Risk assessment and mitigation in research grant applications – A researcher's perspective

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Research Commons: "A Safeguarding Research Overview and How-To: Crafting successful risk assessments and mitigation strategies"

November 7th, 2024

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My research

My research

- 19 years at Geomatics Engineering in Dept. of Earth and Space Science and Engineering, Lassonde School of Engineering

- Director: Global Navigation Satellite Systems Laboratory

- Interim Director: Mobility Innovation Centre (MOVE) ORU

- I work with GPS and other positioning and navigation systems, primarily improving measurement processing algorithms and applying to user applications

- Current research includes improving automotive and smartphone capabilities
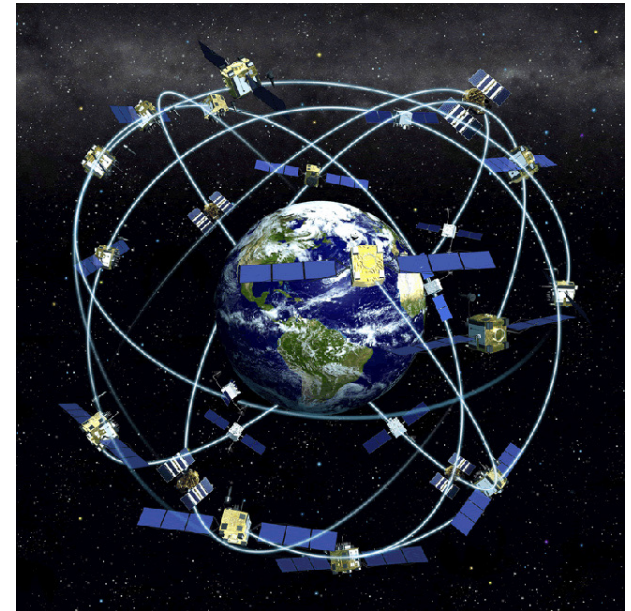
My / the "problem"

> My research is the "problem"

> Simply put:
- While I don't work on military applications,
- These technologies are all military developments and
- Therefore, are all subject to risk assessment

> Perhaps the case for your research, especially under "dual-use" definitions

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Dealing with new research risk requirements in grant applications

More work!

> Know your research: Determine if research falls under a risk category

>> (As risk is defined so broadly, its highly likely)

> Know your partner organization: Determine details about potential partners ownership and affiliations

>> (Sometime difficult to find information, but some warning signs are obvious)

> Risk identification: What is this?!

>> (Follow instructions; ask for help)

> Risk mitigation plan: Even more so, what is this?!?!

>> (Follow instructions; ask for help)

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A specific problem

After doing her review, Rebecca's office sends Globe & Mail article:

Canadian-made parts found in Iranian attack drones used by Russia in Ukraine

STEVEN CHASE › SENIOR PARLIAMENTARY REPORTER
PUBLISHED DECEMBER 4, 2022
UPDATED DECEMBER 5, 2022

What is Research to do with such information?!?!

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Does research require risk assessment?

> Again, probably yes

> Broad definitions provided

> Best to respond conservatively

> As with all grant applications, best to answer all questions directly

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What is a risk mitigation plan?

> As with all grant applications, best to answer all questions directly

> Describing any other relevant review processes for which project has been subject to

> Raising research security awareness and building capacity across your research team

> Ensuring that partner organization(s)' objectives align with objectives of partnership

> Ensuring sound cybersecurity and data management practices

> Agreement on intended use of research findings

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Thoughts and suggestions
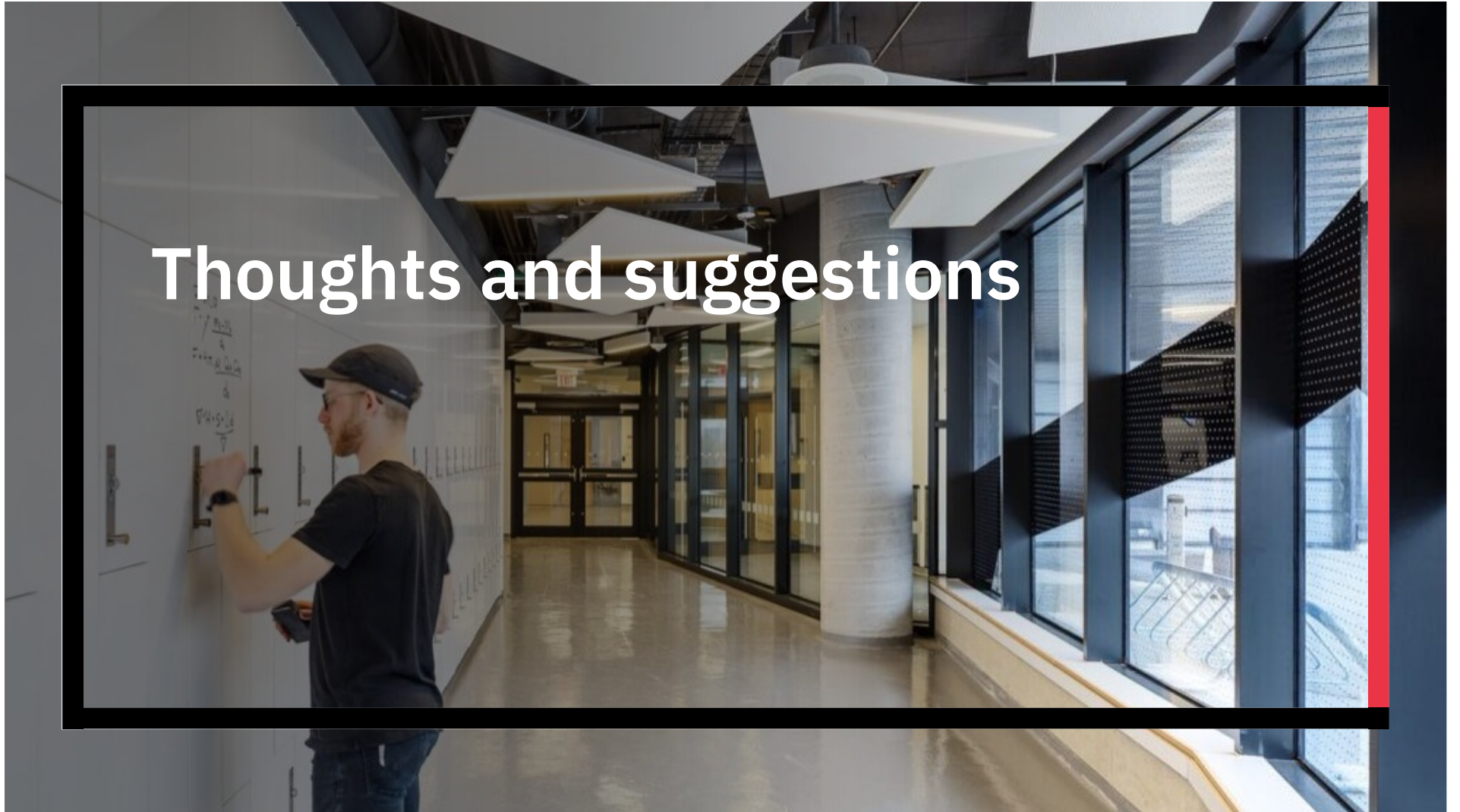
Make use of available resources

> On-line instructions and tools

> Rebecca's office

> Faculty research office

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On-line courses

> Worth stating in risk mitigation plan that Researcher will be / has taken research risk and mitigation webinars

> e.g., Public Safety webinars on safeguarding science, dual-use technologies, international students, exporting, etc.

> e.g., Tri-Agency webinars on sensitive research and affiliations

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Ask for permission now and not forgiveness later

> Bad:
  - More time needed to prepare grant (at least two additional forms)
  - Additional documentation depends on type of grant – but typically additional material
  - More work for Researcher (research, communications, writing, reviews, edits, etc.)

> But …
  - Not taking these new requirements seriously could result in grants being sent back
  - Best to do the extra work, rather than complain / ignore / minimize it
  - Same situation for various other grant requirements

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