

Update

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Key themes for the 2025 Innovation Fund competition

Building on feedback from the 2023 Innovation Fund competition, and after consulting with our network of stakeholders, we are excited to share some changes we are proposing for the 2025 competition. The Innovation Fund remains open to proposals from all disciplines, with tailored options to better meet needs identified by the research community.

Funding the social sciences, humanities and the arts (SSHA)

Research in SSHA plays a critical role in the Canadian research ecosystem. SSHA researchers now use new technologies to leverage vast amounts of data to make new discoveries that will fundamentally change how research is conducted. There is an increasing appetite to engage with data at an accelerated rate among social scientists.

SSHA research is at a turning point where the successful collection and rigorous analysis of complex and highly varied data require new skills, collaborations, research methods and computational tools. Social scientists and humanists want to rise to the challenges posed by big data.

Access to state-of-the-art infrastructure is as important for the SSHA as it is for health and the natural sciences and engineering, but the nature and balance of the required infrastructure portfolio is distinctive. In digital humanities, for example, there are large-scale research infrastructure investments in collaborative data tools. Once these are in place, in many cases, the next most important form of support needed is not hardware, but people.

To better support the research community in SSHA, the 2025 Innovation Fund will:

- Allow each institution to submit one proposal outside of the institutional envelope with the primary field of research in SSHA
- Establish an SSHA-specific funding stream with adapted assessment criteria
- Extend the eligibility of personnel required for the continuous development and use of databases (evergreening).

Role of core facilities in the research ecosystem

With the growing emphasis on collaborative research, an increasing number of institutions have adopted core facilities and formal policies to support them. Core facilities have proven instrumental in attracting, retaining and training top researchers from around the globe. They also foster collaborations across academic, private, public and non-profit sectors. In addition, they provide a way to organize expert support within the facilities to ensure that equipment is working and used properly (extending its lifetime) and that the hours of service can generally be extended to meet the needs of researchers and their students.

A core facility provides access to the following, which are generally too expensive, complex or specialized for researchers to cost-effectively provide and sustain themselves:

- State-of-the-art research services and analyses
- Instruments and technology
- Expertise
- Training and education.

A core facility also:

- Is broadly available to many researchers to conduct their research activities, irrespective of their administrative affiliation and with no requirement for collaboration or co-authorship
- Has dedicated equipment and space serving one or more institutions
- Is recognized and supported by the research institution where it is located
- Has a clearly defined governance and management structure and a sound management plan reflective of its mandate, breadth and complexity
- Has dedicated management involving individual(s) with the technical and subject matter expertise necessary to oversee all aspects of the facility.

The performance of research can necessitate complex, expensive technical equipment that often requires operation by dedicated, skilled scientific personnel.

The collaborative and diverse nature of these facilities and their user base extends beyond the requirements of a single researcher and serves a broader community. There is a consistent need to refresh, renew, upgrade and sustain both the workhorse and cutting-edge equipment housed within.

To support these core facility needs, the 2025 Innovation Fund will:

- Establish a core-facility-specific funding stream with adapted assessment criteria
- Expand eligible costs to include personnel involved in operations and management of core facilities. Activities performed by specialized personnel may include:
 - Platform management and coordination
 - Operation and maintenance of specialized equipment
 - Interaction with researchers from a variety of disciplines
 - Outreach to and work with private sector users
 - Training highly qualified personnel for research in industry and academic or government labs.

Update on research security

On January 16, 2024, the Government of Canada announced the [**Policy on Sensitive Technology Research and Affiliations of Concern**](#) (STRAC). It also published an extensive [**FAQ**](#) document.

We are planning to start implementing the policy this spring and are preparing guidance on what institutions are required to do as well as an onboarding timeline. In the coming weeks, you will find this information on Innovation.ca under Apply & manage your awards/Resources to apply and manage your award/Research security, where you will also find guidance and timelines for complying with the [**Government of Canada's National Security Guidelines for Research Partnerships \(NSGRP\)**](#).

Our implementation plan is based on three principles: meeting the imperative of the policy, recognizing the resources available and creating a user-friendly environment for researchers and institutions. We continue to work with the three federal research funding agencies to harmonize and coordinate our approach as much as possible.

One aspect of the policy could have an immediate effect for projects funded through the 2023 Innovation Fund competition. Although the STRAC policy was not in place for proposals to that competition, the Government of Canada may nevertheless consider any risks associated with affiliations if, as part of our normal procedure for National Security Guidelines for Research Partnerships, we refer a project funded through the 2023 Innovation Fund competition to the Government of Canada to be further assessed.

Launch of the call for proposals for the Northern Fund

We launched the **call for proposals** for the newly created Northern Fund on January 31, 2024. Our thanks to all the institutions, organizations and individuals who contributed to the development of this fund through several rounds of consultations and feedback on the draft call for proposals.

Through the Northern Fund, we will invest up to \$25 million in research infrastructure funding and associated operating costs through our Infrastructure Operating Fund. For the purposes of this funding program, the North comprises Yukon, Northwest Territories, Nunavut, Nunavik and Nunatsiavut. The Northern Fund is open for proposals from all research disciplines that can clearly demonstrate how the research directly engages and serves the needs of Northern communities, including First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities.

Proposals to the Northern Fund can be submitted any time between February 2024 and February 2028. Please refer to the call for proposals for details on submitting proposals and note the deadlines in the table below.

Activity	Deadline
Deadline to submit proposals	Any time between February 2024 and February 2028
Last round of funding decisions from the CFI	March 2029
Duration of the Northern Fund	Five years or until the funds are fully committed

For further information about the Northern Fund email us at northern.fund@innovation.ca.

For information about how to apply to be eligible for CFI funding, email us at eligibility@innovation.ca.

Update on the College Fund

We are happy to see that the changes we made to the College Fund in 2022 are allowing for more diversity in applied research fields and partner organizations, resulting in an increasing number of proposals being submitted. With this in mind, and in order to successfully continue the delivery of the fund, we will be shifting the timeline of the College Fund to a fall proposal submission, starting with the 2024 competition. We will communicate more information in the coming months.

2023 Report on results now online

Our **2023 Report on results** is now available online. The report provides a visual summary of the outputs and outcomes achieved between April 1, 2022 and March 31, 2023 through research infrastructure funded by the CFI. It is based on information collected through 1,594 CFI project progress reports submitted by 98 institutions across Canada pertaining to the role research infrastructure plays in:

- Attracting and retaining researchers from around the world
- Supporting the development of the next generation of researchers
- Promoting collaborations
- Generating new knowledge
- Fuelling innovation-related outcomes in Canada.

We would like to thank institutions and researchers for providing the CFI with information of high quality and value.

Annual financial trend analysis

Starting last year, we now perform an annual financial trend analysis for each institution that has active CFI-funded projects. This analysis is part of our oversight framework and helps inform our risk-based decisions regarding payments to institutions. We consider how often an institution has had significant project spending delays, based on actual costs reported in the latest financial reports for active projects. At the same time, we consider additional risk factors that may affect our decisions regarding payments, including difficulty in obtaining timely financial reports and other requested information.

This analysis, which is done each winter, allows us to better align payments we make to institutions with the spending trends we observe and our experience with each institution. Once our analysis is complete, we will notify institutions whose planned instalments and/or reporting requirements will be affected.

Navigator’s 10th anniversary: Thank you for sharing your stories and your Navigator pride!

Thank you to everyone who has sent “**selfie**” **videos** to help us mark the 10th anniversary of the CFI’s **Research Facilities Navigator**. With our anniversary campaign running all year long, please keep them coming. Researchers with facilities listed on the Navigator can simply record themselves highlighting the impact of the Navigator on their work and the value it has to Canada’s innovation community. We then promote the videos on all our communications channels. Please contact **Danielle Fremes**, Senior Stakeholder Relations Officer, for information on how to participate or find out more [here](#).

Important upcoming dates

You can always find key dates for all the CFI’s funding opportunities on our website. Here are a few important dates coming up:

February 15, 2024	Deadline to submit proposals for the John R. Evans Leaders Fund – unaffiliated proposals
February 29, 2024	CFI Board of Directors meeting – special meeting for the Biosciences Research Infrastructure Fund
March 18, 2024	CFI Board of Directors meeting

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