

# John R. Evans Leaders Fund

Guidelines for reviewers -  
Partnerships

October 2018

## INTRODUCTION

These guidelines are intended for reviewers assessing a proposal submitted to the John R. Evans Leaders Fund (JELF) jointly with any of our partners – Canada Research Chairs (CRC), Canada Excellence Research Chairs (CERC), Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada (NSERC), and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC). These partnerships help reduce the burden on both applicants and reviewers.

**NB:** Reviewers assessing an unaffiliated JELF proposal should consult the *JELF Guidelines for reviewers*.

## 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 to benefit Canadians. Thanks to CFI investment in state-of-the-art facilities and equipment, universities, colleges, research hospitals and non-profit research institutions are attracting and retaining the world's top talent, training the next generation of researchers, supporting private-sector innovation and creating high-quality jobs that strengthen Canada's position in today's knowledge economy. Read more at [Innovation.ca](http://Innovation.ca)

## PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

At a time of intense international competition, the John R. Evans Leaders Fund (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.

Canadian universities recognized as eligible by the CFI receive an allocation of CFI funds commensurate with 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.

## Eligible infrastructure projects

An eligible project involves the acquisition or development of research infrastructure including workhorses (high usage equipment that routinely and dependably perform over a long period of time), and the upgrading or replacement of aging infrastructure. An eligible project may also include research equipment that, while in and of itself is basic, will enable innovative research or technology development activities.

Infrastructure projects may also involve the construction of a new building or the development of new space in an existing building (e.g. new floors, reconfiguration of existing space) only when new space is essential to house and use the eligible infrastructure requested in the proposal or when additional space to house and use other eligible infrastructure (i.e. not part of the current proposal) that is essential for the use of the requested infrastructure.

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.

The CFI also contributes to the operation and maintenance (O&M) costs of funded projects through its Infrastructure Operating Fund. The support allocated is equivalent to 30 percent of the CFI contribution to the capital costs of the funded project. These O&M funds do not need matching funding.

## REVIEW PROCESS

The CFI structured merit review is designed to assess proposals relative to the JELF assessment criteria (see below) and is tailored to the complexity of the proposal. The review process is administered by the partnering organization. However, should the infrastructure component of the joint proposal receive divergent written reviews, in order to make a funding recommendation to our Board of Directors, the CFI may:

- seek the input of additional expert reviewers; and/or,
- seek the input of the JELF Advisory Committee.

The number of assessment criteria to address depends on the partnering organization and the amount requested from the CFI in the proposal.

### JELF-CRC/CERC and JELF-SSHRC

Total CFI request (\$)	Assessment criteria to address
≤ \$75,000	Infrastructure
> \$75,000 to \$800,000	Infrastructure and Benefits to Canadians

### JELF-NSERC

Total CFI request (\$)	Assessment criterion to address
Up to \$800,000	Infrastructure

Applicants are instructed to address a number of aspects under each criterion standard in their proposal. While some aspects are optional (e.g., for projects with a construction component), failure to address all of the aspects that apply to the proposal within each criterion should be treated as a weakness and assessed as such.

As a reviewer, you must rate the degree to which the proposal meets each criterion standard using an assessment scale (see below). The ratings must be substantiated by explaining your perceived strengths and weaknesses of the proposal for each of the assessment criteria.

The appropriateness of the budget and cost estimates should also form part of your assessment under the “infrastructure” section of the report. The budget evaluation should identify any items not adequately justified in view of the planned research activities.

It is incumbent upon the applicant to demonstrate in the proposal how the project satisfies each criterion and it should therefore be the sole information source upon which you base your review.

### **Documentation and review material**

All documentation and review materials needed to conduct an assessment are provided by the partnering organization.

When you are asked to complete a written report, an anonymized copy of your report will be shared with the applicant institution. To ensure that anonymity is preserved, we kindly ask that you refrain from writing any comments in your report that could reveal your identity.

When you are invited to participate in a review committee meeting by teleconference or in person, you will be asked to submit preliminary reports prior to the meeting. These reports help to identify areas of focus for the discussion at the time of the meeting and help inform the expert committee report that is drafted by CFI staff. They are not shared with the applicant institutions.

During the teleconference or in-person meeting, reviewers will be called upon to present their preliminary assessments. A general discussion will ensue, focusing on the criteria where there are significant discrepancies among the reviewers’ assessments. Ultimately, for each criterion, the committee must reach a consensus on:

- the degree to which the proposal satisfies the criterion standard;
- an appropriate rating for each assessment criterion;
- the strengths and weaknesses of the proposal for each assessment criterion; and,
- a funding recommendation.

## ASSESSMENT SCALE

<b>EX</b> Significantly exceeds the criterion	<b>SA</b> Satisfies the criterion	<b>SW</b> Satisfies the criterion with only a few minor weaknesses	<b>PS</b> Partially satisfies the criterion with some significant weaknesses	<b>NS</b> Does not satisfy the criterion due to major weaknesses
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## ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

### 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.

### 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 <sup>1</sup>.

- 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.

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

## DECISION MAKING

### Funding decisions

The final funding decision for the research support component of the proposal will be made by the partnering organization. The final funding decision for the infrastructure component of the proposal will be made by the CFI Board of Directors at one of their triannual meetings and is contingent upon a positive decision on the research component from the partnering organization. Institutions are informed by the CFI of decisions related to the infrastructure component. The reviewers' comments are made available to the institutions by the partnering organization while expert committee reports are provided by the CFI. In cases where the CFI sought additional expert input, the CFI will also provide those additional comments to the institution.

## CFI OVERSIGHT OF MERIT REVIEW PROCESS

### Role of CFI staff

CFI staff ensures the integrity of the merit review process by guiding the expert reviewers and committees through their review of proposals. This involves providing instructions on the CFI review process, policies and procedures, and ensuring consistency in the proposal evaluations. They are also responsible for drafting the committee reports and confirming their accuracy in consultation with the committee.

### Collaboration with provinces

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

