



Tri-Agency CV - Quick Start Guide

Pragmatic advice for drafting your narrative CV



UNIVERSITY OF CALGARY

Knowledge to Impact

What is the TCV?

The TCV is a flexibly structured, narrative account of research contributions and achievements. It should reflect a broad range of relevant skills, experiences, achievements, and research impact related to your research proposal.

Required:

- 5 Pages max (English) or 6 Pages max (French)
- 3 Core Sections
- Must use official templates
- Must be self-contained*

Learn More:

[View: Full Guide Online](#)

[KI's Narrative Support Webpage](#)

* According to CIHR, this means that 'you must include all necessary and relevant information so others can understand, evaluate and make decisions based on your tri-agency CV without needing to refer to other documents. It must stand alone and provide all relevant details to support clear and informed decision-making.

This Guide has been developed by the [Knowledge to Impact team](#), Research Services Office (RSO), at the University of Calgary to support faculty, staff, students, and partners drafting a new narrative-style CV for funding competitions.

The [tri-agency CV \(TCV\) format](#) is being phased in gradually by Canada's three major federal research funding agencies—CIHR, NSERC, and SSHRC—as part of their commitment to inclusive, diverse, and holistic approaches to assessing research excellence. This Guide offers practical guidance on drafting your TCV, aligned with tri-agency requirements.

Who is this for?

This Guide can be used by researchers and others who are: applying to tri-agency funding opportunities that require a TCV; those preparing for upcoming transitions to narrative CV formats; or anyone seeking to understand how to communicate research contributions, impact, and mentorship in a narrative, evidence-based format aligned with responsible research assessment principles.

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Introducing the TCV

Why It Matters

In November 2019, Canada's three major research funding agencies (CIHR, NSERC, and SSHRC) signed the Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA), committing to move beyond journal-based metrics and recognize and value the full diversity of research contributions.

The transition to the narrative CV represents more than a format change - it's a cultural shift in how research excellence is defined and recognized in Canada. The narrative CV is a key part of this shift. It allows you to:

- Showcase diverse research contributions including but also beyond publications (e.g., community partnerships, creative works, knowledge mobilization, datasets, etc.)
- Demonstrate real-world impact through evidence of uptake, outcomes, and benefits to society
- Tell your unique research story in your own words, reflecting your distinct career path and the full spectrum of your work as it relates to this particular opportunity.

How Is It Different?

1. **Tailored Messaging:** Written to align with the specific goals and objectives of the opportunity.
2. **Selectively Curated:** Presents your achievements, contributions, and experiences that are most relevant to your proposal, instead of listing everything.
3. **Focused on Impact:** Highlights quality, context, and evidence of who benefited, not just quantity or metrics of outputs.
4. **Broader Scope:** Can include diverse outputs like partnerships, EDI, mentoring, and influence on policy.

Drafting Your Narrative CV

3 Core Sections:

The following three sections are required in the TCV, and appear in this order in the official templates:

PERSONAL STATEMENT

Who you are as a researcher.
Your research identity.
Your research journey.

"I am X. My work focuses on Y to achieve Z."

MOST SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTIONS (MSC) AND EXPERIENCES

Your most significant contributions and their impact.

"Here's what I created, why it matters, who it helped, and the evidence."

SUPERVISORY & MENTORSHIP ACTIVITIES

How you mentor and develop others.

"Here's how I support the next generation and what they've achieved."

Recommended Drafting Order

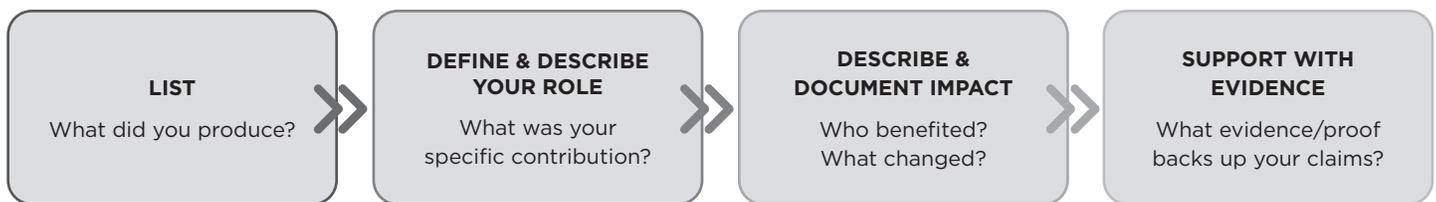
We recommend drafting in the following order because the Personal Statement should contextualize the detailed work described in your other sections. Writing it last means you're synthesizing, not starting cold.

However: let your own style lead the way!



4- Step Method

When drafting your Core Sections, be sure to:



Drafting the Core Sections

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Drafting Your MSC Statement

Key Principle

This is the heart of the TCV, showcasing your most important research work as it relates to this opportunity. Select up to 10* relevant contributions and (optionally) bundle them into 3-5 thematic groups to tell a coherent story about your research trajectory.

Building and Describing Contributions

Use the 4-step method:

1. **List** relevant contributions.
2. **Define and Describe** your specific role in each.
3. **Document the Impact** (what was the challenge, who benefited, what changed).
4. **Support your Claims** with a mix of qualitative and quantitative evidence.

Total: ~250-500 words per contribution or bundle (recommended)

*10 contributions is a maximum, not a requirement.



TIP

List then Bundle: List your contributions first, then explore groupings. Moving outputs together often reveals new ways to frame and name your work. Many will bundle outputs thematically, but others (especially early-career researchers) may choose to present individual contributions.

It should be clear to reviewers:

- What you produced and why it matters
- Your specific role in advancing these contributions
- Who benefited and what changed
- The quality of your work through evidence of its uptake, use, and impact

Key Principle

Focus on how you support the growth of others and the results of that support. Avoid focusing only on the total quantity of students supervised.

Adapting the 4-Step Method

Use the same 4-step method as the MSC section, but think about “people and training” rather than research outputs:

1. List Activities

Briefly list and/or group related supervision/mentorship experiences and activities

(e.g., “Graduate supervision,” “Postdoc mentoring,” “Building an inclusive lab,” “Supporting non-academic careers”).

2. Define & Describe Your Role

Be clear what you actually did for people.

(e.g. “Primary supervisor for...”, “Co-supervisor”, “Program lead for a peer-mentoring initiative”, “informal mentor to early-career faculty”).

3. Document Outcomes/Impact

Shift quickly from: “what I did” to “what changed for them.”

- Where did trainees go next?
(academic, industry, government, community)
- What skills did they gain?
(technical, leadership, policy, community-engagement)
- What did they produce with you?
(papers, presentations, tools, policy briefs)

4. Support with Evidence

Add 1-2 sentences that show this made a difference.

- Destination examples (i.e., where are they now?), awards, acknowledgements, evaluations, or brief testimonials.



TIP

This is about **highlighting your efforts to mentor** and train future generations.

Emphasize your role in creating inclusive environments, delivering training, providing mentorship, and supporting the development of others through diverse and impactful activities.

It should be clear to reviewers:

- How you enabled the development of others
- Who you trained
- How your training impacted their trajectories



Remember, Language Matters!

Research shows reviewers score higher when they see ownership, affirmative language, and clarity.

Avoid negation (“not,” “no,” “none”), uncertainty (“could,” “should,” “would”), and passive voice wherever possible.

Shift From:

“The project was completed successfully”



“This approach is not limited to one field”



“This could potentially influence policy”



“We hoped to improve outcomes”



“It should be noted that...”



To:

“**I led** the team to complete the project successfully”

“This **approach spans** three disciplines”,
or “This multidisciplinary approach...”

“This **research informed** three policy changes”

“**We improved** patient outcomes by X%”

“Our **results show** that...”

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Drafting Your Personal Statement

Key Principle

This is your research identity and story in miniature—why you do this work, what you focus on, and what difference it has made so far. This sets the stage for your entire TCV. The goal of this section is to create a concise, compelling introduction to YOU and your work.

Prompts

Think about focusing on the following prompts to help **capture the essence of your work** and your approach:

"I am a [your role] dedicated to [your work's central goals]."

"My research focuses on [your areas/domains] in order to [Big Picture impacts you hope to achieve]."

"To date, I have accomplished [____], and I am therefore now ready to [____]."

"My journey in this field has been driven by [your personal/professional motivations]."



TIP

Use this section to **highlight big themes, directions, and priorities** in your research. Identify the key research challenges you address.

Summarize any benefits/impacts your work has made to society and science, and highlight recognitions, awards, or prizes you want to showcase.

It should be clear to reviewers:

- Who you are as a researcher
- Why you do what you do
- Your career journey so far
- Where you would like your research to go next



As You Draft:

DO:

✓ **Tailor to each application.**

Review criteria; highlight what's relevant to this opportunity or competition.

✓ **Write in plain, active language.**

Assume your reviewers are informed, but avoid jargon. We recommend using first person ("I led," not "The team conducted").

✓ **Be selective, not exhaustive.**

Choose 10 contributions max. Bundle related outputs together. (It is not necessary to include 10.)

✓ **Show, don't tell.**

Include evidence (testimonials, metrics, documentation) for every claim.

✓ **Highlight partnerships & collaborations.**

Especially with communities, industry, or lived experience.

✓ **Emphasize agency & ownership**

"I designed" not "was involved in." Be clear about your exact role and contributions.

✓ **Keep your traditional CV updated**

Maintain an up-to-date traditional CV alongside your narrative CV. You may still need a traditional CV for other competitions or opportunities (e.g., tenure promotion, job searches, etc.)

Do NOT:

✗ **Do NOT simply convert your old CV.**

Narrative CVs require storytelling and organizing your research outputs. Don't rely on your previous CV's lists!

✗ **Do NOT use Journal Impact Factor or h-index**

The tri-agencies explicitly advise against this. Focus on article-level citations (e.g., the number of citations a specific output received) and other evidence that showcases the quality of your work instead. [Read More](#)

✗ **Do NOT reuse the same TCV for multiple applications**

Each opportunity requires tailoring.

✗ **Do NOT leave claims unsupported.**

Provide qualitative & quantitative support right alongside your outputs. Your reviewers need to follow the trail.

✓ Is Your TCV Ready? - Checklist

Content & Narrative

- Each contribution tells a story.
- Contributions are bundled thematically.
- Each claim has supporting evidence.
- The narrative is coherent across all three sections.
- My Personal Statement supports the other sections.

Language & Tone

- The language is clear and free of jargon.
- I avoided the use of JIF, h-index, and journal-based metrics.

[Read More](#)

- The writing emphasizes my agency & ownership.
- The language is positive and avoids unnecessary uncertainty ('could', 'should')

Format & Compliance

- I used the official Tri-Agency template provided by the relevant agency.
- The page count is within range.
(5 pages (Eng) / 6 pages (Fr) or fewer)
- It is self-contained.
(i.e., reviewers do not need to consult any other documents or pages to provide context.)
- It is tailored for this specific opportunity.
- It has been reviewed by peers or colleagues.

Resource Links

General

[Tri-Agency CV description](#)

[Tri-Agency CV frequently asked questions](#)

[CIHR applicant resource: How to highlight your research contributions and impacts](#)

[NSERC guidelines on the assessment of contributions to research, training and mentoring](#)

[Tri-Agency's TCV webinar \(Aug 2025\)](#)

[UCalgary's TCV webinar \(Aug 2025\)](#)

Official Templates

[CIHR Tri-Agency CV template](#)

[SSHRC Tri-Agency CV template](#)

TCV Instructions

[CIHR Tri-Agency CV instructions](#)

[SSHRC Tri-Agency CV instructions](#)

Final Check

Create a "source" TCV.

With 8-10 contributions or bundles you can mix & match.

Re-read the specific opportunity criteria.

To ensure you've tailored the sections accordingly.

Have a peer review the draft.

Ideally at least one individual inside and one individual outside your discipline.

Revisit & iterate.

Your TCV evolves as you achieve new impacts.

Appendix

Note on Journal Impact Factor or h-index

As part of their commitment to DORA principles, the tri-agencies have explicitly stated that reviewers should not consider “surrogate measures of quality and impact, such as the prestige of a publication venue or citation-based metrics (e.g., [Journal Impact Factor or h-index](#))”.

The tri-agencies note that “if discipline-appropriate metrics are included, consider them alongside more holistic measures of quality...and impact”.

We recommend against including journal-based metrics in your TCV materials, but if you do choose to include them, be sure to contextualize them with additional metrics and evidence of quality and impact.

Tri-Agency Narrative CV Guide

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