



John R. Evans Leaders Fund

Guidelines for completing a
proposal

July 2018

INTRODUCTION

These guidelines are intended for researchers and institutional research services personnel tasked with preparing and submitting a proposal to the John R. Evans Leaders Fund (JELF). The CFI encourages researchers to consult with their research office early in the process and to refer to internal institutional practices for submitting JELF proposals early on in the process. For further information on this fund, consult the JELF program description on the CFI's website, Innovation.ca.

NB: Applicant institutions submitting a JELF-partnership proposal (joint submission with any of our funding program partners) should consult the [JELF-partnership guidelines](#).

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

At a time of intense international competition, the JELF is a critical strategic investment tool designed to help institutions attract and retain the very best of today's and tomorrow's researchers. The fund's name pays tribute to the outstanding contributions of John R. Evans, the first Chair of the CFI's Board of Directors.

The JELF enables a select number of an institution's excellent researchers to undertake innovative research by providing them with the foundational research infrastructure required to be or to become leaders in their field. In turn, this enables institutions to remain internationally competitive in areas of research and technology development that are aligned with their strategic priorities.

Proposals are evaluated based on the following assessment criteria:

- Research or technology development
- Researchers
- Infrastructure
- Institutional commitment and sustainability
- Benefits to Canadians

The criteria to be addressed depend on the amount requested from the CFI.

Submission deadlines

There are three submission deadlines per year. If the deadline falls on a weekend or holiday, it will be extended to the following business day.



Submission date	Anticipated decision date
February 15	June
June 15	November
October 15	March

ELIGIBILITY

Eligible institutions

Canadian universities recognized as eligible by the CFI can apply to the JELF if they have a minimum annual average of \$200,000 over the last three years in research funding received from the three federal research funding agencies (Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada) over the last three years. Research hospitals and research institutes wanting to apply may do so through the eligible university with which they are affiliated. Universities whose JELF funding allocation would be calculated as less than \$800,000 have access to the Small Institution Fund instead.

The CFI encourages institutions to foster and develop multi-institutional projects. These collaborations may be integrated into all facets of the proposed activities; for example, for the conduct of the research or technology development program, the optimal use and sustainability of the infrastructure, and knowledge or technology transfer that will generate socioeconomic benefits.

Eligible researchers

Up to three researchers may be listed on the proposal to either work collaboratively using the same requested infrastructure, or to work independently while sharing the requested infrastructure. For the latter, the CFI requires that the justification for the infrastructure be articulated for each researcher. The researchers listed in the proposal must be:

- Recognized leaders or have demonstrated the potential for excellence in the proposed research fields;
- Engaged in or embarking upon research or technology development activities that are innovative, feasible and meet international standards; and,
- Current faculty members with full-time academic appointments or candidates that the university is in the process of recruiting to full-time academic positions.

Researchers who have previously been supported by the CFI are eligible for additional funding.

Eligible infrastructure projects

An eligible project involves the acquisition or development of research infrastructure to increase research capacity, allowing the pursuit of innovative research. This includes the acquisition of workhorses (high usage equipment that routinely and dependably perform over a long period of time), and the upgrading or replacement of aging infrastructure.

Construction costs to build new spaces or to renovate existing space (including fitting out existing space) which is essential to house and use the infrastructure effectively, are eligible.

To be eligible for funding, in-kind contributions from external partners and cash expenditures by the institution must have taken place in the six months prior to the deadline on which the proposal is submitted. Expenditures are considered incurred when goods are received, services have been rendered or work has been performed.

Universities can submit proposals requesting up to \$800,000 from the CFI, with a maximum total eligible cost of \$2 million. The CFI will allow the submission of proposals requesting less than or equal to \$75,000 from the CFI from the social sciences, humanities and arts, and those universities that have access to the Small Institution Fund.

For more information on CFI eligibility guidelines, please refer to the [Policy and program guide](#).

Advanced research computing infrastructure

Institutions may submit proposals including advanced research computing infrastructure and related resources to carry out a research or technology development project. As a matter of policy, the CFI is convinced that investments in advanced research computing infrastructure are maximized through the sharing of resources. The CFI therefore expects that research computing resources costing more than \$100,000 will normally be housed, managed and operated by Compute Canada. Although this is the CFI's preferred approach, it is not intended to be an iron-clad rule. The CFI recognizes that there are instances where, for compelling reasons, research computing infrastructure is best housed, managed and operated by institutions.

The CFI expects all institutions to consult with Compute Canada when planning to request advanced research computing infrastructure. For such cases, please visit [Compute Canada's website](#) for information on the established process to facilitate collaboration with institutions. If, however, an institution chooses not to consult with Compute Canada, the CFI will conclude that the institution is planning to assume full responsibility for the operating and maintenance costs of the proposed infrastructure, including the research computing component.

Advanced research computing infrastructure normally includes systems or resources such as:

- Capacity or throughput computing
- Capability computing supporting tightly coupled, fine-grained applications
- Shared memory systems
- Systems supporting very large memory requirements
- High-performance storage
- Long-term storage
- Cloud computing
- Computing using specialized accelerators, including GP-CPU and others
- High-performance visualization systems
- Systems suitable for computational steering and interactive use.

In each case, advanced research computing infrastructure encompasses both the software and environment needed for a given discipline to effectively utilize these types of infrastructure such as high levels of data security and integrity.

GUIDELINES FOR PROPOSAL PREPARATION

Researchers and institutional research services personnel will use the [CFI Awards Management System \(CAMS\)](#) to prepare, share and submit proposals to the JELF.

It is important that all submissions conform to the guidelines provided on the electronic proposal forms as well as those in this guide. It is strongly recommended that researchers and institutional research services personnel review the completed forms before submitting them electronically to ensure that proposals comply with these guidelines.

Guidelines for attachments

CAMS will automatically paginate proposals when they are submitted. Documents *should not* be individually paginated prior to being uploaded to the electronic system.

Page formatting

Since reviewers will assess proposals electronically, the applicant should only use a standard, single-column on an 8.5" x 11" page layout for documents. Avoid using a two-column or landscape format since it may reduce legibility.

The proposal must be clear and easily readable. Legibility is of paramount importance and should take precedence in the selection of an appropriate font for use in the proposal. The applicant is strongly encouraged to use a 12-point, black-coloured font and use single line spacing (six lines per inch) with no condensed type or spacing.

Additionally, the CFI expects documents to conform to the following guidelines:

- Header: indicate the applicant institution on the top left and the project number on the top right of each page.
- Footer: do not include any information in the footer as this area will be used for automatic page numbering.
- Page margin: insert a margin of no less than 1 inch around the page. The header may be within the margin.
- File format and size: only PDF files may be uploaded. Documents in other formats should be converted to PDF prior to being uploaded and should not be encrypted or password protected. The file size must not exceed 20 megabytes.

Adherence to the page formatting guidelines noted above is necessary to ensure that reviewers receive legible proposals and that no applicant will have an unfair advantage by using smaller type, line spacing or margins to provide more text in the proposal. Failure to adhere to these guidelines may result in the CFI returning a proposal for revision.

PROPOSAL STRUCTURE

The proposal should clearly present the merits and excellence of the proposed project. Sufficient information should be provided to enable reviewers to evaluate the proposal in accordance with the assessment criteria established by the CFI (please refer to the Assessment criteria section of the guidelines).

The proposal consists of three separate CAMS modules:

Project module: information about the proposed project and how it meets the criteria of the funding program.

Finance module: information pertaining to the budgetary details of the proposal.

Suggested reviewers module: list of potential reviewers of the proposal.

The forms in CAMS will dictate the maximum number of characters that can be included in each section and/or the page limits for uploaded documents.

Project module

The project module consists of the following sections:

- Project information
- Plain language summary
- Researchers
- Assessment criteria
- Financial resources for operation and maintenance
- Attraction and retention of leading researchers (to be completed by the institution)
- Past/current CFI investments (to be completed by the institution)

Project information

This section captures basic information about the project such as the title, applicant institution and keywords.

Plain language summary (1,500 characters)

Provide a short summary in plain language of the proposed project: what is being researched, how it is being done and why it is important. Focus on the expected impact and benefits to Canada, beyond academic accomplishments. This summary will not be used in the review process. Should the project be funded, it may be used in the CFI's communications products and website.

Researchers

Researchers included in the proposal must have a CAMS account and agree to participate in the project before the proposal can be submitted to the CFI. The CFI curricula vitae of the researchers will be appended to the proposal.

Assessment criteria

Upload a PDF document that contains key information on how the proposal meets the assessment criteria for this program. Ensure that the document follows the guidelines for attachments. Additionally, the applicant should address each criterion in the order in which they appear below.

Each assessment criterion will be evaluated against a standard. Each criterion includes aspects that must be addressed in the proposal. Failure to do so will weaken the proposal. Expert reviewers and/or expert review committees will be asked to rate the degree to which the proposal meets each standard.

The number of criteria to address and the page limits for this PDF document depend on the amount requested from the CFI in the proposal. The attachment allows institutions maximum flexibility to address each criterion, including the use of figures or diagrams where appropriate. The exact distribution of pages for each criterion is at the applicant's discretion.

Total CFI request (\$)	Assessment criteria to address	Maximum number of pages
≤ \$75,000	Research, researchers, infrastructure	10
> \$75,000 to \$800,000	All	15

Assessment Criteria

Research or technology development

The research or technology development activities are innovative, feasible and meet international standards.

- Describe the proposed research or technology development activities conducted in an area of institutional priority.
- Demonstrate the innovativeness and feasibility of the proposed activities by positioning them within the international context, describing the proposed approach and including references.

Researchers

The researchers demonstrate excellence and leadership at a level appropriate for the stage of their career. The researchers have the expertise or relevant collaborations to conduct the research or technology development activities.

- Describe the researchers' track record, including scientific and technical expertise relevant to conduct the proposed activities.
- Describe the collaborators' and partners' contributions essential to the success of the proposed activities.

Infrastructure

The infrastructure is necessary and appropriate to conduct the research or technology development activities.

- Describe each item and justify its need to conduct the proposed activities. For construction or renovation, provide a description of the space including its location, size and nature. Use the item number, quantity, cost and location found in the *Cost of individual items* table. Provide a cost breakdown for any grouping of items.
- Explain why existing infrastructure within the institution and the region cannot be used to conduct the proposed activities.

Note: For construction or renovation, a detailed cost breakdown, timeline and floor plans must be provided in a separate document as part of the Finance module.

**Institutional
commitment
and
sustainability**

The infrastructure is optimally used and sustainable through tangible and appropriate commitments over its useful life.

- Present a management plan that addresses the optimal use (e.g. user access and level of use), and the operation and maintenance (O&M) of the infrastructure.
- Provide detailed information on O&M costs and revenue sources, including institutional commitment. Refer to the *Financial resources for operation and maintenance* tables.

**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 to Canadians, including better training and improved skills for highly qualified personnel ¹.

- Briefly describe potential socio-economic benefits, including better training and improved skills for highly qualified personnel.
- Delineate the knowledge mobilization plan and/or technology transfer pathways, including partnerships with end users.

¹ Highly qualified personnel include technicians, research associates, undergraduate students, graduate students and post-doctoral fellows.

Financial resources for operation and maintenance

This section of the Project module captures the annual costs and sources of committed support to ensure the effective operation and maintenance (O&M) of the infrastructure for the first five years after implementation.

In cases where the useful life² of some of the infrastructure items requested are longer or shorter than five years, the Assessment criteria section of the proposal should provide complementary information regarding the operating and maintenance needs for these items over their useful life. Do not include costs related to research and/or technology development.

The CFI will contribute to the operation and maintenance costs of funded projects through its Infrastructure Operating Fund (IOF). The IOF generated will be equivalent to 30 percent of the CFI contribution to the capital cost of projects funded under the JELF. If funding sources include the CFI Infrastructure Operating Fund (IOF), list these in the “institutional contribution” category. The institution has the flexibility to distribute its IOF allocation based on actual operating and maintenance needs as opposed to allocating the exact amount to the project that generated it, in accordance with its internal plan for the provision and administration of operating and maintenance support.

² The useful life of the research infrastructure is considered to be the period of time over which the infrastructure is expected to provide benefits and be usable for its intended purpose as per the proposal, factoring in normal repairs and maintenance.

Attraction and retention of leading researchers

This section is to be completed by the institution by selecting whether the infrastructure requested will be used to attract a new researcher to the institution or to retain an existing faculty member. The information is used for statistical purposes only.

Attraction: ≤ 24 months since researcher’s full-time academic appointment

Retention: > 24 months since researcher’s full-time academic appointment

Past/current CFI investments

This section is to be completed by the institution to indicate whether the infrastructure will support research activities in which the CFI has or has not previously invested. This information is used for statistical purposes only.

Finance module

The finance module consists of the following sections:

- Cost of individual items
- Construction or renovation plans (if applicable)
- Contributions from eligible partners
- Infrastructure utilization

- Overview of infrastructure project funding (generated automatically)

The tables in the Overview of infrastructure project funding section in CAMS will be automatically populated with information taken from other sections of the Finance module. Note that the amount requested from the CFI is calculated based on the difference between the total contributions from eligible partners and the total eligible costs.

Cost of individual items

When completing the Cost of individual items section, the CFI recommends that the applicant bundle items into functional groupings. However, details and justification for each item within a group should be provided when addressing the infrastructure criterion in the Assessment criteria document. The CFI's [Policy and program guide](#) outlines the eligible costs for infrastructure projects.

List only the eligible infrastructure acquisition and development costs. List the full cost of each item. Retain documentation (price lists, quotes, etc.) so that they can be provided to the CFI upon request.

Please note:

- If the infrastructure will be used for purposes other than research or technology development, list only pro-rated research or technology development costs.
- The total eligible costs must include taxes (net of credits received), shipping and installation. However, taxes must not be calculated on the in-kind portion.
- When preparing budget estimates, the applicant must follow their existing institutional policies and procedures. Costs included in this budget must be close estimates of fair market value. Refer to the [Policy and program guide](#) for information on how in-kind contributions must be assessed.

Construction or renovation plans

All proposals that include construction or renovation must provide the following information:

- A detailed cost breakdown of the overall cost of the construction or renovation project, categorized by cost component (i.e. direct, soft and contingency costs).
- A timeline identifying key dates for the various stages of the proposed construction or renovation.
- Floor plans of the proposed area(s), showing the location of the infrastructure and the scale of the plans for projects involving multiple rooms. The floor plans must be legible when printed in black and white on standard letter size paper (8.5" x 11").

Note: the cost breakdown, timeline and floor plans should be uploaded as a separate PDF document. These pages do not count towards the page limit for the Assessment criteria section of the proposal.

Contributions from eligible partners

List all contributions from eligible partners. Do not include the amount requested from the CFI. Provide the partner name and type, as well as a breakdown of contributions (cash and in-kind) for each eligible partner. The applicant is encouraged to bundle all expected in-kind contributions from vendors into a single line. If partner contributions are expected but have not yet been confirmed, outline the plans for securing these funds.

Infrastructure utilization

This section of the Finance module captures the use of the requested infrastructure for CFI-eligible and non-eligible purposes and any applicable pro-rating of costs.

Suggested reviewers

Identify a minimum of six reviewers who are well-qualified to review the proposal and who are not in conflict of interest. A conflict of interest may be deemed to exist or perceived as such when reviewers:

- are a relative or close friend, or have a personal relationship with the project leader or other researchers included in the proposal;
- 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 project leader or other researchers included in the proposal;
- are currently affiliated with the project leader's or other researchers' institutions, organizations or companies, including research hospitals and research institutes;
- are closely professionally affiliated with the project leader or other researchers, as a result of having in the last six years:
 - frequent and regular interactions with the project leader or other researchers in the course of their duties at their department, institution, organization or company;
 - been a supervisor or a trainee of the project leader or other researchers;
 - collaborated, published or shared funding with the project leader or other researchers, 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 decision whether to use suggested reviewers remains with the CFI.

REVIEW AND DECISION MAKING

The CFI merit review process will be used to evaluate proposals on the basis of the assessment criteria that reflect the JELF. Proposals should clearly present the merits and excellence of the proposed project and provide sufficient information to enable reviewers to evaluate the proposal in accordance with the assessment criteria.

Review process

The CFI will first undertake an administrative review of the proposals to ensure that they are eligible and complete. CFI staff will follow up with institutional research services personnel if applicable. The expert review process will be tailored to the complexity of the proposal.

≤ \$75,000

Proposals are reviewed by a multidisciplinary review committee.

> \$75,000 to ≤ \$400,000

Proposals are reviewed by a minimum of two experts who provide a written review to the CFI. Should a proposal receive divergent reviews, have a proposed research plan that spans diverse disciplines or is otherwise complex, the CFI may:

- Request a teleconference with reviewers of the proposal;
- Seek the input of an additional reviewer; and/or,
- Seek the input of the JELF Advisory Committee.

> \$400,000 to ≤ \$800,000

Proposals are reviewed by an expert review committee.

The review process for proposals submitted by an institution from Québec is administered by the Government of Québec following a longstanding partnership between it and the CFI. Those proposals are reviewed by expert committee.

To coordinate the review process and avoid duplication of review efforts, review materials are shared with provinces in accordance with agreements between the CFI and provincial funding authorities, as permissible pursuant to the Privacy Act.

Funding decisions

All funding decisions are made by the CFI Board of Directors at one of their triannual meetings.

Following the meeting, the applicant institutions will receive the review materials for their proposals.

SUBMISSION PROCESS

JELF proposals must be submitted by the institution to the CFI through CAMS. For multi-institutional proposals, the institutions must communicate to the JELF Manager (Olivier Gagnon, Olivier.Gagnon@innovation.ca) the dollar value of its share of the proposal, by the submission deadline.

