

Leaders Opportunity Fund (\$1 million-\$2 million) 2010 Competition Guidelines

1. Vision

The Leaders Opportunity Fund (LOF) offers institutions the opportunity to acquire foundational infrastructure for their leading research faculty to undertake cutting-edge research and to create competitive packages of research support. To this end, the financial limit imposed on traditional LOF proposals has been increased to further facilitate the investment in the attraction and retention of the very best researchers. In turn, this will enable universities to remain internationally competitive in areas of research and technology development that reflects their priorities as identified in their Strategic Research Plan.

2. Description

i) Proposal Characteristics

This competition seeks mid-range infrastructure projects that are larger than the average traditional LOF award but that maintain the original purpose of the program: to promote the research endeavors of researchers that demonstrate, or have the potential for, excellence, creativity and leadership in the proposed research field, and who are a source of competitive advantage for the institution and the country. Proposals should adequately demonstrate that the infrastructure requested is essential to establish or enhance the candidate's capability to carry out innovative research or technology development that will lead to advances and advantages for Canadians.

In selecting proposals for the LOF (\$1 million-\$2 million) 2010 competition, institutions will be expected to address the availability and accessibility of similar infrastructure within their institution and region, as well as issues of complementarity, duplication and sharing. The CFI does not require that the requested infrastructure be for the exclusive use of the candidate(s) but that the infrastructure is required to conduct their groundbreaking research and that they will have priority access to it.

ii) Funds available

A university that has sufficient funds in their LOF allocation (Annex 1) may put forward a proposal with total project costs between \$1M and \$2M under this new LOF stream. The CFI will provide funding for up to 40 percent of the eligible costs of a funded proposal.

The CFI will not accept proposals with total project costs of more than \$2M. By the same token, the CFI reserves the right to make the final decision on the classification of projects that are near the \$1M threshold. The CFI will advise the institution whether a proposal will be reviewed under the LOF or the LOF (\$1 million-\$2 million) competition.

iii) Operating and Maintenance (O&M) Costs

The CFI will contribute to the operating and maintenance costs of approved proposals through its Infrastructure Operating Fund (IOF). The IOF allocation will be equivalent to

30 percent of the CFI funding awarded to an institution for proposals approved under this new LOF stream.

3. Eligibility

The usual eligibility considerations pertaining to institutions, research infrastructure and location of the infrastructure apply to this stream. Please refer to the CFI Policy and Program Guide.

Similarly, this stream is as well intended to serve the infrastructure needs of individual faculty, or small groups of up to three faculty members where there is a need to share infrastructure. The LOF is not intended to serve the infrastructure needs of larger groups, centres, departments or institutions. The sharing of equipment is encouraged to the extent that the candidate(s) maintain priority access.

It should be noted however that the candidate(s) put forward must be recognized leaders in their field or who show promise of becoming research leaders. They must be engaged in, or embarking upon, an innovative research program for which the infrastructure is essential and which will provide an enriched research environment.

4. Strategic Research Plan

Institutions must make choices and set priorities that build on their distinct advantages. The CFI expects that institutions will submit only proposals of exceptional quality that are consistent with their strategic research plan and reflect their institutional priorities. Institutions will identify how the requested infrastructure will aid in the attraction or retention of excellent researchers to advance the university's strategic research plan.

Research initiatives in the social sciences and humanities are fully eligible and encouraged.

5. Review and decision-making

i) Criteria

The CFI evaluates proposals on the basis of the three broad criteria (below) that reflect its mandate. To be funded, a proposal must satisfy all three criteria to a degree appropriate to the size and complexity of the proposal. The application form will provide details on the information required to assess the results and outcomes expected.

1. Quality of research and need for the infrastructure

- Quality, innovation and transformative potential of the research or technology development;
- Extent to which the candidate is highly accomplished or is an emerging researcher who has demonstrated potential for excellence and leadership in the proposed field;

- Appropriateness of the infrastructure in meeting the proposed research or technology development activities, and its complementarity to other existing infrastructure, where appropriate;
- Effective ongoing management, operation and maintenance of the infrastructure.

2. Contribution to strengthening the capacity for innovation

- Enhance the institutional capacity in its strategic research priority areas;
- Assist the institution to create or sustain a competitive advantage and a capacity for innovation that is internationally competitive;
- Create a stimulating and enriched environment for training highly qualified personnel for research and other careers;
- Strengthen multidisciplinary approaches and collaborations among researchers, as well as partnerships with different institutions and sectors.

3. Potential benefits to Canada

- Lead to benefits to society, health, the environment, quality of life, or public policy;
- Contribute to economic activities through new products and services, greater resource efficiency and productivity, and sustainable job creation in strong or emerging areas of the Canadian economy including the four priorities stated in the federal S&T Strategy: environment, natural resources and energy, health and related life sciences, and information and communication technologies.

ii) Assessment Process

The CFI will initially assess proposals for eligibility and completeness, and may request additional material to ensure that all essential information is available for review. The assessment of each proposal will be comprised of two stages.

Expert Reviews

The Expert Review process is designed to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the proposals in relation to the three criteria described above (quality of research, need for the infrastructure and benefits to Canada). Depending on the number of proposals submitted, the CFI may rely on expert written reviews, expert committees or a combination of these approaches.

Multidisciplinary Assessment Committee

The second stage of review entails the assessment of the proposals by one or more MACs. The specific number of MACs will be determined by the number of submissions. Based on its own assessment and informed by the expert reviews, the MACs are responsible for assessing each proposal against all evaluation factors relative to other competing requests and recommending projects that should be funded.

MAC members will be specifically chosen for their capacity to assess proposals based on the three CFI criteria, and for their breadth and understanding of the research environment, the niches of innovative excellence in eligible institutions and knowledge of impacts and outcomes from research investments across the entire landscape of research activity.

Given the goals of this stream of the LOF, a focus of both the expert review and MAC assessments will be the evaluation of the candidate(s), as opposed to the other users or collaborators in the research process. Proposals will therefore have to clearly describe the:

- qualifications and accomplishments of the candidate(s) in relation to the proposed research and research training;
- infrastructure that is being requested for use by the candidate(s) and why it is essential to carry out the candidates' proposed research;
- how the infrastructure facilitates the attraction or retention of the candidate(s);
- value added of an additional award in cases where the candidate(s) have previously received an award through the LOF, New Opportunities Fund, Canada Research Chairs Infrastructure Fund, or Career Award. Specifically, the results and outcomes of the previous award must be highlighted.

Final Decisions

All final decisions will be made by the CFI Board of Directors at its June 2010 meeting. Summary comments will be provided to the institutions for all projects. Funding for infrastructure associated with a Canada Research Chair will be conditional upon the final approval of the nomination or renewal by the CRC Steering Committee.

6. Application Procedures/How to Apply

i) Notice of Intent (NOI)

Institutions wishing to submit a full application to the Leaders Opportunity Fund (\$1 million-\$2 million) competition for either infrastructure alone or infrastructure associated with a Canada Research Chair **must** submit a Notice of Intent (NOI). NOI forms will be available on the CFI website in November 2009 with an electronic submission deadline of December 15, 2009. A full application can only be submitted for a project if an NOI has been received by the CFI.

The Notice of Intent (NOI) is an integral part of the application process. The NOI is used by the CFI to plan its assessment processes and to start the recruitment of the expert reviewers that will assess the scientific merit of the proposal. Consequently, it should contain accurate information about the infrastructure and the research it will enable. Institutions will be required to provide:

- an estimate of the total cost of the infrastructure project and the amount requested from the CFI;
- keywords that describe the infrastructure project;

- the names of other principal users of the infrastructure;
- a brief (2500 character) overview of the project including a description of the infrastructure, the research to be conducted with the proposed research and the area of application of the research; and
- a minimum of six reviewers for the application, three of whom should be members of the Canadian research community.

Institutions will be notified when mock-ups of the NOI in PDF format are posted on the CFI website.

ii) Full Applications for Infrastructure Alone

The submission deadline for full applications is February 15, 2010.

Separate application instructions will accompany the application form to assist institutions and project leaders in completing electronic applications to the 2010 Leaders Opportunity Fund (\$1 million-\$2 million) competition. Institutions must use the web-based electronic forms which will be available on the CFI website in January, 2010.

iii) Full Applications for Infrastructure Associated with a Canada Research Chair (CRC)

Normally, infrastructure requests for CRC candidates are submitted to the CRC Secretariat in conjunction with the CRC renewal or nomination and are part of the CRC review process. For projects with total costs of less than \$1M, this will continue to apply.

For CRCs requesting infrastructure funding with total project costs between \$1M and \$2M, the institution must complete and submit a full CFI application form by February 15, 2010. Institutions will also be required to submit a renewal or nomination application to the CRC Secretariat but will not have to complete the abridged CFI infrastructure request.

Funding for infrastructure associated with a Canada Research Chair will be conditional upon the final approval of the nomination or renewal by the CRC Steering Committee.