
Canada Foundation for Innovation

VP UPDATE

May 2014

In this issue of the Canada Foundation for Innovation (CFI) VP update:

1. Special competition of the Major Science Initiatives Fund
2. Innovation Fund competition
3. Join the CFI Research Facilities Navigator
4. CFI stickers on their way
5. In-kind contributions from suppliers
6. Overall performance evaluation and value-for-money audit (OPEA) of the CFI
7. Consultation on the CFI Cyber-infrastructure initiative

1. Special 2014 competition of the Major Science Initiatives (MSI) Fund

In December 2013, the CFI issued a draft Call for Proposals for consultation for its special competition of the MSI Fund. The research community responded positively and enthusiastically to the initiative with a very high level of interest, as evidenced by the more than 100 expressions of interest (Eols) received. The Eols were planning to request some \$200 million from the CFI. Based on the feedback received, the CFI made a few minor revisions to the final Call for Proposals — most notably, to define more clearly what constitutes a unique national research facility. An analysis of the Eols revealed that a significant proportion describe facilities that are either institutional, regional or provincial in nature. Subsequently, in early February, the CFI held a series of meetings across the country (nine in total) to meet with potential applicants to clarify the competition objectives and eligibility criteria and to address their questions.

At the February 27, 2014, deadline, the CFI received 59 eligible notices of intent (NOIs) from 29 institutions, requesting nearly \$120 million from the CFI. The NOIs were posted on the CFI website shortly thereafter. The CFI reviewed the Statement of Qualification portion of the NOIs to assess the eligibility of the proposed MSI based on the five established eligibility criteria. Decisions were communicated to institutions on or around March 14, 2014.

A total of 23 facilities, requesting just over \$60 million, were invited to submit full proposals by the May 20, 2014, deadline. The CFI has begun constituting expert committees, and researchers at institutions that submitted a few of the larger and more complex proposals will be invited to meet with the expert committees in face-to-face meetings. Funding decisions will be made at the November 2014 meeting of the CFI Board of Directors.

2. Innovation Fund 2015 competition

Under the 2015 Innovation Fund competition, **“Striving for global leadership and reaping the benefits,”** the CFI will invest up to \$325 million (\$250 million in capital and an additional \$75 million under the Infrastructure Operating Fund). The three objectives of the 2015 Innovation Fund are to enable institutions and their best researchers to:

- **Strive for global leadership** by conducting world-class transformative research and technology development in areas of institutional strategic priority;
- **Forge and foster productive, value-added partnerships** within and among institutions, sectors and disciplines that will nurture creativity and innovation and will result in the effective and sustainable use of the research infrastructure and facilities; and
- **Identify and develop plans and potential pathways** to social, health, environmental and economic benefits for Canada, including better training and improved skills for highly qualified personnel.

A total of 349 notices of intent (NOIs) were received at the March 28, 2014, submission deadline, requesting \$870 million from the CFI. The list of NOIs was posted on the CFI website shortly thereafter. Given the competition objectives and the collaboration incentives developed for this competition, it is interesting to note that a large number of centralized and distributed multi-institutional proposals are being developed. As a reminder, **a collaborating institution is defined as a currently CFI-eligible institution that receives part of the infrastructure or contributes part of its institutional envelope to the project.**

Based on the preliminary information in the NOIs, some 65 proposals will bring two collaborating institutions together (requesting approximately \$160 million from the CFI) and some 48 proposals will bring three or more institutions together (requesting roughly \$200 million from the CFI). The latter will be able to request up to an additional five percent of the CFI award to cover, among other costs, administrative costs associated with the management and governance of their projects. A justification for these additional funds must be included in the proposal and will be subject to the merit-review process. A number of those 48 NOIs (three or more institutions), however, did not indicate that the institutions were contributing part of their institutional envelopes or receiving part of the infrastructure. The CFI will not consider a request for additional funds (up to five percent) should those proposals not meet the definition of collaborating institutions as described above.

The CFI has received a few questions regarding the eligible administrative costs associated with the governance and management of multi-institutional projects bringing together three or more collaborating institutions. Administrative costs are not normally eligible under a CFI infrastructure project (*section 4.6 of the CFI Policy and program guide*), but under the 2015 Innovation Fund competition, costs such as the salaries of non-academic managers, professionals, technicians, administrative personnel and consultants directly involved in the governance, management, operation and maintenance of the facility and costs related to Board of Director and governance committee meetings, including telecommunications costs, document sharing (e.g. SharePoint) and related travel, are eligible.

The CFI has also noted that eight NOIs describe major international initiatives where some or all of the requested infrastructure would be located outside the country. It will be critical for those proposals to address the funding arrangements for both the infrastructure component and the operations and maintenance and to present a robust sustainability plan, as these will be central aspects of the merit-review process.

Finally, the Call for Proposals clarifies the CFI's expectations for collaboration with Compute Canada for those proposals requesting advanced computing infrastructure.

NOI snapshots:

349 NOIs submitted by 74 institutions; total project costs of \$2.35 billion requesting \$875.1 million from the CFI.

By institution type:

Institution type	# NOIs (%)	Total cost \$ (%)	CFI request \$ (%)	Avg. CFI request \$
Universities	335 (96%)	2.28B (97%)	842.5M (96.7%)	2.5M
Colleges and CEGEPS	11 (3.2%)	40.2M (1.7%)	15.7M (1.8%)	1.43M
Non-Profit Research Org.	3 (0.8%)	33.8M (1.4%)	13.3M (1.5%)	4.44M

By project size:

CFI request (\$)	# NOIs (%)	CFI request \$ (%)
More than 10M	6 (1.7%)	79.7M (9.2%)
6M-10M	17 (4.9%)	120.7M (13.8%)
4M-6M	34 (9.7%)	160.4M (18.4%)
1M-4M	209 (59.9%)	461.5M (53%)
Less than 1M	83 (23.8%)	49.2 M (5.6%)

3M-4M	43 (12.3%)	149.2M (17.1%)
2M-3M	70 (20%)	173.5M (19.9%)
1M-2M	96 (27.5%)	138.8M (15.9%)

3. Join us on the Navigator: Where business finds research

A year ago, the CFI invited institutions to participate in the CFI Research Facilities Navigator, a new online directory of research infrastructure and expertise we created to help facilitate collaboration between businesses and CFI-funded researchers. The directory, Innovation.ca/navigator, was launched in late November 2013, and to date, we have received entries for 361 research labs and facilities at 63 CFI-funded institutions across Canada.

The CFI has received tremendous response from institutions and researchers, as well as the private sector. We have promoted the Navigator to a number of industry associations and industry-facing organizations (such as ACCT, ADRIQ, IRAP’s Concierge Service and Mitacs) and will continue to do so as part of our outreach activities in support of the directory.

Over the next year, we plan to greatly increase the number of entries, so in the coming weeks, VPRs, CFI liaisons and other contacts who received our original invitation last year will receive another email invitation from the CFI to submit new labs and facilities to the Navigator.

4. CFI stickers coming your way

In the coming weeks, look for a package from the CFI with a selection of branded stickers (small: 2’x4’; medium: 4’x8’; large: 6’x12’) for your CFI-funded labs and equipment. We realize that some labs still have our old logo affixed to their existing infrastructure and that some institutions may not have received stickers for new research infrastructure. We encourage you to use these stickers to help promote the Government of Canada’s continued support for research and innovation through the CFI. If you require stickers in advance of our mailing or if you have a specific quantity and/or size requirement in mind, please contact Regina Iskhakova at Regina.Iskhakova@Innovation.ca or 613-947-3885.

5. In-kind contributions from suppliers – revised guidelines yet to be adopted by institutions

We are closely monitoring practices at institutions and note that some institutions have not yet fully adopted the revised guidelines for in-kind contributions. We urge all institutions to do so in the near future.

It is the responsibility of the institution to ensure that the fair market value reported to the CFI for items involving in-kind contributions is reasonable. Changes were made to the guidelines related to in-kind contributions in May 2013, emphasizing the need to be diligent when establishing fair market values. For example, when establishing the fair market value of an item involving an in-kind contribution provided by a supplier, the institution should consider **all** readily available sources of information and not necessarily limit itself to the supplier confirmation. This is applicable for **all** in-kind contributions, regardless of the dollar amount. Readily available information can include, for example:

- Supplier confirmation of the price that would normally be charged to the institution for the item or service;
- Other bids that have been received as part of a competitive bid process and provide useful market comparisons;

- The cash consideration paid in a previous purchase of a similar item not related to a CFI-funded project; and
- The institution's experience with a supplier's discount structure.

The CFI would also like to remind institutions that from the outset, institutions (through their own procurement services or otherwise) should assist researchers and must be involved in discussions and negotiations with suppliers. Institutions must take the necessary steps to ensure that fair and transparent procurement processes are in place.

In the past year, the CFI has worked with individuals from the community to develop material that will assist institutions in appropriately communicating with suppliers about the CFI and in-kind contributions. On the CFI website, institutions can now access [sample material](#) that can be included in requests for proposals (or similar procurement requests) to communicate information about the CFI and to request consideration of in-kind contributions at the application stage and at time of purchase. This material can also be used as part of an orientation process to educate suppliers, researchers or other individuals involved in the administration of CFI awards. Please note that this material has been embedded in an existing document (see pages 2 to 4). We hope that institutions will find this material useful. The CFI wishes to thank all those who have contributed to this initiative.

6. Overall performance evaluation and value-for-money audit (OPEA)

In accordance with the terms of its Funding agreement with Industry Canada, the CFI is currently undergoing an Overall performance evaluation and value-for-money audit (OPEA) to measure its performance in achieving its objectives and to ensure the economy, efficiency and effectiveness with which CFI funds have been used. The management consulting firm Bell Browne Molnar & Delicate Consulting (BBMD) has been engaged to conduct this independent study and is expected to submit its report to the CFI Board of Directors and Industry Canada by November 2014.

BBMD has completed much of the preliminary work and data analysis, bringing it to the next stage of the project. BBMD is now launching a survey to address information gaps identified to date and to validate its preliminary findings. CFI project leaders and principal users will receive a request in the coming weeks to complete this survey. It is anticipated that the survey will take approximately 20 to 30 minutes to complete. BBMD has contracted Corporate Research Associates to conduct the survey.

Should you have any questions about this study, please do not hesitate to contact Laura Hillier, Director of Evaluation and Outcome Assessment, at the CFI at 613-996-5936 or laura.hillier@innovation.ca.

7. Consultation on the CFI's Cyber-infrastructure initiative

Click [here](#) to view a document outlining the principal parameters of the Cyber-infrastructure initiative we are planning to launch this October. It is constructed as a consultation document. Your views on the design and delivery of this initiative are most welcome.

We plan to gather as much feedback as possible until the end of June, after which we will conclude our discussions with the federal government and develop a draft Call for Proposals.

In addition to receiving written input, we will also hold a series of information sessions beginning in the latter part of May. The sessions will be held in six or seven metropolitan centres across the country. We will also endeavour to respond to invitations by institutions or communities of researchers to hold special workshops either in person or electronically.

Please forward your views to Robert Davidson at robert.davidson@innovation.ca.