Navigating Horizon Europe as a Canadian University

Overview & Recommendations for Research Administration

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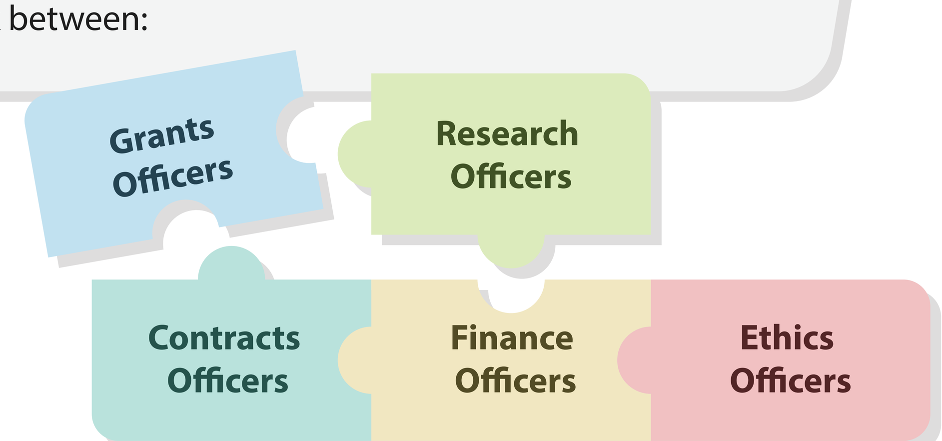
What is Horizon Europe (HE)?

- EU's research & innovation program (2021–2027), **€95.5B** budget.
- Organized into **3 pillars**; Canada can participate **only in Pillar II – Global Challenges & European Industrial Competitiveness**.
- Focuses on **collaborative, multi-country, institutional projects** tied to EU policy goals.

Research Admin Ecosystem

Supporting a Horizon Europe project requires coordinated work between:



Objectives & Methodology

1. **Compare** HE's funding, budgeting, & reporting structures with Canadian research funding frameworks, by reviewing EU & Canadian regulatory sources.
2. **Map** differences onto core research administration functions (grants, research, finance, contracts, & ethics) to develop targeted recommendations for management of HE projects.

HE Pillar II: Key Points for Research Admins

Consortium Formation & Governance

- Participation requires a multi-country consortium (minimum 3 institutions from EU Member/Associated States).
- Agreements:
  - **"Consortium Agreement" (CA):** signed among partners, defining roles, responsibilities, & resource allocation.
  - **"Model Grant Agreement" (MGA):** legally binding contract with European Commission, covering funding, reporting, compliance, data management, ethics, gender equality, IP, open science, & research security.

Proposal Development

- Application process can be 1- or 2-step (concept note -> full proposal if invited).
- Proposals structured & evaluated on: **Excellence, Impact, Implementation.**
- Address dual-use concerns (e.g., AI or biotech), environmental & societal implications, human/animal/data protection.
- EU's General Data Protection Regulation (GDRP) applies if processing EU individuals' personal data; includes rights to erasure, data portability, explicit opt-in consent.
- Open Science obligations: open access to publications, FAIR data principles, data management plan.
- Gender equality must be addressed in proposal & reporting.

Financial Management & Eligibility Rules

- Budgets in Euros, covering 100% direct + 25% flat-rate indirect costs.
- Funding models: **Cost-Reimbursement** (actual costs; no profit), **Lump-Sum** (pre-set amount released after completing work packages).
- Costs are recorded in profit & loss accounts with supporting evidence (timesheets, usage logs).
- Personnel costs: actual days worked × daily rate (from annual salary).
- Subcontracting only for justified tasks; no invoicing between beneficiaries.
- Not eligible: profit, bank fees, exchange losses, interest, deductible VAT.

Intellectual Property (IP) & Exploitation

- IP ownership: Distinguishes Background (pre-existing) from Foreground IP (generated within project); Institution that produces a result generally owns it, joint ownership possible if applicable.
- Obligations:
  - Granting access rights to background & results for implementation & exploitation.
  - Exploiting or making results available if not exploited on time.

  Recording all results in the "Results Ownership List," including owner(s), country, & whether ownership is single or joint.

Reporting & Audits

- Periodic technical & financial reports submitted via "eGrants system".
- Final report due within 60 days post completion, submitted by consortium coordinator.
- Audit window: up to 2 years after project end. Must maintain all financial statements, timesheets, travel logs, etc.
- Limited budget flexibility, especially under lump-sum funding.

Tips for Research Admins

Grants Officer

- Provide researcher with institutional info: Participant Identification Code, admin contact, legal & financial details, Gender Equality Plan.
- Identify & coordinate with consortium coordinator.
- Check if activities align with call objectives, work plan, & institutional capacity.
- Verify that budget follows HE rules & institutional policies.
- Identify potential security screening; connect researcher with Institutional Research Security Office for proposal support.

Research Officer

- Ensure proposal aligns with call topic, expected outcomes, & EU priorities (Green Deal, digital transition, resilient & inclusive Europe).
- Confirm consortium expertise is complementary & work packages, deliverables, & risks are realistic.
- Verify impacts are evidence-based, measurable, follow HE impact logic, & include strong exploitation & dissemination plans.
- Check that gender, open science, ethics, security, & responsible research are fully integrated.

Contracts Officer

- Ensure tasks, deliverables, & timelines are clear, realistic, & limited to what the institution agreed to.
- Check that background & results IP are clearly defined; access must be limited, fair, & time-bound.
- Confirm eligible costs, 25% indirect rate, & that subcontracting meets EU rules.
- Verify that ethics approvals, data protection (GDPR compliance), & open-access requirements are satisfied.

Finance Officer

- Track spending vs. plan, ensure all costs meet HE eligibility rules. Flag deviations early.
- Check timesheets, salary calculations, & maintain auditable records for all expenses.
- Prepare periodic financial reports, reconcile with institutional accounts, & maintain audit-ready files.
- Oversee budget amendments, ensure VAT/exchange rates are correct, & confirm alignment with GA & institutional policies.

Ethics Officer

- Ensure "Ethics Issues" & "Security Issues" tables are complete, & dual-use, AI, environmental, & societal risks are identified & included in mitigation plans.
- Check that the proposal's methodology, REB approvals, consent forms, & recruitment materials comply with EU regulations.

Selected References

European Commission (2024, November 1). Horizon Europe Model Grant Agreement (HE MGA), V1.2.

Government of Canada. (2025, June 26). Intellectual Property (IP). Innovation, Science & Economic Development Canada.

European Commission (2024, December 16). Horizon Europe Programme Standard Application Form, V9.0.

Government of Canada. (2025, June 26). General Data Protection Regulation. Innovation, Science & Economic Development Canada.