



SHRF External | Reviewer Handbook

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About this Handbook

The following External Reviewer Handbook is to be used to support external reviewers in successfully completing and submitting an external review to a SHRF Peer Review Committee. It is comprised of two components: The External Reviewer Guidelines; and the External Reviewer SHRF RMS Manual.

The External Reviewer Guidelines is a condensed version of SHRF's Research Funding Peer Review Committee Guidelines to directly support the role of the external reviewer. If you would like access to the full Guidelines document, please visit shrf.ca/peer-review. The Guidelines will give you an understanding of the roles that directly affect you, along with information on SHRF peer review procedures (i.e., confidentiality, conflict of interest) and an overview for completing the requested external review.

The External Reviewer SHRF RMS Manual will give you a step-by-step process, including images, on how to access and complete the review through SHRF's Research Management System (SHRF RMS). This manual will give you instructions for each step that you need to do to successfully complete and submit your comments for the review committee.

Alongside this Handbook, SHRF will also share general instructions specifically related to the funding opportunity that you have been invited to submit an external review to.

Contacts

For general inquiries: fundinginfo@shrf.ca

For SHRF technical issues helpdesk@shrf.ca

1. Overview of External Reviewer Guidelines

Please note that this External Reviewer Guideline document is a focused document, reflecting the larger “SHRF Research Funding Peer Review Committee Guidelines”. For further information on our full peer review process, please see the PDF document on our website at shrf.ca/peer-review.

1.1 Purpose of Research Funding Programs

SHRF’s funding programs are key tools for achieving a legislative mandate to encourage, facilitate and disseminate health research in Saskatchewan in a strategic way benefiting the people of Saskatchewan (*The SHRF Act*, 2002).

All SHRF-funded research must have relevance for human health and is intended to support health research in Saskatchewan. SHRF defines human health research broadly as encompassing biomedical science research, clinical research, health services and systems research, and research on the cultural, social and environmental determinants of population health.

Within the broad scope of health research outlined above, SHRF’s funding role is largely developmental. Its funding programs aim to build health research capacity and foster research relevant to Saskatchewan. Current programs can be found on SHRF’s website: shrf.ca/Opportunities.

1.2 Peer Review for Research Funding Applications

All applications to SHRF research funding competitions are adjudicated according to principles of peer review. Review committees evaluate applications according to scientific standards and SHRF-specified criteria related to the funding opportunity purpose and objectives and recommend meritorious applications to SHRF for funding.

Review committees also play an important role in providing feedback to SHRF about procedures, policies and programs, and about trends in the health research community.

Review committees are made up of active researchers and health professionals and may include non-academic reviewers with relevant perspectives for a funding opportunity, such as industry, government, community leaders, persons with lived experiences, etc.

2. Roles and Committee Membership

2.1 General

The SHRF Programs team, consisting of the Director of Programs and Partnerships, the Programs and Peer Review Manager, the Programs and Engagement Manager and the Programs and Peer Review Coordinator, provide administrative support to SHRF’s funding programs. Either the Director of Programs and Partnerships, the Programs and Peer Review Manager or the Programs and Engagement Manager is designated as Program Manager for a given funding opportunity. SHRF peer review committees will be primarily supported by the Programs and Peer Review Manager and the Programs and Peer Review Coordinator.

2.2 External Reviewers' Role

External reviewers are respected researchers or individuals with expertise and/or experience relevant to a specific application. They are not members of the SHRF Board or staff and are usually recruited from out of province, but within Canada. External reviewers are not part of the committee, do not attend the meeting and do not participate in the scoring of the application.

External reviewers are appointed by the Director of Programs and Partnerships, on the advice of the Programs and Peer Review Manager, on a one-time basis, where there is a need for a specialized review to support the Peer Review Committee.

Duties of the external reviewer include:

- Adhere to all SHRF application and peer review policies and procedures;
- Review assigned application according to scientific and ethical standards and to SHRF's stated criteria; and
- Provide constructive review comments for committee members and applicants.

NOTE: Review comments are anonymously shared with applicants. Comments should provide constructive feedback that can be used to improve future submissions, including comments from the review meeting discussion. Wording that may be construed as personal, derogatory or offensive should be avoided.

2.3 Programs and Peer Review Manager

The Programs and Peer Review Manager is a SHRF staff member responsible for administering SHRF's peer review processes according to policies set by the SHRF Board and CEO. The Programs and Peer Review Manager works in consultation with the Program Manager, who supports the application processes of the funding opportunity, and the Programs and Peer Review Coordinator, who oversees the RMS and administrative tasks for the funding opportunity both at application and review stages.

Duties of the Programs and Peer Review Manager includes:

- Adhere to all SHRF application and peer review policies and procedures;
- With input from the Chair and Director of Programs and Partnerships, suggest committee members for appointment;
- Assist the Chair in selecting lead reviewers for each application from among the committee membership;
- Assist the Chair in selecting external reviewers, as required;
- Ensure committee members receive materials necessary to carry out their responsibilities;
- Ensure that review materials are handled and distributed in a confidential manner;
- Advise the Chair and committee members on points of procedure, eligibility, program requirements and other related administrative matters; and
- Respond, in consultation with the Chair and the Director of Programs and Partnerships, to questions of confidentiality, conflict of interest, applicant eligibility and any other major issues that may arise with respect to the peer review process.

3. Peer Review Process

Most of the external reviewer work occurs on SHRF's Research Management System (RMS). External reviewers will have their own Personal Profile and access to the Reviewer Home Page. The Reviewer Home Page will have all the information needed to complete the review. This section goes over the different phases of the review, giving an overview of the responsibilities for each.

3.1 Review Background Information

External reviewers are asked to complete the conflict-of-interest step outside of the RMS. The below information goes over confidentiality and conflict of interest policies, along with information regarding application eligibility screening and decisions.

3.1.1 Application Eligibility Decisions

An initial eligibility screening will take place where the Programs Team ensures applicants have fulfilled basic eligibility requirements for a funding opportunity. Immediately after the full application deadline, the Program Manager and Programs and Peer Review Coordinator will screen all applications for completeness and eligibility, according to program requirements. The Program Manager will make a final ruling on any eligibility issues related to the application completeness and will follow up with the Programs and Peer Review Manager if there are any decisions that they need to be aware of for the peer review process.

The Program Manager may take steps to verify applicants' qualifications for eligibility purposes and may seek the advice of the Chair and/or the Director of Programs and Partnerships, as needed. **The Director of Programs and Partnerships, in consultation with the Program Manager, makes the final ruling on applicant eligibility issues.**

3.1.2 Confidentiality

SHRF is subject to the Privacy Act and the Access to Information Act. Documentation submitted to SHRF by the applicant may be provided to the review committee, external reviewers and observers, only as it relates to the review of the application. Confidentiality is vital to maintaining the credibility of the adjudication process. SHRF works to ensure that personal and application information remain confidential unless the party which supplied the information has consented to release such information. Committee members, external reviewers, observers and SHRF staff must ensure that:

- All information submitted by the applicant will be kept confidential;
- All review documentation must be stored in a secure manner to prevent unauthorized access. Following the review process, all documentation must be destroyed in a secure manner. Any loss or theft of the information must be reported to SHRF;
- There is no discussion regarding individual applications, reviews or rankings with anyone not formally involved in the process. Any comments or questions from colleagues and/or others about the review process are to be directed to the Programs and Peer Review Manager; and
- Applicants are not asked for additional information outside what is included in the application.

Additionally, the below requirements are to be followed by any individuals involved in the review process:

- Identity of successful applicants and the details of the review outcomes must remain confidential until the decisions are announced by SHRF to the applicant and publicly; and

The identity of reviewers will not be revealed to applicants. However, a list of review committee members is published as part of SHRF's Annual Report. SHRF Annual Report can be found at shrf.ca.

3.1.3 Conflict of Interest

A conflict of interest is a conflict between a person's duties and responsibilities regarding the review process and that person's private, professional, business or public interests. An external reviewer cannot be involved in the review of an application if they are in a conflict of interest.

The policy will be interpreted and applied in a way that best reflects the following:

- To protect the fairness and impartiality of the review process and to protect the public interest;
- To ensure transparency and consistency in any measures taken to manage Conflict of Interest;
- To ensure that all funding organization review process participants are accountable for their actions;
- To promote public confidence in the research enterprise; and
- To foster a culture of trust in the research community.

There may be a real, perceived or potential conflict of interest when an external reviewer:

- Would receive professional or personal benefit resulting from the funding opportunity or application being reviewed;
- Has a professional or personal relationship with an applicant or the applicant's institution; or
- Has a direct or indirect financial interest in a funding opportunity or application being reviewed.

A conflict of interest may be deemed to exist or perceived as such when an external reviewer:

- Is an applicant within the competition and can bias or influence the process to the benefit of their application;
- Are a relative or close friend, or have a personal relationship with an applicant;
- Can gain or lose financially/materially from the funding of an application;
- Have had long-standing scientific or personal differences with an applicant;
- Are closely professionally affiliated with an applicant as a result of having in the last five years:
 - Frequent and regular interactions with an applicant in the course of their duties at their department, institution, organization or company;
 - Been a supervisor or a trainee of an applicant;
 - Collaborated, published or shared funding with an applicant or have plans to do so in the immediate future; or
- Feel for any reason unable to provide an impartial review of the application.

SHRF reserves the right to resolve areas of uncertainty and to determine if a conflict exists.

External reviewers in a conflict of interest must not participate in any way in the evaluation of that applicant's proposal.

3.2 Completing Review

3.2.1 Review Criteria

External reviewers shall follow scientific standards relevant to the field of study and consider additional SHRF review criteria, as appropriate. Generally, reviewers shall consider the following criteria when assessing applications:

- Fit with the purpose and requirements of the funding program, as described in the SHRF funding opportunity application package;
- Originality of the proposed research;
- Quality and feasibility of the research design;
- Importance and potential impact;
- Suitability of the research environment;
- Potential of the applicant(s) to carry out the work;
- General soundness of the overall research plan;
- Appropriateness of the budget; and
- Adherence to principles of ethical research.

Where there are program specific review criteria, it will be provided by the Programs and Peer Review Manager. **External reviewers do not provide scores for the application.**

External reviewers are asked to submit their review by the requested deadline. This deadline is important as the review supports the committee Chair and lead reviewers on the committee in preparation for the review meeting.

3.2.2 External Reviewer Form

Usually, external reviewers are provided a review form on SHRF's RMS (where the review form is not found on the RMS, an external review form will be provided with the appropriate review criteria and instructions to complete the form). This form includes the review criteria and textboxes for reviewers to leave comments regarding each criterion. When assessing design, methodology, etc., external reviewers should follow the principles and expectations generally accepted in the particular discipline or field of study. SHRF is open to a wide variety of approaches and methodologies. The key consideration is that they are appropriate to the area of study and have the potential to answer the research question(s).

In addition to key review areas on the form, reviewers are invited to comment on other factors they identify as being important to a decision about funding, such as particular strengths (e.g., proposal addresses an important research need or gap in understanding) or weaknesses (e.g., concerns about ethics or duplicate funding).

External Reviewer SHRF RMS Manual

The information in this section will give you an overview of the system, how to log in, how to update your profile and then a quick overview of the Reviewer Portal. Don't forget that we also have helpful external reviewer videos.

- [Reset your password](#)
- [Completing an external review](#)

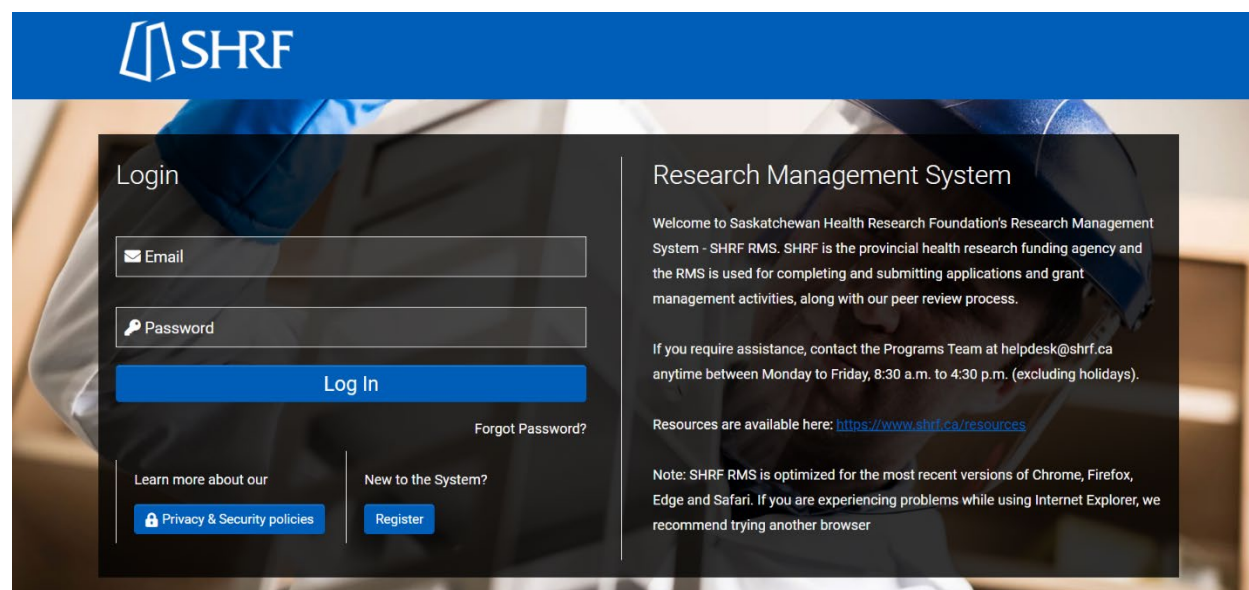
SHRF RMS Overview

SHRF uses an integrated online research management system by SmartSimple. We continue to improve and update our online system to deliver an efficient process at all stages of the funding opportunity.

Internet browsers currently supported by the SmartSimple platform are listed [here](#). At SHRF, we have found that Chrome works best. SmartSimple performs system-wide upgrades and backups at 01:00am EST each night, so you may experience slowness or difficulties around this time.

SHRF welcomes suggestions for improving the system or this manual. The SHRF RMS can be accessed at shrf.smartsimple.ca or through the links at shrf.ca.

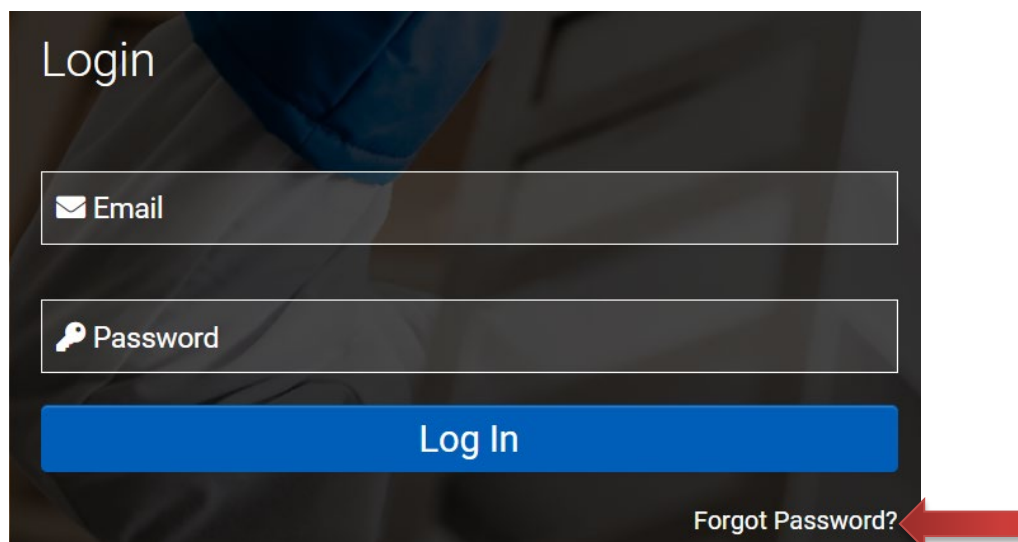
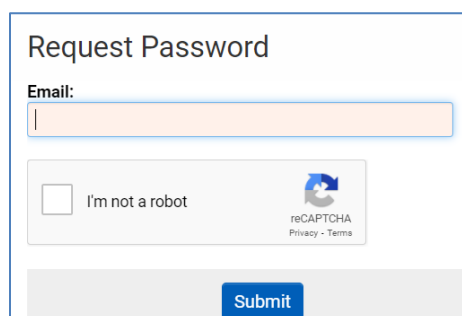
NOTE: You will be automatically logged out after four hours of inactivity – ensure your session is valid before entering information.



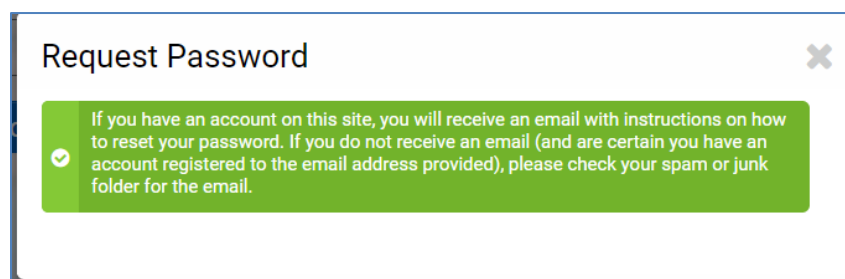
Logging In

As an external reviewer, SHRF has already set up your profile in the system. Your username is the email that the invitation was sent to. You will need to use the “forgot password” button to update your password to access the system.

On the Login page below the “Log In” button, you will see a “Forgot Password?” button. Click this button to open a new window, where you can enter your email address that you use to log in.

Once you have completed the required information, click the “Submit” button. A message will appear letting you know an email has been sent with instructions on [how to reset your password](#). 📧



The email may take a few minutes to appear. Once you do receive it, you will get the following message:

“You are receiving this email because you forgot your password for the Saskatchewan Health Research Foundation’s online research management system – SHRF RMS. If you did not request a forgot your password, please ignore this email.”

Your user name is ... please click on the link below to create a new password: [link here](#).

If you encounter any problems, please email helpdesk@shrf.ca.


Thank you,

SHRF Programs Team”


After clicking the email link, you will be taken to the Account Activation page to fill in your new password. Follow the instructions on the window and make sure your new password meets SHRF’s new password policy.

Account Activation






New Password:




Confirm Password:



Policy:

-  Password must have at least 8 characters
-  Password must have at least one lowercase letter
-  Password must have at least one uppercase letter
-  Password must have at least one number
-  Password must have at least one special character

☐ I'm not a robot


reCAPTCHA
[Privacy](#) - [Terms](#)

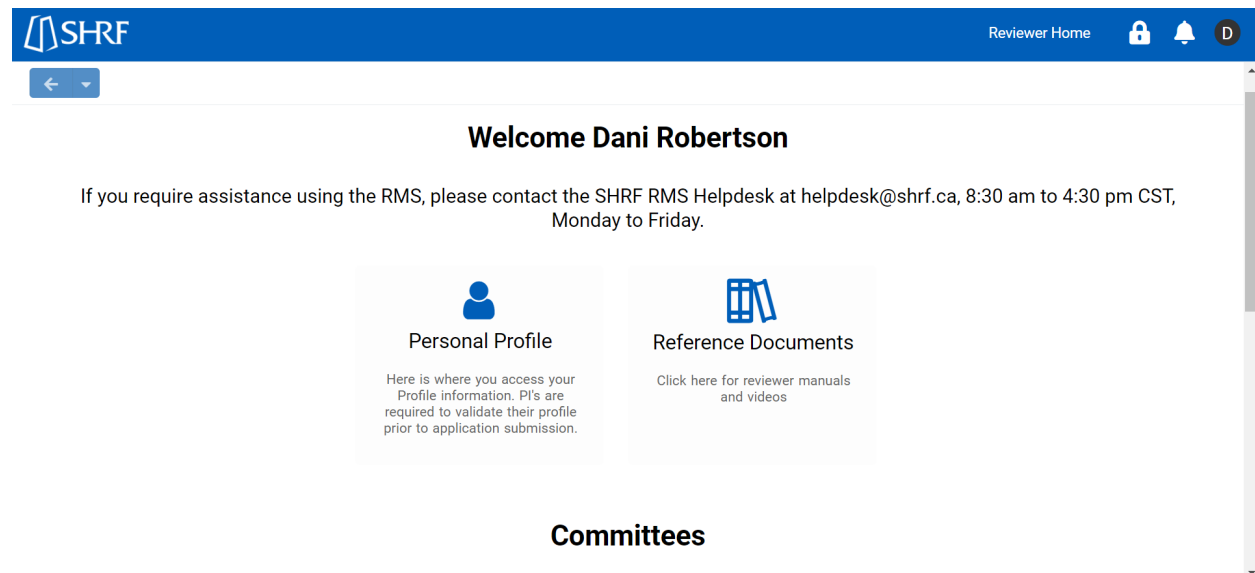
Submit

After this is complete, you will now be able to enter the SHRF RMS.

Navigating the SHRF RMS

Reviewer Home Page

Once logged in, you will be directed to your Reviewer Home Page.



NOTE: Users who have been in the RMS as an applicant (either as a PI or other project role) will see two Home Page buttons in the Navigation Bar: Home and Reviewer Home. Make sure to click on the Reviewer Home to see the Reviewer Portal.

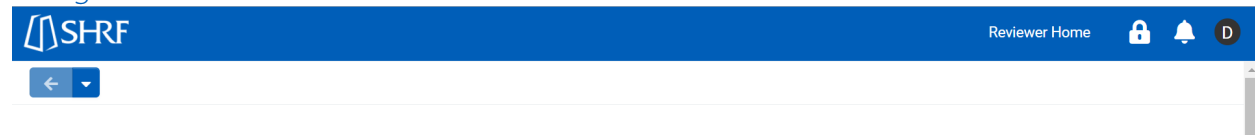
The Reviewer Home is broken down into the top navigation bar and three sections with different icons under each.

NOTE: As an external reviewer, most of the icons found on the Reviewer Home will not be of use to you. The icons that are relevant to you as an external are highlighted below:

- **Navigation Bar**
 - *SHRF Logo and Home Button*
 - *Padlock Icon*
 - *Bell Icon*
 - *Initials*
- **Welcome**
 - *Personal Profile*
 - *Reference Documents*
- **Review Phases**
 - *Review Form*

Below is information for each of sections and the corresponding icons.

Navigation Bar



SHRF Logo and Home Buttons

By clicking either the “SHRF Logo” or the “Review Home” button, this will take you to the Review Home page no matter where you are in the system. The system may prompt you to save your work prior to going back to the Review Home page but it is good practice to click save on a regular basis when working in the system.

Padlock Icon

This is where you can access SHRF’s Privacy & Security Policies.

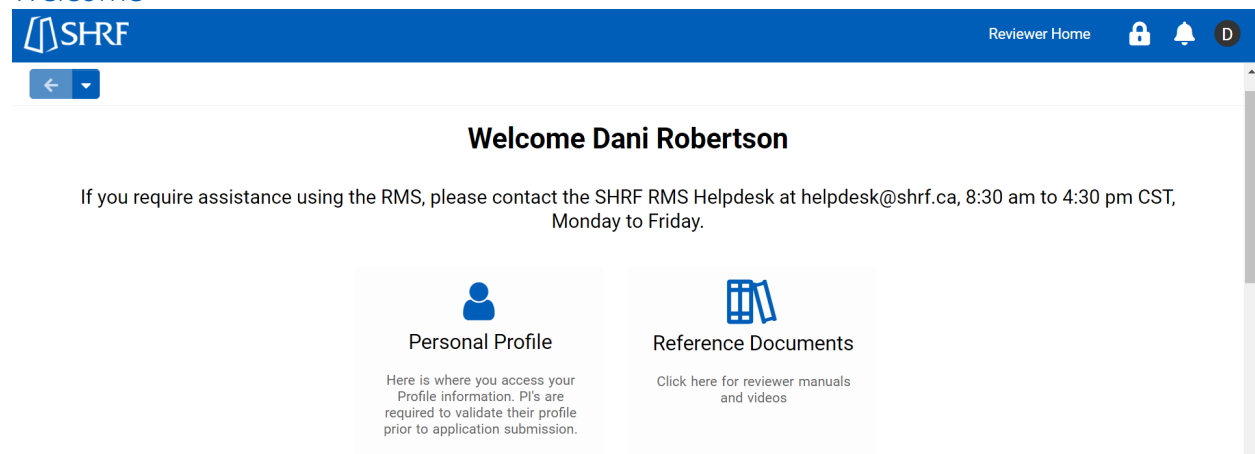
Bell Icon

This is where you may see notifications from SHRF. Currently, we are not using this functionality.

Initials

When you click on your initials, a drop down will appear, showing many of the icons and buttons under the Welcome section of the Review Home page.

Welcome



Personal Profile ([Watch the video](#))

Completing a Personal Profile is an important step in using the SHRF RMS. Contact information should always be up to date as SHRF staff uses this information regularly to stay in touch with you. Below are the steps on how to complete your Personal Profile.

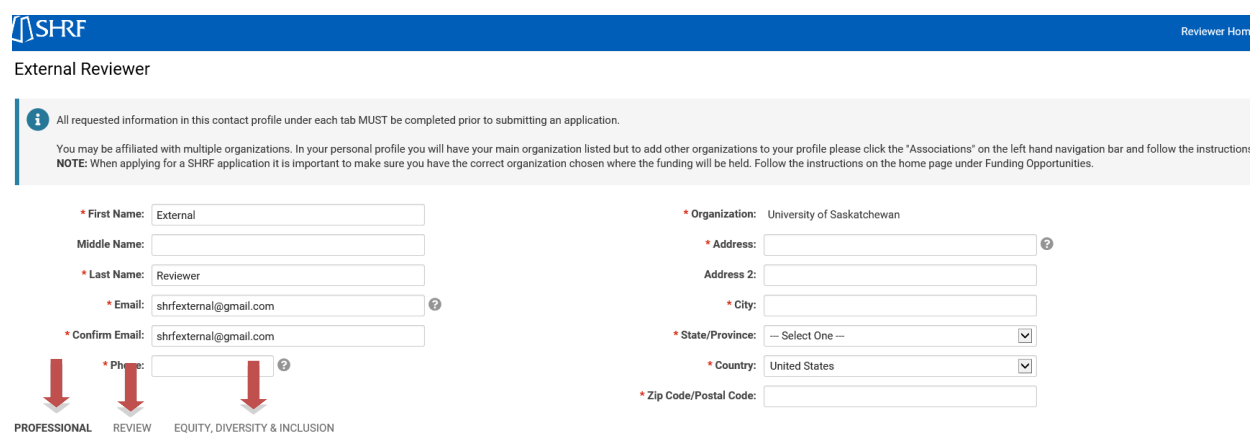
You can access your Personal Profile from the Welcome section of the Reviewer Home Page or in the top right corner by clicking on you initial and then choosing Personal Profile from the drop down.

In your profile, there is the general Contact Information, which sits outside of the tabs and includes mostly contact information. The Organization listed here is your primary organization that you registered with when you first created your profile. If you ever need to change your primary

organization, please contact helpdesk@shrf.ca, as a SHRF staff member will need to do this for you. All mandatory fields will have a red asterisk (*) in front of the field.

Below your Contact Information are three tabs:

- **Professional** – This section includes fields for all possible roles/positions you may have that would pertain to applying. There are also fields in this section related to your online and social media presence that would be used by our Engagement team.
- **Review** – This section includes an overview of SHRF’s Peer Review and asks if you would be interested in reviewing for SHRF. If you are interested, questions will appear that are specific to your research and/or health background that would be important for being a reviewer for SHRF.
- **Equity, Diversity & Inclusion** – SHRF has created a questionnaire based on the updated CIHR EDI questionnaire. This information will only be used internally by SHRF to get a better understanding of who our applicants and reviewers are.



At the bottom of the page are two buttons: “Save Draft” and “Save”. If you need to leave the page and don’t have time to complete all required fields, you can click “Save Draft” and come back another time to complete your profile. Once your profile is complete, click the “Save” button. The system will then validate that all fields are complete. If there are missing fields, the system will notify you, otherwise your Profile will be considered complete. You can come back at any time and update information if something changes.

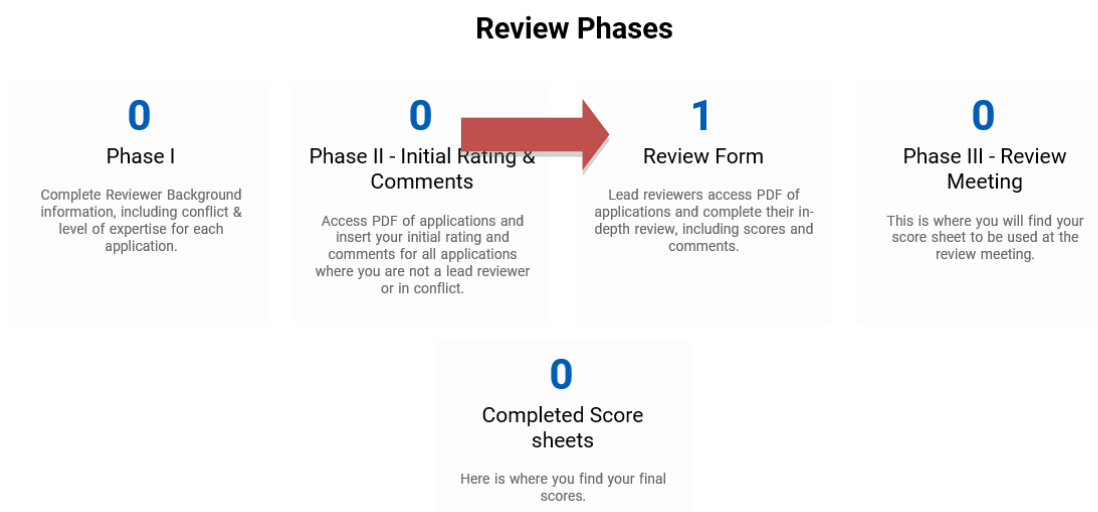
Reference Documents

The Reference Documents page will have helpful information regarding how to use the SHRF RMS and for completing applications. The majority of this information will pertain to the full committee, but external information, such as this handbook, will be accessible too.

Completing an External Review

Accessing the Review Form

On the Reviewer Home page you will scroll down to the Review Phases header and click on the Review Form icon. **NOTE:** All other icons listed under this header are related to the full committee, therefore they are not relevant to complete the external review.



In this icon will be the list view of the application that you have been assigned as an External Reviewer. The list view will give you high level access of the application information, the status of your form (Activity Status) and the role you have on the application (External). To access the individual review form click the “Open” button.

Review Form

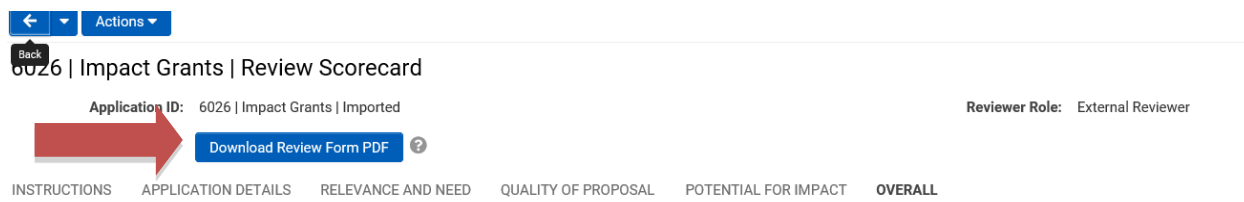
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Review Form Overview

Printing the Review Form PDF (after completing the required information)

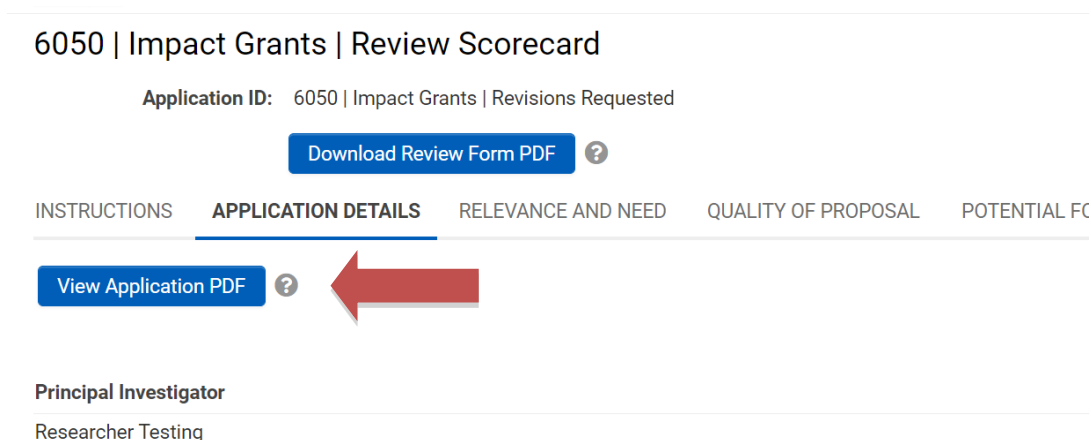
When you click “Open” from the Review Form list view, it will take you in to the individual application review form, where you will be able to input your rating, and comments based on the review criteria. At the top of the Review Form you will see The Application ID, Grant Type and Grant Status, along with your Reviewer Role on this application. Directly below this is the “Download Review Form PDF”. This button is where you can download a PDF copy of this review form to print. Please note that you must complete and submit the Review Form on the RMS. After you have done that, all information in your form can then be downloaded and printed using this button if you rather work from paper while

reviewing the application. Directly below the “Download Review Form PDF” button, you will see that the form has been broken down into Tabs.



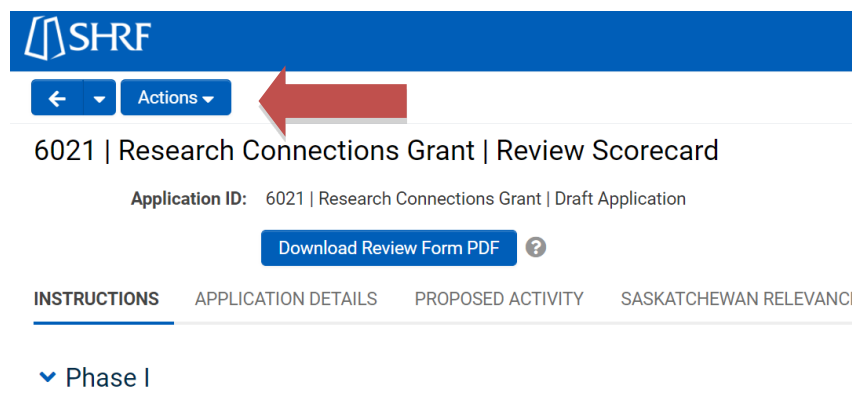
Accessing the Application – PDF

To download and print the application PDF, click the “View Application PDF” button found at the top of the Application Details tab. It will open a separate window for you to see the application, along with giving you the option to download the application to your computer or print it.



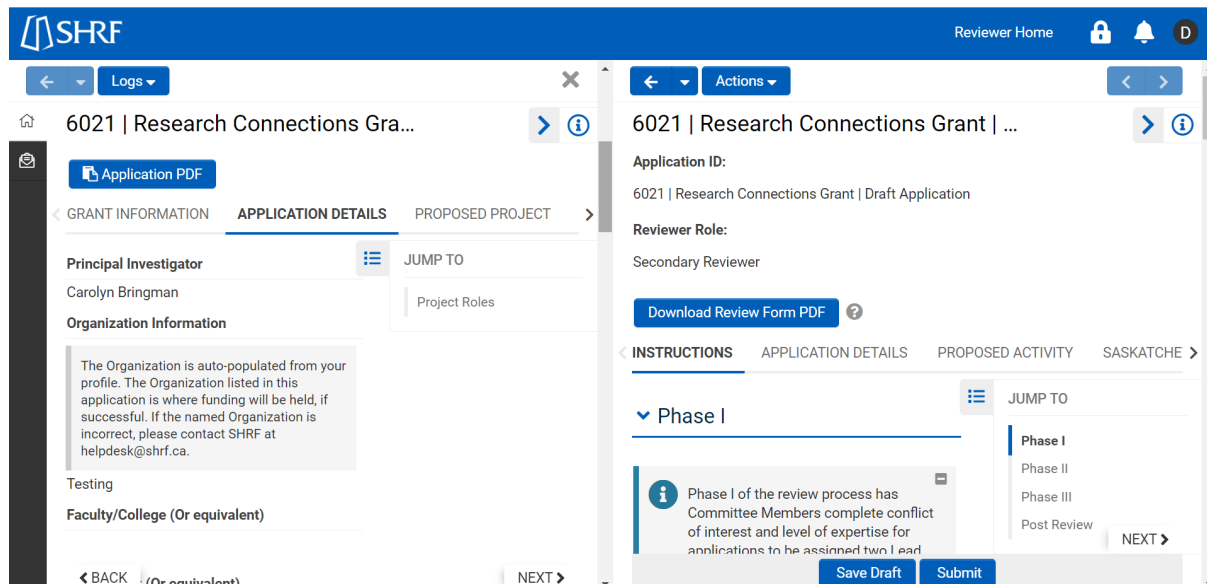
Accessing the Application - Online

If you would like to access the application online and not download and/or print it, you can do this by clicking the “Actions” button in the top left corner of your screen.



By clicking this button, a drop down will appear with the “View Application in Split Screen” option. When you click this option, the application will appear on the left-hand side of the browser with the

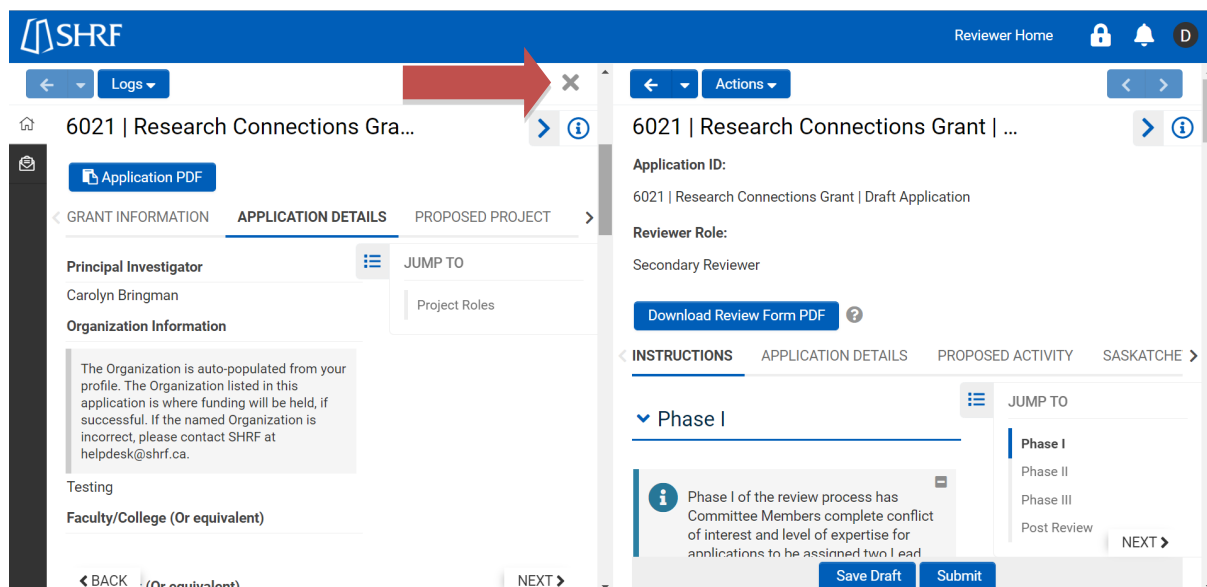
Review Form appearing on the right. You can then move through the different tabs of the application while you work through the review criteria.



Application Form

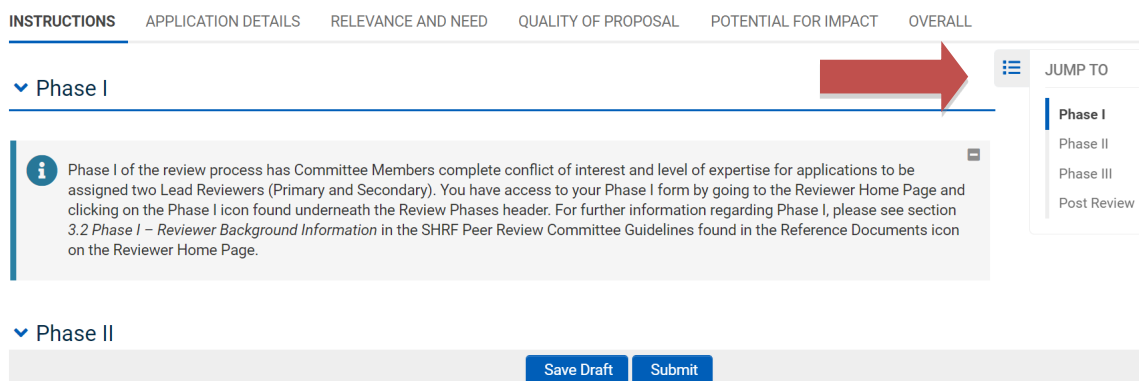
Review Form

When you wish to close the application, click the grey “X” in the right of the application side and you will go back to only viewing the Review Form.



Instructions Tab

The first tab gives you an overview of the instructions for different review phases. As an external reviewer, you are only involved in Review Phase II. You can use the Jump To menu on the right hand side and click “Phase II” to jump to those instructions, skipping the Phase I instructions that are not relevant for your review.

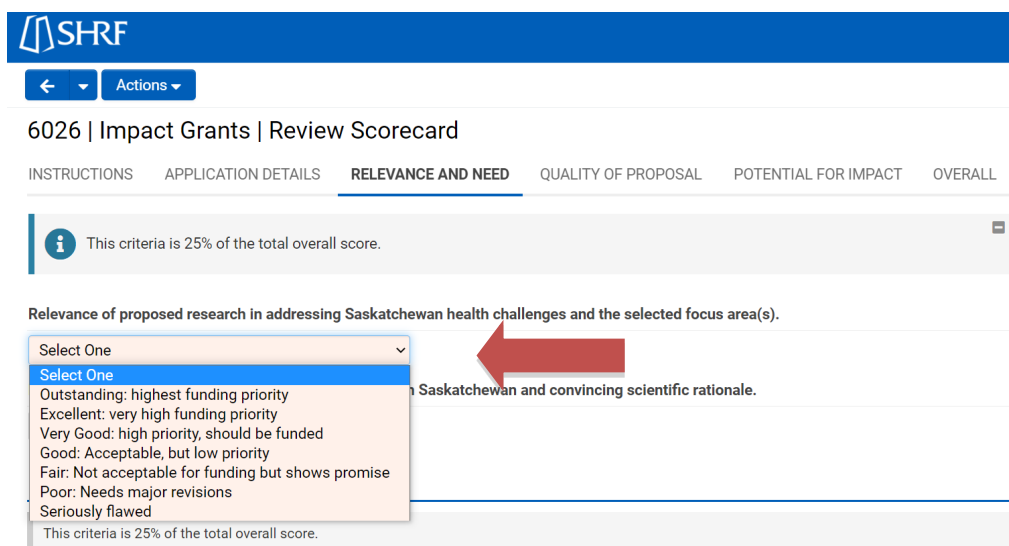


Application Details Tab

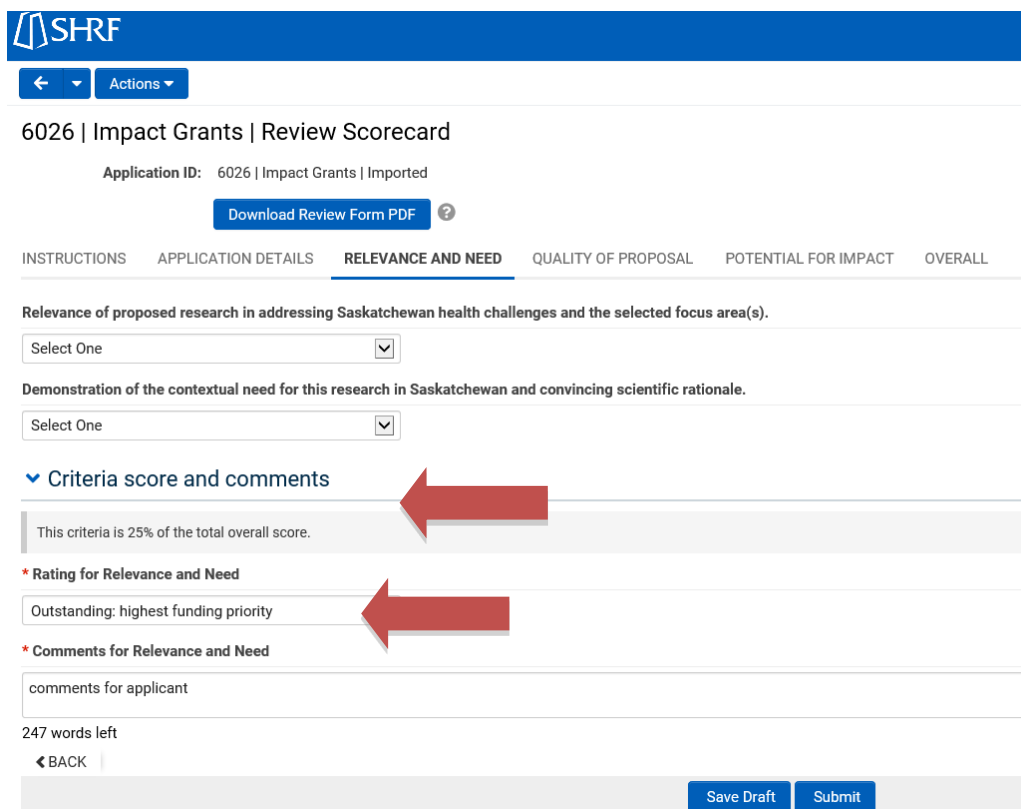
This tab gives the Applicant Information of the grant along with access to the Full Application PDF. Please see “Accessing the Application - PDF” header above for further information on accessing the application.

Review Criteria Tabs

After the Applications Details and before the Overall tabs will be a tab for each high-level review criteria. In the tab will be any sub-criteria points to consider, along with a Criteria Score and Comments section. When you click into the tab, you will see under each sub-criteria a drop-down field. This drop-down field is optional but allows for the external reviewer to give specific ratings to each sub-criterion to help them during the review. This part of the review form is not shared with the applicant and is only intended to support the review process.



Below the sub-criteria is where you will find the Criteria Score and Comments header. In this section you are required to complete the Rating for the criteria and provide comments regarding your rating and score. **As an external reviewer you will not be giving a score on applications on a rating.** Please note that the comments in this section for each criteria will be shared with the review committee and the applicant.



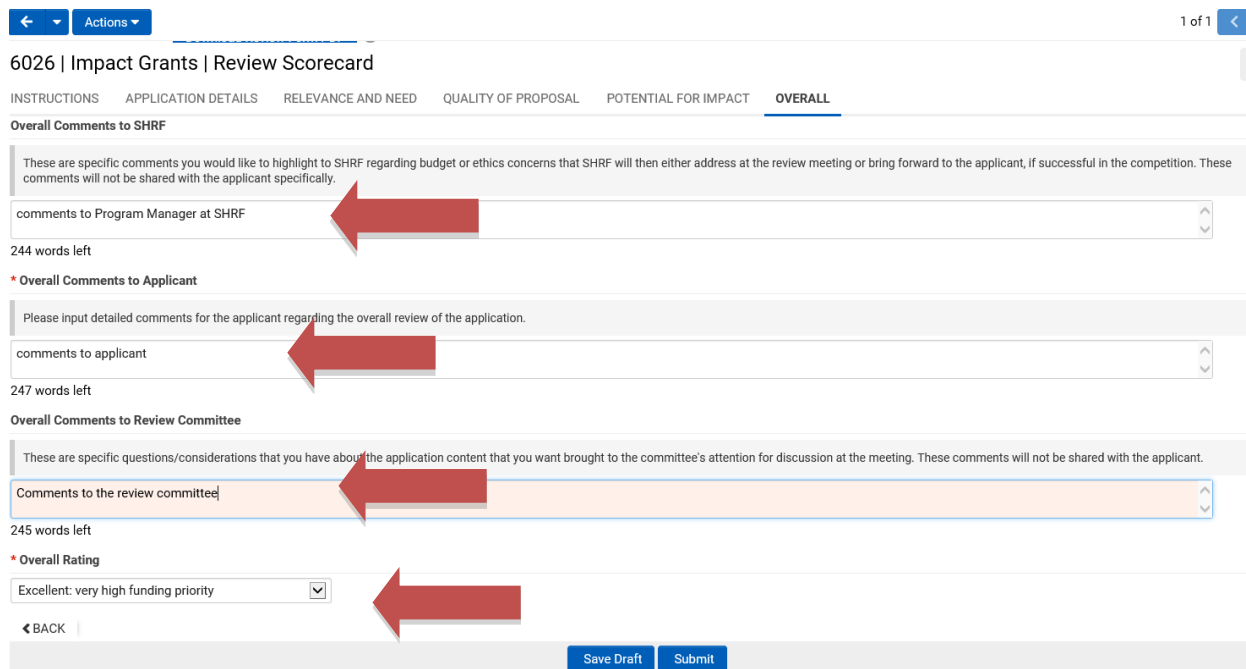
Once you have completed a criterion, make sure to click the “Save Draft” button so that you do not lose your work. By saving your work, you may also leave the review form and come back at any time prior to submitting.

Overall Tab

After you have completed each criterion and the required fields, you will then move to the Overall tab. This tab has three spots for commenting and an overall rating drop-down. Regarding the comments, you have the following spots to comment to direct audiences:

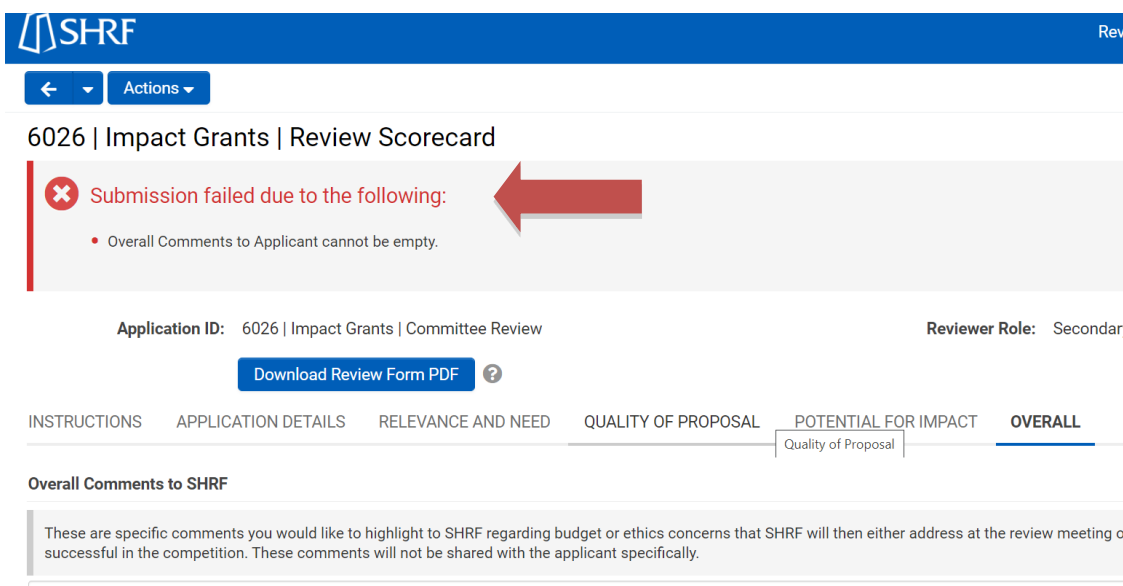
1. Overall Comments to SHRF (not mandatory) – here you can let the Program Manager know of specific budget and/or ethical concerns you have with the application that wouldn’t necessarily impact the grant overall, but would need to be addressed if the application was funded. The comments in this section will not be shared with the applicant, but instead the Program Manager will take into consideration and apply conditions to funding as required, if successful.

2. Overall Comments to Applicant (mandatory) – this is where you will give your overall comments of the application. The comments should be detailed and appropriate. This section will be shared with applicants following the review and results.
3. Overall Comments to Review Committee (not mandatory) – this is where you can input any questions or considerations you would like the review committee to consider regarding the application. This section will not be shared with applicants.

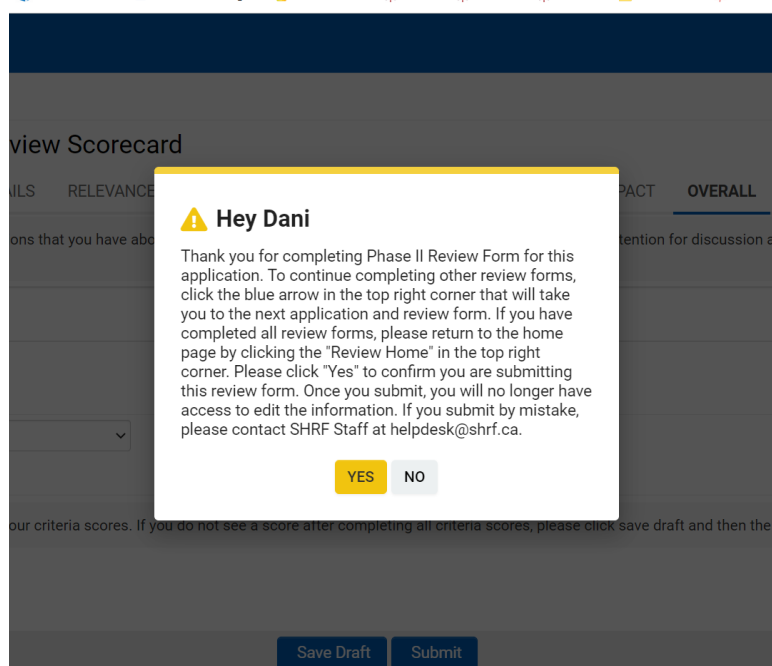


Below the comments section of the form you will be able to give the application an overall rating using the drop-down.

Once all mandatory fields are complete and you are satisfied with your comments, you may submit the review form. To do so, click the “Submit” button at the bottom of the page. That action will do a check to make sure that all fields are complete. If they are not, you will receive an error messaging letting you know which field(s) still need to be completed. Once you have updated that information, you can click the “Submit” button again and the form should go through.



Once you have updated that information, you can click the “Submit” button again and the form will go through and you will receive a submission confirmation message. Click yes to confirm the submission. The status of the review form will also change in the list view from Draft to Submitted.



IMPORTANT NOTE: Once submitted you will no longer be able to edit your comments. If you accidentally submit before intended, please contact SHRF. When you submit, please be aware that your review does not go directly to the applicants. SHRF reads over and removes any identifying information before sharing reviews with the applicant.