



**Background information  
and  
Guidelines for reviewers  
Partnership Grant**

**John R. Evans Leaders Fund**

**March 2017**

## The CFI's mission and mandate

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.

Support from the CFI enables institutions to set their own research priorities in response to areas of importance to Canada. This allows researchers to compete with the best from around the world, and helps to position Canada in the global, knowledge-based economy. The research enabled by CFI support is also creating the necessary conditions for sustainable, long-term economic growth, including the creation of spin-off ventures and the commercialization of discoveries, and supporting improvements to society, quality of life, health, the environment, and public policy.

Additional information on the CFI is available on our website at [www.innovation.ca](http://www.innovation.ca).

## Overview of the John R. Evans Leaders Fund (JELF)

The John R. Evans Leaders Fund (JELF) is designed to help universities attract and retain the very best of today's and tomorrow's researchers at a time of intense international competition. To this end, the JELF offers universities the opportunity to

- acquire infrastructure for their leading research faculty to undertake cutting-edge research. Additionally, the JELF supports this infrastructure by providing a portion of the operating and maintenance costs which is coupled with direct research costs from partner organizations.

The John R. Evans Leaders Fund is intended to serve the infrastructure needs of individual faculty, or small groups of up to three faculty members where there is a need to share infrastructure. In order to maximize the impact of the JELF as a key strategic tool to build and enhance research capacity, JELF guidelines are broadened to include the acquisition, the upgrading or the replacement of aging workhorses. The research infrastructure must be centered on the research needs of one to three researchers but the sharing of the infrastructure is encouraged provided that the candidates have sufficient access to carry out the proposed research program.

The candidates put forward by an institution must be recognized leaders in their field or who show promise of becoming research leaders. They must be engaged in, or embarking upon, an

innovative research program for which the infrastructure is essential and which will provide an enriched research environment.

Each institution receives an allocation of CFI funds commensurate with their tri-council research funding. The institution selects the candidates and projects to put forward for one of three competitions per year. The CFI will provide funding for up to 40 percent of the eligible costs of a funded proposal, the remaining 60% is leveraged by the institution from other sources (provincial, local, institutional, vendors, etc.).

The CFI will also contribute to the operating and maintenance costs of approved proposals through its [Infrastructure Operating Fund](#) (IOF). The IOF allocation will be equivalent to 30 percent of the CFI funding awarded for proposals approved under the JELF and is given to the institution to distribute as it sees fit appropriate.

## **Merit Review Process**

Jointly with the NSERC Expert Review Committees or the Industrial Research Chair Site Visit Committee, the CFI evaluates proposals on the basis of the two broad review criteria that reflect the CFI's mandate: Need for the infrastructure and budget justification and the Benefits to Canadians. To be considered for funding, a proposal must satisfy these two criteria to a degree commensurate with the size and complexity of the proposal.

Each criterion will be evaluated against a standard. Reviewers will be asked to rate the degree to which the proposal meets each standard, based on the information provided in the proposal. Specifically, the information will be assessed on whether the requirements for that standard are:

- Not satisfied;
- Partially satisfied;
- Fully satisfied with only a few minor weaknesses;
- Fully satisfied;
- Fully satisfied and significantly exceeded in one or more key aspects.

Reviewers are expected to substantiate the assessment by commenting on the strengths and weaknesses of the proposal with regards to each standard.

### **Assessment criteria**

***Need for the infrastructure and budget justification***

Each of the following must be addressed:

1. Describe each item and justify its need to conduct the proposed research or technology development program. 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.
2. Explain how the infrastructure will be fully utilized by the candidate(s) and other users (if applicable).
3. Identify similar infrastructure available within the institution, the region and the country.
4. Describe the value added of an additional award in cases where a candidate has previously received a CFI award.
5. For construction or renovation, provide a description of the space including its location, size and nature.

**Criterion standard:**

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

*In cases where the infrastructure will not be fully used by the candidate(s), the institution has developed plans to maximize its utilization within and/or outside the institution.*

## Benefits to Canadians

Each of the following must be addressed:

1. Beyond the creation of new knowledge and the training of highly qualified personnel, describe the expected benefits to Canadians and why they are significant.
2. Identify potential end users of the research or technology development results and describe the plans for knowledge mobilization and/or technology transfer.

## **Criterion standard:**

*The research or technology development program has the potential to lead to tangible benefits for society, health, the economy and/or the environment.*

*There are measures in place to transfer the research results and outputs of the technology development to potential end users in a timely manner.*

## **Funding decisions**

The final decision for the research support portion of the proposal will be made by NSERC. Conversely, the final funding decision for the infrastructure portion of the proposal will be made by the CFI Board of Directors at its earliest possible meeting.

Shortly after the CFI Board has met, institutions are informed by email of decisions related to the infrastructure portion of the proposal. We inform institutions of any conditions associated with an award. The NSERC Expert Review Committee reports or the Site Visit Committee Report are made available to the institution by NSERC.

It is the responsibility of recipient institutions to submit the necessary documents to the CFI to finalize awards and establish payment schedules.

## **Terms of reference for reviewers**

### **Governing principles**

Site Visit Committee members or Expert reviewers must adhere to the CFI's Statement on ethics, conflict of interest and confidentiality (see Appendix 2). The CFI expects the research community to not contact reviewers for information on committee deliberations. Reviewers are instructed not to discuss anything related to the review process or specific proposals with other members of the research community. They will only receive additional information or representations relating to proposals from the CFI directly, and must refer all inquiries for other material or information directed to them personally, to the CFI for response.

## **Appendix 1 - Common CFI definitions**

For all CFI funds, the following definitions apply:

### **Infrastructure**

The CFI funds projects to develop or acquire research infrastructure. It does **not** fund the conduct of research or salaries of investigators.

Infrastructure is defined as equipment, scientific collections, computer software, databases, and communication linkages used or to be used primarily for carrying on research including the housing and installations essential for the use and servicing of this infrastructure.

### **Innovation**

Innovation is a process that begins with the creation of knowledge in research, and continues through its applications, for the benefit of Canadian society.

### **Research**

Experimental or theoretical work undertaken primarily to acquire new knowledge of the underlying foundation of phenomena and observable facts or on new knowledge directed primarily towards a specific practical aim or objective.

### **Technology development**

Systematic work, drawing on existing knowledge gained from research and/or practical experience, which is directed to producing new materials, products or devices, to installing new processes, systems and services, or substantially improving those already produced or installed.

### **Research training**

Training of highly qualified personnel (HQP) through research, including technicians, technologists, undergraduate students, graduate students, postdoctoral fellows and other trainees.

### **Applicant**

For all CFI awards, institutions are the applicants, not individual researchers, thus only institutions may submit applications to the JELF.

## **Appendix 2 - Statement on Ethics, conflict of interest, and confidentiality**

### **Equity in the Merit Review Process**

Merit review by nature is a subjective process. Bias may manifest in several ways and could be based on a school of thought, fundamental versus applied or translational research, areas of research, sub-disciplines or approaches (including emerging ones), size or reputation of a participating institution, age, language, personal factors or gender of the applicant. To sensitize reviewer to unconscious biases they may hold, CFI cautions members against any judgment of an application based on such factors, and asks them to constantly guard against the possibility of implicit bias influencing the decision-making process. This is essential in order to ensure that all participants in the merit review process have the same base knowledge of the processes and policies in order to conduct effective and fair merit review.

### **Conflict of interest and confidentiality agreement for review committee members, external reviewers and observers**

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.

### **Conflict of interest**

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.

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

### **Disclosure and compliance measures**

Any review committee member, external reviewer or observer who becomes aware of a conflict of interest must promptly disclose the conflict to CFI staff. The CFI will determine if it constitutes a conflict of interest and what measures—such as recusal—are required. No review committee member, external reviewer or observer may participate in the review process of a proposal with which he/she is in conflict of interest. The conflict of interest depends on the role and level of involvement of a review committee member, external reviewer or observer and the size of the research team. Such disclosures and compliance measures shall be documented and retained for the record.

### **Confidentiality**

The CFI is subject to the [Privacy Act](#) and the [Access to Information Act](#). These laws govern the collection, use and disclosure of information under the control of the federal government and certain federally funded organizations. Documentation submitted to the CFI by the applicant institution may be provided to the review committee members, external reviewers and observers. The documentation may contain personal information and confidential commercial information. By law, candidates have the right of access to the information provided by review committee members and external reviewers about their proposals. The names of external reviewers must be kept confidential to ensure they can provide an impartial review of a proposal. Review committee members' names can be released at the discretion of the CFI. Written materials used in the review process are generally made available to candidates when they are notified of the funding opportunity results.

Review committee members, external reviewers and observers must ensure that:

- all documentation and information that the CFI entrusts to review committee members, external reviewers and observers is maintained in strict confidence at all times. It must be used only for the purpose for which it was originally collected—namely, to review proposals and make funding recommendations as applicable;
- review documentation is stored in a secure manner to prevent unauthorized access. It must be transmitted using secure techniques and when it is no longer required, it must be destroyed in a secure manner. Any loss or theft of the documentation must be reported to the CFI;
- all enquiries or representations received by review committee members, external reviewers or observers about a proposal or its review must be referred to the CFI. Review committee members, external reviewers or observers must not contact the candidates for additional information or disclose matters arising from the review process to the candidates.

Additional requirements for review committee members and observers:

- Review deliberations are confidential. Comments made by review committee members during the review of proposals and the conclusions of the committee’s review must never be discussed or disclosed with individuals not involved in the review process unless required by legislation or the courts.
- The identity of successful candidates and the details of the awards must remain confidential until a decision is made by the CFI and officially announced to the candidates and the public. The identities of unsuccessful or ineligible candidates are not made public and must not be divulged unless required by legislation or the courts.
- During the meeting, observers must be as unobtrusive as possible to minimize disruption and must not remove from the meeting room written notes or documentation related to reviewer assignments, ratings or reviewer comments on proposals.

### Confirmation

I have read and understood the *Conflict of interest and confidentiality agreement*. I agree to comply with the requirements of the [Conflict of interest and confidentiality policy of the federal research funding organizations](#). (Additional information can be found in procedural guidelines for the specific review process.) I understand that any breach of this agreement will result in a review of the matter, with the CFI reserving the right to take appropriate action including, but not limited to, my removal from serving on or observing current or future CFI review committees or from serving as an external reviewer. The use of review documentation for any other purpose could result in a CFI investigation and/or report to the federal Privacy Commissioner’s Office. Any action that the CFI may or may not take will not prevent a person whose privacy rights have been compromised from seeking legal action against the respondent. By signing this form, I also certify that I am not currently ineligible to apply for and/or hold funds from the CFI, the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada, the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council

of Canada or any other research or research funding organization worldwide for reasons of breach of policies on responsible conduct of research—such as ethics, integrity or financial management policies.

I agree to take personal responsibility for complying with these requirements.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date