

CANADA FOUNDATION FOR INNOVATION

Aiming high

Addendum to the Canada Foundation
for Innovation's 2023–28 strategic plan

May 2026

INNOVATION

Canada Foundation
for Innovation

Fondation canadienne
pour l'innovation



Since the endorsement of *Aiming high*, the Canada Foundation for Innovation's (CFI) 2023–28 strategic plan by the Board of Directors on November 8, 2022, the organization's operating environment has shifted significantly. The assumptions underpinning our original priorities have been reshaped by geopolitical instability, persistent post-pandemic economic pressures, rapid technological change, evolving security dynamics and constrained public finances. Federal, provincial and territorial governments have recalibrated policy and spending priorities in response to these same pressures.

Across advanced economies, strategic competition, economic sovereignty, resilience and national security are redefining research and innovation agendas. Governments are emphasizing productivity, talent attraction and retention, commercialization and measurable returns on public investment. Fiscal restraint is coupled with heightened expectations for impact and alignment.

At the same time, Canada's research infrastructure ecosystem has become more complex and interdependent, requiring stronger coordination to ensure investments are complementary, effective and aligned with long-term national objectives.

In this context, the CFI must adapt. Our core mandate to strengthen the research capacity of institutions and researchers across Canada remains unchanged and the strategic pillars established in 2023 continue to provide a solid foundation. However, the relative emphasis, pace and mechanisms of implementation must evolve.

We refer to this recalibration as CFI 3.0: a deliberate adjustment of our strategy, enabled by our arm's-length model, to respond to a more complex and demanding environment.

As a federally funded organization, the CFI operates within a constrained fiscal framework and under heightened expectations for demonstrable public value. Adaptability, transparency and rigorous stewardship are essential to maintain the confidence of the public and of the research community in research infrastructure investments. To meet these requirements, we will align more explicitly with national priorities while preserving our commitment to research excellence, with greater focus on system coherence and long-term impact.

Through 2028, the CFI will strengthen Canada's resilient, high-performing research and innovation ecosystem by:

- Investing in world-class research infrastructure that supports both discovery and mission-driven research in strategic areas
- Reinforcing institutional capacity to attract and retain global talent
- Enhancing research security and integrity
- Leveraging research infrastructure to accelerate commercialization and productivity
- Demonstrating clear value for money through stronger performance measurement and continuous program improvement.

Beyond our role in funding research infrastructure projects, the CFI plays a key stewardship role in Canada's distributed research infrastructure system. As the principal federal funder in this space, we help shape a coherent, strategically aligned landscape across institutions, regions and disciplines, encouraging coordination, shared investments, support for core and national facilities, and long-term sustainability. Through thoughtful program design and partnerships, we ensure infrastructure investments are inclusive, responsive and positioned to deliver sustained scientific, societal and economic benefits for Canada.

CFI 3.0 will deepen collaboration across the research and innovation ecosystem to strengthen coherence and collective impact. We will work more closely with governments, institutions, industry and funding partners to advance coordinated, mission-driven research and expand meaningful academia–industry partnerships that accelerate innovation adoption.

Engagement with trusted international collaborators will reinforce Canada’s global research position. We will also work more deliberately with science-based federal departments and agencies to reduce duplication, improve alignment and maximize the impact of public investments in research infrastructure.

Long-term sustainability of research infrastructure is an increasingly urgent challenge. Aging assets, rising operating costs and growing technical complexity require coordinated lifecycle approaches beyond initial capital funding. Through the Major Science Initiatives Fund, the Major Research Facilities program and continued support for institutional core facilities, the CFI helps strengthen governance, lifecycle management and sustainable operating models. We will continue to lead collaborative efforts with institutions and governments to ensure research infrastructure remains effective, accessible and resilient over time.

As the environment evolves, the CFI will stay grounded in its mandate while remaining responsive to emerging needs. Strategic focus, collaboration and evidence-informed decision-making will be central to sustaining a strong research infrastructure foundation.

This addendum to our strategic plan provides a clear framework for navigating change. By evolving our approach, the CFI will help ensure Canada’s research infrastructure continues to drive discovery, talent development and economic resilience in an increasingly uncertain world.