spending the funds allocated. Funds allocated for one-time, annual projects must be spent within 12 months (from May to April). Unspent funds will return to NIF. Funds allocated for 3-year projects must be spent within 36 months (applicable fiscal years). Unspent funds will be returned to NIF. The utilization of unused funds beyond timelines above into the subsequent financial year may be considered and approved by the OCUL Executive Committee in exceptional situations.

   The budget should include the following, where applicable:

   - Hardware, software, or equipment
   - Staffing
   - Infrastructure
   - Matching funds if applicable
   - In-kind resources
   - Travel, training, or professional development
   - Cost for expert panel or subject matter experts if applicable

- 3rd party analytical or other technical support, expertise, or services (e.g., legal, consulting, digitization, etc. if applicable)

3. A clear statement outlining the key metrics and performance indicators that will be used to measure the effectiveness and impact of the initiative.

4. A statement on how any infrastructure or other resources related to the initiative will be managed and sustained on an ongoing basis.

5. A sustainability plan for ongoing support for the initiative after NIF support has ended if project is intended for ongoing operations. This should consider staffing as well as other ongoing costs.

Application Timelines

All proposal must be approved by OCUL Executive in advance of the Fall OCUL Directors meeting to ensure consideration. Approved projects will start in the fiscal year (May 1 – April 30) following the Fall OCUL Directors meeting.

Date	Action
August 1	Call for Proposals
September 15	Deadline for Submission
September 30	Proposals reviewed by the OCUL Executive
October 10	Applicants advised
October/November	Fall Directors Meeting OCUL & SP Budget Presentation
May 1	OCUL Fiscal Year begins/Project starts
April 30 (following year)	Annual project report deadline

Adjudication Process

The OCUL Executive Committee will assess the applications based on the fit with the terms of reference, and OCUL's current strategic focus. To assist their deliberations the Executive may consult with relevant OCUL and Scholars staff and OCUL groups and committees including but not limited to the Financial Management Advisory Committee (FMAC), Scholars Portal Operations Committee (OCUL-SPOD) and Information Resources Committee (OCUL-IR). Assignment of funds will also align with OCUL's Operating Principles and Financial Framework.

Reporting

Successful applicants are required to provide a report to the OCUL Executive on the project within 12 months of the award with emphasis on the metrics identified in the proposal. For multi-year commitments, a report should be submitted every 12 months of the project.

These terms of reference should be reviewed every 5 years.

Approving body: OCUL Directors   *Approved: April 28, 2023*