



2017 INNOVATION FUND

Guidelines for Multidisciplinary Assessment Committees

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FOR INNOVATION

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Mandate of the Canada Foundation for Innovation

Created by the Government of Canada in 1997, the Canada Foundation for Innovation (CFI) strives to build our nation's capacity to undertake world-class research and technology development that benefits Canadians. Thanks to CFI investments in state-of-the-art infrastructure, Canadian universities, colleges, research hospitals and non-profit research institutions are attracting and retaining the world's top research talent, training the next generation of researchers, supporting private-sector innovation and creating high-quality jobs that strengthen Canada's position in today's global knowledge-based economy. Additional information is available at Innovation.ca.

2017 Innovation Fund competition

The CFI will invest up to \$552.5 million for large research infrastructure in the 2017 Innovation Fund (IF) competition. For this competition, the CFI challenges institutions to propose transformative infrastructure projects that will underpin cutting-edge research. Projects funded through this competition will support promising and innovative research or technology development in areas where Canada currently is, or has the potential to be, competitive on the global stage. The CFI will support initiatives that allow institutions and their researchers to build on established capabilities to accelerate current research and technology development or to enhance emerging strategic priority areas.

The objectives of the 2017 Innovation Fund are to enable institutions and their best researchers to:

- Strive for global leadership by conducting world-class research or technology development activities in areas of strategic institutional priority;
- Enhance research capacity by forging productive partnerships within and among institutions, sectors and disciplines for the effective and sustainable use of the research infrastructure and facilities;
- Generate social, health, environmental and/or economic benefits for Canadians, including better training and improved skills for highly qualified personnel, through appropriate pathways.

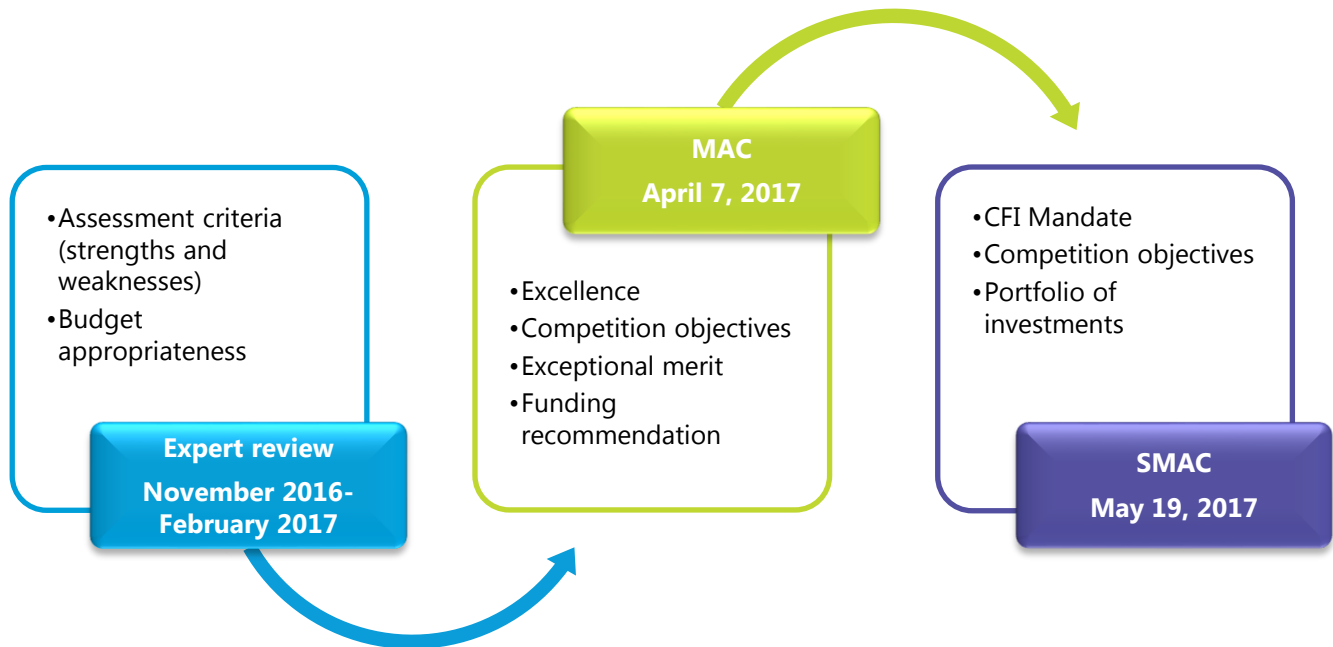
The CFI funds up to 40 percent of a project's eligible infrastructure costs. Institutions must secure the remaining 60 percent of the required funding, typically from provincial governments and other public, private and non-profit organizations. Thus, total investment in projects funded through the 2017 Innovation Fund will exceed \$1.0 billion.

The CFI will invest up to an additional \$127 million to contribute to the operating and maintenance costs of projects funded in this competition through its Infrastructure Operating Fund. The support allocated is equivalent to 30 percent of the CFI contribution to the capital costs of projects funded under the IF. These O&M funds do not need matching funding.

The CFI merit review process

The CFI structured merit review process has three stages: Expert Committee (EC) review, Multidisciplinary Assessment Committee (MAC) review and a Special Multidisciplinary Assessment Committee (S-MAC) review. Figure 1, illustrates the process as well as the roles and responsibilities of each committee. This process ensures that proposals are reviewed in a fair, competitive, transparent and in-depth manner and is tailored to the nature and complexity of the proposals.

FIGURE 1: MERIT REVIEW PROCESS AND TIMELINE



Expert committee review

The first stage of the merit review process, the expert committee review, is designed to assess the strengths and weaknesses of the proposals relative to the six CFI assessment criteria.

1. Institutional capacity and track record: The proposal builds on existing capacity and track record of key investments in people and infrastructure in the area of institutional strategic priority described in the proposal.
2. Research or technology development: The research or technology development activities are innovative, feasible, have the potential to lead to breakthroughs, and will enhance international competitiveness.
3. Team: The team is composed of established or emerging leaders and has the expertise and breadth, including relevant collaborations, to conduct the research or technology development activities.
4. Infrastructure: The infrastructure is necessary and appropriate to conduct the research or technology development activities.
5. Sustainability: The infrastructure is optimally used within and among institutions, sectors and disciplines and is sustainable through tangible and appropriate commitments over its useful life.
6. Benefits to Canadians: The research or technology development results will be transferred through appropriate pathways to potential end users and are likely to generate social, health, environmental and/or economic benefits for Canadians.

Expert Committees (ECs) typically review small groups of similar or related proposals. Each committee is composed of three to seven reviewers selected for their leadership and expertise in their respective fields. The CFI endeavours to combine all the necessary subject-matter expertise to allow an in-depth review of the proposals. When reviewing large and complex proposals, the EC also includes large facility management expertise.

Multidisciplinary Assessment Committee (MAC)

The second stage of review involves the assessment of the proposals by Multidisciplinary Assessment Committees (MAC). Each committee will be responsible for a group of proposals (~35 proposals), which have been grouped with others of similar size (based on total project costs) and/or complexity. At least one committee will be dedicated to assess proposals from small institutions.

Guided by the expert committee reports and their own assessment of the proposals, these committees are responsible for:

- Identifying those that best meet the **three competition objectives**:
 - i. Striving for global leadership
 - ii. Forging and fostering productive partnerships
 - iii. Generating benefits for Canadians
- Recommending proposals for funding and establishing the amount that should be awarded to each proposal.

To assist in the next stage of review, each MAC is also asked to identify up to two proposals of exceptional merit.

A short report detailing the committee's consensus assessment of the competition objectives is written for each proposal.

Membership

MAC members are chosen for their capacity to assess proposals based on the competition objectives and for their breadth of understanding of the research environment, the niches of innovative excellence in eligible institutions and the impacts and outcomes from research investments across the entire landscape of research activity. The Chair is chosen for the same qualities as the members, as well as their ability to facilitate the MAC in functioning effectively and objectively in accordance with the CFI policies.

The CFI expects MAC members to maintain the highest standards of ethics in fulfilling their role. They are appointed as individuals, not as advocates or representatives of their discipline or of any organization. All MAC members must adhere to the Conflict of Interest and Confidentiality agreement ([Appendix 1](#)). The membership of the committees will be made public (on the CFI website) shortly after the funding decisions are announced.

Timeline and key activities

This table summarizes the MAC member’s key activities and important dates for the 2017 IF competition.

TABLE 1 - TIMELINE AND KEY ACTIVITIES FOR MAC MEMBERS

FALL 2016 – JANUARY 2017	Logistics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Complete and return <i>Committee member information form</i>
FEBRUARY – MARCH 2017	Online review portal	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Activate CFI Award Management System (CAMS) account Inform CFI of any potential conflicts of interest Attend member briefing teleconference Complete preliminary assessment form
APRIL 6 – 7, 2017	Assessment of proposals	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Attend MAC meeting Approve consensus report(s) (Chair only)

Logistics

Each member will need to complete and return the *Committee member information form* which will be used to assist the CFI and its travel agency — Carlson Wagonlit Global Travel Centre (Global Travel) — in preparing travel arrangements for the meeting. Shortly after returning the form, members will be contacted by a Global Travel representative with a proposed flight itinerary to approve. All bookings made through Global Travel will be pre-paid by the CFI.

Online review portal

In January 2017, an email containing login details for the CFI Awards Management System (CAMS) will be sent to committee members. The reviewer dashboard in CAMS is where all information pertaining to the review process can be found, including committee membership and details.

To access the review material and preliminary assessment form, simply click on the committee name which will bring you to the review and documentation page. On this page you will find the relevant reference materials (e.g. preliminary assessment form) as well as key information regarding the meeting (e.g. meeting agenda and list of individual assignments, when applicable).

There are also two tabs on this page: *Project material* and *Your review*.

1) “Project material” tab

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On this page you will find proposals and expert committee reports (note: the EC reports will be available late February/early March 2017).

2) “Your review” tab

The list of projects individually assigned to you will be listed in a table. For each competition objective, you will need to select the rating that best reflects your assessment. Once you have completed your assessment of the proposals assigned to you, you will submit your preliminary ratings to the CFI via email by March 30, 2017.

For more information on how to use the CFI reviewer portal please consult the following document: [Getting started with the CFI Awards Management System \(CAMS\) — An overview document for reviewers](#).

Pre-meeting briefing

CFI staff will maintain regular contact with committee members, by email or telephone, before the meeting to ensure all members have the necessary information to conduct their review.

Once all members have activated and accessed their CAMS account, CFI staff will schedule a short briefing session with members to go over the review process.

Assessment of proposals

As mentioned, each MAC will be responsible for the review of approximately 35 proposals. For each of the proposals assigned to the committee, three reviewers will be designated as lead reviewers and will be required to perform a more in-depth review. Each committee member will be assigned approximately 10 proposals in this capacity, some of which will be outside of their general area of expertise as this encourages diverse point of views. While we are aware that you will spend more time on your assigned proposals, each MAC member is expected to read all of the proposals and expert (EC) reports under your committee’s purview in order to be fully engaged in the discussion with the other members of the committee.

Every assigned proposal will be assessed on the degree to which it meets the competition objectives. Each objective is assessed using an assessment scale (Figure 2). Committee members must base their conclusions on the information provided within the proposals and the EC reports (refer to Figure 3 to see the relationship between the assessment criteria and the competition objectives).

During the meeting every proposal will have an assigned discussion period of approximately 20 minutes. The three MAC members assigned to the proposal being discussed will share their preliminary assessment and the rest of the committee will then have the opportunity to share their assessments. A general discussion will follow to achieve consensus on the scoring of the individual objectives and a funding recommendation.

The discussions will be focused on the competition objectives with an emphasis on any significant discrepancies among the assigned members’ individual assessments. Following the discussion, the committee must reach a consensus opinion on the degree to which the proposal satisfies each of the three competition objectives, as well as formulate an overall opinion of the

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strengths and weaknesses of the project. Where there are discrepancies between the MAC's assessment and comments in the EC report, a substantive explanation will be required.

For each proposal, a consensus report (up to one page) will be drafted by the CFI and approved by the committee chair. The reports for proposals recommended by the MACs will be forwarded to the Special Multidisciplinary Assessment Committee (S-MAC) to assist them in their evaluation of the proposals.

Throughout this process, the CFI staff will provide support, instruction and guidance to committee members regarding the review process, policies and procedures, as well as ensuring consistency in the evaluation of the proposals.

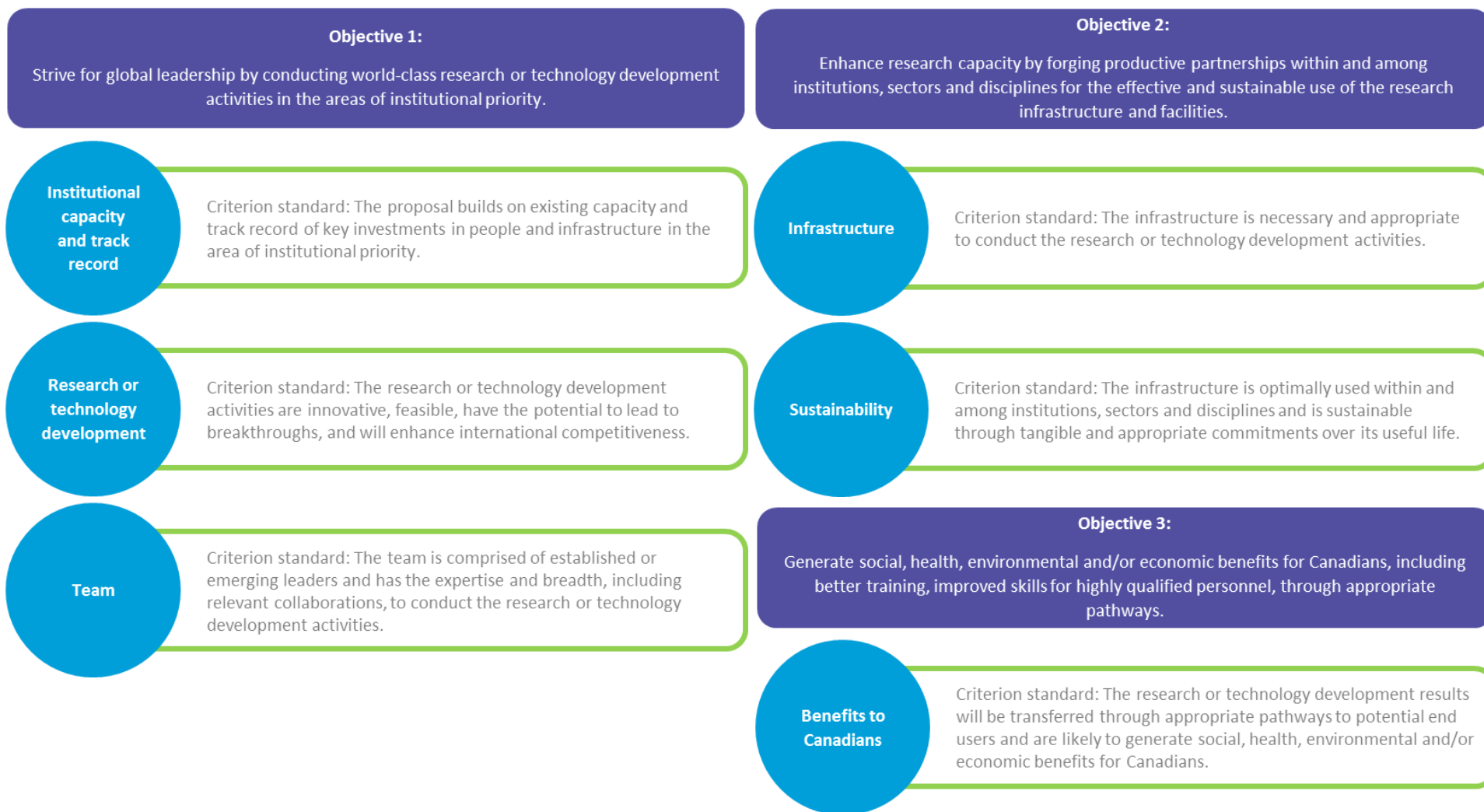
FIGURE 2 CFI ASSESSMENT SCALE

The proposal...

-  Satisfies and significantly exceeds the objective
-  Satisfies the objective
-  Satisfies the objective with only a few minor weaknesses
-  Partially satisfies the objective with some significant weaknesses
-  Does not satisfy the objective due to major weaknesses

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FIGURE 3 RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN COMPETITION OBJECTIVES AND ASSESSMENT CRITERIA



Note: details about partnerships (objective 2) may also be found under the assessment criteria “teams”

Special Multidisciplinary Assessment Committee (S-MAC)

The third stage in the process involves a review and integration of the MAC assessments by a single Special Multidisciplinary Assessment Committee (S-MAC). The S-MAC is charged with ensuring consistency among the MACs, and in instances where MAC recommendations exceed the available resources, the S-MAC recommends to the CFI Board of Directors the proposals that most effectively support the CFI's mandate, meet the objectives of the competition and represent the most effective portfolio of investments for Canada.

Funding decisions

The CFI Board of Directors will make the final decision on funding for each proposal at its June 2017 meeting. Following this meeting, the applicant institutions will receive the funding decisions and expert committee reports, including committee memberships, and MAC reports for their proposals.

Official languages

The CFI offers its services in both of Canada's official languages: French and English. Committees must ensure that all proposals in either official language receive a full and detailed evaluation. The CFI should be advised if a committee member is assigned an application in an official language he or she does not understand. Typically, committee deliberations will be conducted in English.

Collaboration with provinces

To coordinate the review processes and avoid duplication of review efforts, the CFI will provide committee reports, along with the names and affiliations of committee members, to relevant provincial and territorial funding authorities. Disclosure of the list and committee reports will be made only in accordance with agreements between the CFI and provincial or territorial authorities, as permissible pursuant to the Privacy Act.

In addition, representatives of the relevant provincial or territorial authorities will be invited to participate as observers at the expert committee review stage.

APPENDIX 1: CONFLICT OF INTEREST POLICY

The Canada Foundation for Innovation (CFI) must meet the highest ethical and integrity standards in all that it does in order to continue to merit the trust and confidence of the research community, the government and the public. CFI review committee members, external reviewers and observers must meet the highest standards of ethical behaviour to maintain and enhance public confidence in CFI's ability to act in the public's best interest and for the long-term public good. Where a conflict arises between private and public interests, review committee members, external reviewers and observers will be expected to take the necessary measures to ensure that the public interest is protected.

Definition

A conflict of interest is a conflict between a person's duties and responsibilities with regard to the review process, and that person's private, professional, business or public interests. There may be a real, perceived or potential conflict of interest when the review committee member, external reviewer or observer:

- Would receive professional or personal benefit resulting from the funding opportunity or proposal being reviewed;
- Has a professional or personal relationship with a candidate or the applicant institution;
- Has a direct or indirect financial interest in a funding opportunity or proposal being reviewed.

A conflict of interest may be deemed to exist or perceived as such when review committee members, external reviewers or observers:

- Are a relative or close friend, or have a personal relationship with the candidates;
- Are in a position to gain or lose financially/materially from the funding of the proposal;
- Have had long-standing scientific or personal differences with the candidates;
- Are currently affiliated with the candidates' institutions, organizations or companies—including research hospitals and research institutes;
- Are closely professionally affiliated with the candidates, as a result of having in the last six years:
 - Frequent and regular interactions with the candidates in the course of their duties at their department, institution, organization or company;
 - Been a supervisor or a trainee of the candidates;
 - Collaborated, published or shared funding with the candidates, or have plans to do so in the immediate future;
 - Been employed by the applicant institution;
 - Feel for any reason unable to provide an impartial review of the proposal.

Note: The CFI reserves the right to resolve areas of uncertainty and to determine if a conflict exists.



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