CANADA FOUNDATION FOR INNOVATION

Exceptional Opportunities Fund – COVID-19

Guidelines for completing a proposal
May 2020

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PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

These guidelines are for researchers and institutional research services personnel preparing and submitting a proposal to the Exceptional Opportunities Fund (EOF) – COVID-19 competition.

The threat of infectious disease continues to be a major global concern for human health and is a key driver of healthcare system costs, human lives lost and economic turmoil. According to the United Nations, we are now facing an unprecedented "global health crisis— one that is killing people, spreading human suffering, and upending people's lives. But this is much more than a health crisis. It is a human, economic and social crisis. The coronavirus disease (COVID-19), which has been characterized as a pandemic by the World Health Organization (WHO), is attacking societies at their core."[1]

In response to the current pandemic, the CFI is launching an EOF – COVID-19 competition and investing up to $25 million with the objective of supporting urgent needs for equipment for ongoing research related to COVID-19. As an exception to our usual competitions, the CFI will cover up to 100 percent of the eligible costs of a project. However, the CFI encourages institutions to seek funding from other partners when possible, as this will broaden the scope of the initiative.

The EOF – COVID-19 competition is open for proposals from all disciplines.

To qualify for this funding opportunity, a project must meet the following requirements:

- The infrastructure component must be an indispensable element of an ongoing research project related to COVID-19.
- The infrastructure component must be acquired at the latest by **March 31, 2021**.

Proposals are evaluated based on the following assessment criteria:

- Research or technology development
- Researchers
- Infrastructure
- Sustainability
- Benefits to Canadians

Submission deadline

Institutions can submit their proposals between **June 1, 2020**, and **June 15, 2020**, in the CFI Awards Management System (CAMS). During that time, the CFI will receive proposals up to a total value of $31.25 million (125 percent of the available budget). Once that limit is reached, the competition will close and the application module will no longer be available in CAMS.

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1   https://www.un.org/development/desa/dspd/everyone-included-covid-19.html

Eligible institutions

Universities, colleges, research hospitals, research institutes and non-profit institutions recognized as eligible by the CFI can apply to the EOF – COVID-19 competition. Research hospitals and research institutes wanting to apply may do so through the eligible university with which they are affiliated.

Eligible researchers

Up to five 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 in areas of research related to COVID-19;
- Currently engaged in research or technology development activities related to COVID-19 that are innovative, feasible and meet international standards.

Eligible infrastructure projects

Eligible institutions can submit proposals requesting between $200,000 and $1.5 million from the CFI.

To qualify for this funding opportunity, a project must meet the following requirements:

- The infrastructure component must be an indispensable element of a current research project related to COVID-19.
- The infrastructure component must be acquired at the latest by **March 31, 2021**.

Please note that construction costs are not eligible expenses for this competition. However, costs of minor renovations are eligible if the renovations can be completed by **March 31, 2021**.

To be eligible for funding, research infrastructure expenditures must have been incurred after **January 1, 2020**. We consider expenditures incurred when goods are received, services have been rendered or work has been performed.

For more information on CFI eligibility guidelines, please refer to the CFI's Policy and program guide.

PROPOSAL STRUCTURE

Researchers and institutional administrators will use the CFI Awards Management System (CAMS) to prepare, share and submit proposals to the EOF – COVID-19 competition.

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

See the Appendix for screenshots of the relevant sections in CAMS.

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 in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. 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 on its 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 curriculum 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. (See page 7 for details on the assessment criteria.) Ensure that the document follows the guidelines for attachments. 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. Expert reviewers will be asked to rate the degree to which the proposal meets each standard. Institutions will be given a maximum of 10 pages to address all five assessment criteria.

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 life[2] of some of the infrastructure items requested is 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.

Projects funded under this competition will not generate funding from the Infrastructure Operating Fund (IOF). However, **institutions may include an amount of up to 10 percent of the total eligible costs in the project's budget for the operation and maintenance costs of the infrastructure.** The amount requested for operation and maintenance costs in the project's budget should be listed in the institutional contribution category. This amount should also be listed in the Cost of individual items section (see below).

Finance module

The finance module consists of the following sections:
- Cost of individual items
- Institutional support letter
- Contributions from eligible partners (if applicable)
- Infrastructure utilization
- Overview of infrastructure project funding (generated automatically)

See the Appendix for screenshots of the relevant sections in CAMS.

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

Bundle items into functional groupings when completing the Cost of individual items section. Provide details and justification for each item within a group when you address 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.

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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.

As indicated above, an amount of up to 10 percent of the total eligible costs may be included for the operation and maintenance costs of the infrastructure.

Please note:

- The total eligible costs must include taxes (net of credits received), shipping and installation.
- Follow your existing institutional policies and procedures when preparing budget estimates. Costs included in this budget must be close estimates of fair market value. Refer to the CFI's Policy and program guide for information on how in-kind contributions must be assessed.

Institutional support letter

An institutional support letter must accompany each proposal.

Contributions from eligible partners (if applicable)

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. 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

For this competition, the requested infrastructure must be used exclusively for research related to COVID-19. Please enter 100 percent utilization in the "research" category.

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.

ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

RESEARCH OR TECHNOLOGY DEVELOPMENT

The research or technology development activities related to COVID-19 are innovative, feasible and timely.

- Describe the proposed research or technology development activities related to COVID-19.
- Demonstrate the innovativeness and feasibility of the proposed activities by positioning them within the international context of fighting the COVID-19 pandemic, 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. 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.

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.

BENEFIT 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[3].

- Briefly describe potential socioeconomic 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.

3   Highly qualified personnel include technicians, research associates, undergraduate students, graduate students and postdoctoral fellows.

GUIDELINES FOR PROPOSAL PREPARATION

It is important that all submissions conform to the guidelines provided on the CAMS electronic proposal forms as well as those outlined in this document. It is strongly recommended that researchers and institutional research service 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 paramount and should take precedence in the selection of an appropriate font for use in the proposal. Use a 12-point, black-coloured font and 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.

REVIEW AND DECISION MAKING

Review process

Each proposal will be evaluated according to its own merit as soon as it is received by the CFI. Within the available budget, proposals of equal merit will be funded in order of submission date. Due to the urgent nature of this competition, a single stage review process will be used. At least two reviewers with appropriate expertise will be assigned to each proposal. Reviewers will rate the degree to which the proposal meets each criterion using an assessment scale.

Funding decisions

The funding recommendation will be sent to the CFI Board of Directors for a decision at its next scheduled meeting. The CFI will increase the frequency of its Board meetings to expedite the funding decision process. Institutions will be notified by email when decisions and review materials are uploaded in CAMS.

Appendix – Competition screenshots

PROJECT MODULE

Project Information

Project Summary

Researchers

▶ Researcher dashboard > Application > EOF-COVID-19 #39880 > Project module > Researchers

Researchers

i Provide usernames for up to four additional researchers who are essential to justify the research project(s) and/or who will share the infrastructure.

Information about these researchers will automatically be retrieved once the username is entered and validated. Researchers will be notified of their requested participation and, if accepted, will receive read-only access to the project through their researcher dashboard. Write access may be granted to one or more researchers through the proposal sharing page.

Note: All researchers must agree to participate in order for the project to be submitted.

[Display/Print] [Save]

[Remove] Add researcher

Username (email)	Name	Institution	Department	CRC holder *i*	Agency funding *i*	Participation confirmed?
test@innovation.ca	Account, Test	Test institution 1 EN		Please select... ▼	CERC / CIHR / CRC / CFREF Select All None To select multiple, press Ctrl key	Yes

[Remove]

[Display/Print] [Save]

Assessment criteria – Attachment

▶ Researcher dashboard > Application > EOF-COVID-19 #39884 > Project module > Assessment criteria - attachment

Assessment criteria - attachment

i Upload a PDF document that describes how the project meets the established review criteria for this funding program. Refer to the *Guidelines for completing a proposal* for the Exceptional Opportunities Fund - COVID-19 for detailed instructions.

File attachment

i You can attach one PDF document that must not exceed 10 pages. Indicate the project number and section title ('Assessment criteria') at the top of each page.

- Use 12-point Times New Roman or similar font.
- Save in PDF format (8.5" x 11"; portrait layout).
- The file size must not exceed twenty megabytes (20MB).

Note: The system will automatically number each page.

File : [Choose File] No file chosen   [Upload]

Financial resources for operation and maintenance

► Researcher dashboard > Application > EOF-COVID-19 #J9880 > Project module > Financial resources for operation and maintenance

Financial resources for operation and maintenance

i   Outline the overall annual costs and sources of support committed to ensuring effective operation and maintenance of the infrastructure for the first five years after it becomes operational. Do not include costs related to research and/or technology development. For research grant support, only include sums dedicated to operation and maintenance.

For a multi-institutional project bringing together three or more institutions, the additional CFI contribution requested (up to five percent of the CFI award) should be listed in the "Other" category and specified as being "Additional CFI".

Display/Print   Save

Operation and maintenance budget summary

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Personnel					
Supplies					
Maintenance and repairs					
Services					
Other (specify) [ ] 30 characters					
Total					

Funding sources

	Year 1	Year 2	Year 3	Year 4	Year 5
Institutional contributions					
Other organizations					
User fees					
Other (specify) [ ] 30 characters					
Total					

Display/Print   Save

FINANCE MODULE

Cost of individual items

► Researcher dashboard > Application > EOF-COVID-19 #J9880 > Finance module > Cost of individual items

Cost of individual items

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

Please note:

1. If the infrastructure will be used for purposes other than research or technology development, list only pro-rated research or technology development costs;
2. 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;
3. When preparing budget estimates, the institution must follow its existing institutional policies and procedures. Costs included in this budget must be close estimates of fair market value. For more information about assessing the fair market value of costs and in-kind contributions, download the Policy and program guide and refer to the supplemental information on Innovation.ca.

Display/Print   Save

Add item

Move up   Move down

0 entry(ies) found

Item number	Item description	Type of expenditure	Eligible costs			Delete
			Cash	In-kind	Total eligible costs	

0 entry(ies) found

Move up   Move down

Display/Print   Save

Institutional support letter

Researcher dashboard > Application > EOF-COVID-19 #39884 > Finance module > Institutional support letter

Institutional support letter

i Please provide an institutional support letter.

File attachment

i You may attach only one PDF document that must not exceed 10 pages. Indicate the project number and section title ('Institutional support letter') at the top of each page.

- Use 12-point Times New Roman or similar font.
- Save in PDF format (8.5" x 11"; portrait layout).
- The file size must not exceed twenty megabytes (20MB).

Note: The system will automatically number each page.

File : [Choose File] No file chosen   [Upload]

Contributions from eligible partners

Researcher dashboard > Application > EOF-COVID-19 #39880 > Finance module > Contributions from eligible partners

Contributions from eligible partners

i 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.

[Display/Print] [Save]

Add partner
0 entry(ies) found

Partner name▲	Partner type	Cash	In-kind	Total	Secured or expected	Delete

i If applicable, outline partner contributions that are expected but not yet secured, and indicate plans for securing these funds.

[text box]

* Required field   3000 characters

[Display/Print] [Save]

Infrastructure utilization

Researcher dashboard > Application > EOF-COVID-19 #J9880 > Finance module > Infrastructure utilization

Infrastructure utilization

i Outline how the infrastructure will be used, by percentage, in each of the following categories.

Display/Print | Save

	Percentage
Research/technology development and associated training	
Education, excluding research / technology development training (not eligible for CFI support)	
Administration	
Clinical or other service function	
Other (specify) _____ 50 characters	
Total	**%**

i Provide a breakdown of the eligible costs included in each of the above categories.

If the infrastructure is used for non-CFI-eligible purposes, explain how the percentage of utilization was determined in each category and how the budget was pro-rated.

* Required field   3,000 characters

Display/Print | Save

Overview of project funding (read-only)

▶ Researcher dashboard > Application > EOF-COVID-19 #39880 > Finance module > Overview of project funding (read-only)

Display/Print

Project funding

> *i*   This table gives a summary of total contributions and eligible costs for the project.
>
> The values in the table are calculated based on the data entered in the "Cost of individual items" section and the "Contributions from eligible partners" section.
>
> The amount requested from the CFI is calculated based on the difference between the total contributions from eligible partners and the total eligible costs.

	Cash	In-kind	Total
Total eligible costs	$0	$0	$0
Contributions from eligible partners	$0	$0	$0
Amount requested from the CFI			$0
Percentage of the total eligible costs requested from the CFI			.00%

Summary of eligible costs

> *i*   This table provides total eligible costs for each type of expenditure.
>
> The values in the table are calculated based on the data entered in the 'Cost of individual items' section.

Code	Expenditure type — Description	Total
13	Purchase of equipment (including shipping, taxes and installation)	0
14	Lease of equipment	0
15	Personnel (for infrastructure acquisition & development)	0
16	Components	0
17	Travel (infrastructure related)	0
18	Software	0
19	Extended warranties / Service contracts	0
20	Construction/renovation costs	0
21	Initial training of infrastructure personnel	0
22	Other	0
	Total eligible costs	**0**

Display/Print

SUGGESTED REVIEWERS

▶ Researcher dashboard > Application > EOF-COVID-19 #39880 > Suggested reviewers > Suggested reviewers

Suggested reviewers

> *i*   Identify reviewers who are especially well qualified to review the proposal. Reviewers must not be current or recent (within the last six years) collaborators or supervisors of the principal users of the infrastructure nor should they originate from the lead or collaborating institution(s).
>
> CFI reserves the right to select reviewers that are not part of that list.

Display/Print

Remove   Add suggested reviewer

0 entry(ies) found

	Family name▲	First name	Email address	Institution

0 entry(ies) found

Remove

Display/Print