

INNOVATION FUND

Summary of changes and improvements

In Budget 2018, the Government of Canada proposed to establish permanent funding for the CFI. A new contribution agreement outlines this funding until 2026. This new funding model allows us to provide Innovation Fund competitions at regular intervals of 24 to 30 months.

With the 2020 Innovation Fund call for proposals, we are launching the first Innovation Fund competition under our new funding model.

Changes to competition documents:

- **Call for proposals:** The call for proposals for the current competition combines the information previously outlined in both the call for proposals and the guidelines for preparing notices of intent and proposals, so you won't need to reference multiple documents. All technical instructions for using the CFI Awards Management System (CAMS) will be provided in an updated version of the existing [Getting started with CAMS](#) documents for researchers and research administration staff.
- **Notice of intent template:** The list of notices of intent posted on Innovation.ca will include a short project summary to better allow researchers and institutions to review information and to identify possible collaboration opportunities.
- **Signature:** The competition signature has been revised to *"Working together toward global leadership in research for a better Canada."*

Following the 2017 Innovation Fund, feedback from our stakeholders indicated that the competition was well-designed and well-delivered overall; however, there remained some redundancy in the information requested as well as need for clarity in the competition documentation. As such, we introduced the following improvements:

- **Objectives and criteria:** We revised the competition objectives and assessment criteria slightly to reduce redundancy and improve the correspondence between each of the three objectives and their associated assessment criteria.
- **Early CAMS alert for collaborating institutions:** To allow institutions to have up-to-date information on collaborative projects, we implemented an automatic early notification and approval system in CAMS when institutions are added as collaborators to notices of intent and proposals. A notification will be sent by email to the institution's CFI liaison as soon as a would-be collaborating institution is added in CAMS. This process will require institutions that are added to the notice of intent and proposal to confirm their participation in the project as well as to indicate the contribution from their institutional envelope, as appropriate. This approval must be obtained prior to submission of the notice of intent or proposal.

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- Cover letters: Institutions will no longer be required to submit a cover letter and list of projects for envelope-sharing calculations. Instead, reports on envelope allocations will be available in CAMS. A description of the institutional internal selection process is also no longer required.
 - Competition timelines: We have consistently heard, and actioned, requests for more time to develop proposals for the Innovation Fund. As such, we have again increased the time between the notice of intent deadline and the proposal deadline, and shortened the time between when we release the call for proposals and the deadline for notices of intent. Both measures will allow more time for proposals to be developed. We have done the latter knowing that many institutions have already started planning for the next competition, putting out internal calls for project ideas and implementing internal review processes.

Finally, following our 2018–19 pan-Canadian conversation, the following changes have been made for the next Innovation Fund competition:

- Equity, diversity and inclusion considerations:
 - To encourage an equitable, diverse and inclusive research environment, the assessment criterion standard for the project team has been revised to:
The diverse team comprises the breadth of expertise to conduct the proposed program(s).
- Additional instructions are:
- Describe the equity, diversity and inclusion principles you considered in composing the research team (including team leaders, members and/or other users) to include people who have the necessary expertise, who are at different stages of their career, and who are from underrepresented groups, as appropriate for the proposed project.

Your responses will inform the review committees on the EDI considerations undertaken by the applicants; however, they will not be used in the assessments of the research project. Committees may opt to provide feedback to guide your future EDI-related activities. These responses will also further our understanding of the challenges and realities of diversifying research teams.

- We also encourage you to suggest reviewers, in your notices of intent and proposals, which include people who are at different stages of their career, with diverse backgrounds and from underrepresented groups, as appropriate for the proposed program(s).

- Team leader(s) and team members:
 - We have introduced an option to select up to two team leaders, instead of a single project leader, to allow you to recognize other leaders within the team and to compose a more inclusive research team. We also replaced “principal user” with “team member” to recognize the critical role of *teams* in the success of a research program.

For CAMS submissions, team leader(s) will be recognized as follows:

- Administrative leader: The CAMS user that creates the project (typically an academic researcher) in CAMS. The administrative leader will be responsible for the tasks (e.g., submission to the institution) usually under the purview of the “project leader.”
 - Team leader(s): You can identify up to two team leaders. The administrative leader will be assigned as a team leader by default and there is an opportunity to designate an additional team leader. The additional team leader does not need to be associated with the administrative institution.
- CV module: In recognition that research contributions may be affected by various career leaves, the CV module in CAMS will be updated on April 30, 2019 to allow team leaders and members (formerly project leader and principal users) to mention such leaves and explain how they resulted in delays in research activities and dissemination of results. Reviewers will be instructed to be sensitive to the impact of these delays to avoid unfairly penalizing applicants.
 - Eligibility of infrastructure:
 - A recurring challenge identified by the community is the ineligibility of extended service agreements and warranties for existing equipment that supports the needs of new projects proposed to the CFI. Service contracts and warranties purchased at the same time as the infrastructure have long been CFI-eligible costs. In order to allow institutions to better operate and sustain critical infrastructure, we will now accept service contracts and warranties as eligible costs for existing equipment.
 - Better flexibility and revised eligibility criteria for collaborative space to (such as accidental, collision, or focus group space) to better support convergence and to meet the particular needs of all research communities, including social sciences and humanities and Indigenous research. Only space that is directly related to, and essential for, proposed research program(s) will be eligible. Collaborative space is expected to be used exclusively for research activities.

Lastly, the call for proposals includes revised wording to clarify that it is leading edge, transformational research *projects* we seek to support, rather than necessarily leading edge and transformational *infrastructure*. The idea that it is the research tools themselves (rather than the projects they enable) that must meet this description is a recurring misconception we hope to dispel. To better communicate this important distinction, reviewers will also receive instruction and guidance in this regard.