

Learning & Education Advancement Fund (LEAF): Budget Guidelines

Last updated June 2026

As you prepare your LEAF budget, here are some guiding questions for your consideration:

- *Sustainability is a key tenet of LEAF. How will you leverage LEAF to set your project up for long term success and ensure your project continues to have an impact beyond the initial infusion of funds?*
- *How will these funds be used to support student learning outcomes?*
- *How will these funds be used to provide a new learning opportunity to students (and in some instances extend the outreach of the learning opportunity)?*
- *Are there common or standard hiring rates for teaching-related supports (RA, educational developer, educational technologists) in your unit/division? We recommend speaking with your divisional or unit business officer and/or unit or program administrator early to understand these standard rates and the HR processes involved to hire these supports.*
- *Are there institutional or divisional offices that you may collaborate with to maximize resources or ensure long-term support or use for project resources or equipment (e.g., options for potential re-use of equipment that will be needed only once / temporarily by your project; video filming and editing support from a divisional digital studio, etc.)?*

Process

LEAF Application	As part of your LEAF application, you will be asked to submit an annual budget breaking down the years you are seeking funding: ○ LEAF Impact: \$10,000 - \$100,000 per year for up to 3 years ○ LEAF Seed: up to \$10,000 per year for up to 3 years If you have questions or concerns as you prepare your LEAF budget, please reach out to a member of the Office of the Vice-Provost, Teaching & Learning (OVPTL) who will meet with you to discuss further (vp.tl@utoronto.ca).
LEAF Approval	Even if your application for LEAF is successful, you may be asked to revise and resubmit your budget to align with LEAF principles and practices. A member of the OVPTL will ask to meet with you to work with you on your budget.
LEAF Status Reports	If your application for LEAF is successful, you will be asked to submit an annual status report. The report provides an update on the progress of your project. We also appreciate that your anticipated budget

	might change as you undertake the project. The status report is also an opportunity to submit a revised budget based on the changing needs of your project. If you submit a revised budget that includes new or modified budget items, or requests additional funding, the OVPTL will review it for approval.
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General

General	It is recommended and encouraged that LEAF recipients use existing University of Toronto resources where appropriate; that is, student participation, technical support services, existing technology platforms, professional services, etc.
Support from Division / Academic Unit	Please identify divisional in-kind support prior to LEAF submission will strengthen applications.
Conflict of Interest	LEAF <u>cannot</u> cover expenses that violate the University's Conflict of Interest Policy .
Curricular	To be considered for LEAF, your project must have a clear curricular connection. Activities are intended to enhance the academic experience of the University's undergraduate student population. Co-curricular activities should directly connect to supporting the attainment of specific course or program learning outcomes.
Space	LEAF <u>cannot</u> cover the costs for traditional infrastructure (e.g., building or renovating classrooms or labs).

Teaching and Research Support

Faculty / Staff Salary	LEAF <u>cannot</u> be used to cover the salary costs of a faculty or staff member who have a continuing appointment at the University of Toronto.
Teaching Release	As part of your LEAF Impact project and budget, you may wish to ask for teaching release. Teaching releases are not a universally applied practice at the University. Prior to submitting your LEAF proposal, please connect with the relevant academic administrator within your academic unit and division to understand if teaching release is feasible and aligns with their policies. If it is an approved practice within your unit and division, the LEAF program has a limit of one 0.5 FCE release <i>per LEAF Impact project</i> . Course release is typically up to a maximum of \$11,500.
Teaching Assistant / Research Assistant Support	You may wish to hire additional TA / RA support for your LEAF project. A few general principles: ○ With your division / unit, discuss the work / responsibilities involved with a position to determine if it should be classified as a Research Assistant, Teaching Assistant or other role.

	○ Research Assistant: Broad category of employment intended to support non-course-based activities, most commonly quantitative or qualitative data collection, analysis and documentation. ○ Pay: No fixed rate. Varies based on skills and duties. ○ Teaching Assistant: Undertake the following in relation to a for-credit course; grading, demonstrating labs, running a variety of tutorials, holding consultation hours related to a course, invigilating tests and exams, and clerical duties related to course management. ○ Pay: Determined by CUPE 3902 Unit 1 Collective Agreement
Work Study Students	Overview: In support of your LEAF project, a Work Study student could support faculty, staff or an administrative unit undertake core operations or special projects. The Work Study pay rate is the provincial minimum wage. Local hiring units may choose to increase the rate of pay. ○ The Work Study program pays 50% of the hourly pay rate plus 10% benefits and the hiring unit pays the remaining 50% of the hourly pay rate plus 10% benefits. Please ensure to only account for the hiring unit costs in your budget. ○ You may wish to increase the rate of pay (i.e., a top-up) in line with the level of work and expertise asked of students. Please note that this top-up will be at the expense of the hiring unit and should be included in your LEAF budget. With the Work Study program, it is important to note the specific confines for student engagement: ○ The Work Study program has specific start and end dates for when you can actively engage students in work. Please refer to the Work Study website for these dates. ○ Maximum hours: students hired through the Work Study program can work a maximum of 15 hours per week. ○ During the fall / winter Work Study period, a student can work a maximum of 200 hours for the entire work period. ○ During the summer Work Study period, a student can work a maximum of 100 hours for the entire work period. ○ Any hours that exceed these maximums will not be covered by the Work Study program. ○ The Work Study program is an experiential learning opportunity for students. As part of this learning, it is important to include opportunities for training, professional development and

	critical reflection. To help support you with this, review the resources and programming offered by the Work Study program .
USW Casual	Overview: USW Casuals are generally hired to work on an infrequent, irregular, or intermittent basis, or they might be hired to work regularly scheduled hours for a period of up to six months. Casual employees are unionized at the University (USW 1998). • Pay: No fixed rate. Varies based on qualifications and duties. Please work with your divisional HR office to determine an appropriate rate of pay for the position.
Honorarium	It is important to understand when it is appropriate to offer an honorarium. Financial Advisory Services and Training (FAST) offers a detailed overview of honorarium payments in their resource, Understanding Honorarium Payments with FAST and Central Payroll Services. Please review this resource should you be planning to offer honorarium payments as part of your LEAF project. As outlined in the resource, honorariums are not appropriate when they are: ○ Based on an agreed to amount between the individual providing services and the University seeking services. If the payment is agreed upon, it constitutes a contractual agreement (i.e., employee or independent contractor relationship). ○ Obtaining the services of a professional speaker or consultant who performs the requested service for a living. As noted in this resource, the information provided does not address honorarium payments to Indigenous people. Please review “Indigenous Payees” below for further guidelines.
Indigenous Payees	When consulting an Indigenous Elder, Knowledge Keeper, Traditional Teacher, translator or other Indigenous community members, please consult the University of Toronto’s Payments to Indigenous Payees Guidelines. Please note that projects incorporating Indigenous research should include a consultation with the Office of Indigenous Initiatives and/or your divisional office.

Consumables

Events	LEAF does <u>not</u> support the costs of hosting special events such as receptions, exhibitions or conferences.
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Food	LEAF does <u>not</u> typically support the costs of providing food for events. Discuss with your unit if they are willing to support these costs, and if this could be in-kind support from your academic unit / division. ○ If you plan to hold focus groups and share food as part of student compensation, LEAF can be used to cover nominal food costs totaling up to \$250.
Compensation for Focus Groups / Survey Participants	As part of their compensation for participating in focus groups or completing surveys in relation to your LEAF project, you may wish to provide students with gift cards or transfer funds to their TCard (TBucks) that can be used to pay for printing and photocopying at most University of Toronto libraries, at food outlets and vending machines on campus and at the U of T Bookstore. As you consider appropriate levels of compensation for research participants, we recommend that you review academic unit / divisional policy as well as guidelines by Research & Innovation. We would recommend you review: 1. Compensation & Reimbursement of Research Participants 2. Use of Student Participation Pools in Research Typically, student gift cards that have been approved as part of a LEAF budget have aligned with minimum wage rates in Ontario up to \$20 per hour for their participation. Reminder, when involving students in your research, it is important to also debrief students about the design of your project and the assessment structure. This will help support your students continued learning about the research process.
Equipment	LEAF does <u>not</u> support the purchase of basic computer and related equipment and does not consider these items to be matched funds. LEAF will consider funding the purchase of specialized equipment specifically related to the project provided a clear justification is included in your application.

Research Dissemination and Travel

Outside of Ontario	LEAF does not support travel or expenditures for events or activities outside of Ontario.
Research and Publications	Although sometimes an output of a project, LEAF does not support the costs associated with publication.
Conferences	LEAF cannot be used for conference-related expenses such as registration, travel and accommodation.