
Canada Foundation for Innovation

VP UPDATE

July 2015

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1. Farewell to Robert Davidson

As many of you know, the CFI recently said farewell to Robert Davidson, who retired June 30 after a long and remarkable career in post-secondary education policy and research funding. He spent twelve years with the CFI, first as Director of Programs, and since 2011 as Vice-President, Programs and Planning. Robert was honoured by the Canadian Association of Research Administrators (CARA) in May with the 2015 Walter Hirschfeld Award for his exceptional contributions to enhancing research management in Canada. I know you join the CFI in wishing Robert a well-deserved "career change."

2. 2015 Innovation Fund competition results

The results of the CFI's most recent Innovation Fund competition [were announced by Minister of State \(Science and Technology\) Ed Holder on May 29](#). Through this competition, the CFI invested a total of \$333 million in 82 projects at 52 research institutions across Canada: \$256 million for research infrastructure, and \$77 million for operations and maintenance.

The CFI had implemented a number of new design elements in the 2015 competition, such as:

- Having the Multidisciplinary Assessment Committees rate proposals based on the three competition objectives that were different from the six assessment criteria reviewed by the expert committees;
- Moving from a four-level rating scale to a five-level scale;

- Providing an opportunity for institutions to request additional funding (up to 5 percent of the CFI award) for multi-institutional proposals that bring three or more CFI-eligible collaborating institutions together to cover administrative costs associated with the management and governance of the proposed projects; and,
- Giving recognition to all institutions receiving CFI funding, regardless of whether or not the institution was the administrative (formerly called “lead”) institution or a collaborating institution.

While many of you have already shared your feedback on these new elements of the 2015 Innovation Fund, we would be pleased to hear more, including thoughts on the approach we took in announcing the results. All feedback helps inform our future competitions. Please send any comments to Guy Levesque at Guy.Levesque@innovation.ca.

Following the May announcement, the CFI compiled some [illustrative information](#) on the competition results. Some highlights and key observations:

- Overall competition success rate: 31 percent; funding rate: 33 percent.
- Average CFI award: \$2.95 million, with smallest award at \$285,000 and largest at \$23 million.
- Large universities (those that receive more than 1 percent of the total funding from the three federal granting agencies) continue to represent the largest share of proposals submitted (85 percent), proposal funded (94 percent) and funding received (97 percent) and had an overall success rate of 34 percent. The U15 garnered a significant proportion of the competition funding (\$206 million, or roughly 80 percent).
- Small universities (with less than 1 percent of total funding), on the other hand, have seen their share of proposals submitted decrease from 18 percent in the previous 2012 competition to 13 percent; proposals funded from 9 percent to 5 percent; and funding received from 6 percent to 3 percent. Their overall success rate was 11 percent, down from 16 percent in 2012.
- Only 13 proposals were submitted by institutions in Atlantic Canada, compared to 9 in 2012. While none of these proposals received funding, one Atlantic institution will receive CFI funding as a collaborating institution in another project.
- A closer look at the distribution of CFI funding by proposal size reveals that 84 percent (\$215 million) of the competition funding went to 47 proposals requesting \$2 million or more from the CFI. The remaining 40 funded proposals received just over \$40 million in total.
- In terms of share, proposals requesting more than \$2 million from the CFI represent 54 percent of awards, and those requesting less than \$ 2 million represent 46 percent. Given that the share of submitted proposals requesting less than \$2 million was 43 percent, smaller proposals fared well in the 2015 competition.
- Of the 87 funded projects, 15 were multi-institutional projects involving three or more CFI-eligible institutions. A total of \$2.5 million in additional funding (up to 5 percent of the CFI amount) was awarded to 10 proposals for which the merit-review process deemed the request for additional funding fully justified.

- The CFI received 54 proposals that were resubmissions of proposals that were not successful in the 2012 Leading Edge and New Initiatives Fund competition. Of these, 23 were funded — a 43 percent success rate much higher than the overall 31 percent success rate.

The results of the 2015 Innovation Fund competition raise a few important questions for the CFI as we start to plan and develop the next calls and competitions. In particular, the CFI will further analyze the low participation and success rate of small institutions and institutions in Atlantic Canada to determine how the suite of CFI funds can best meet the needs of the full spectrum of institutions across the country. These will be among the key issues for discussion during consultation meetings the CFI is planning for the fall. In the meantime, we welcome your input, insights and suggestions on these and other issues.

3. Cyberinfrastructure Initiative update

Much has happened since the November 2014 launch of the Cyberinfrastructure Initiative. The CFI wishes to sincerely thank everyone who participated in the June 2014 and January 2015 consultation meetings, which were instrumental in developing an initiative that aligns well with the needs of the research community.

For the first competition for Research Data Infrastructure projects (Challenge 1), the Multidisciplinary Assessment Committee recently met to review the [37 Notices of Intent](#) received in late May. Eighteen NOIs have now been invited to submit a full proposal in October.

For the Challenge 2 proposal to modernize and upgrade the pan-Canadian advanced research computing platform managed by Compute Canada, with an emphasis on addressing the most pressing and urgent needs of the platform, the CFI Board approved funding at its June 2015 meeting. We expect the federal government to make the public funding announcement soon.

4. 2015 Federal Budget allocation

As you know by now, Federal Budget 2015 called for an investment of \$1.33 billion in the Canada Foundation for Innovation. This is the largest single investment ever made to support research infrastructure in Canada. The CFI is currently in discussion with Industry Canada regarding the broad parameters for this new funding, and we are hopeful to be able to finalize details leading to a signed agreement in the coming weeks. Once the process is completed, we will provide more details to all CFI stakeholders about the plans for the use of the \$1.33 billion, including anticipated competition timelines and proposed CFI consultations.

5. College-Industry Innovation Fund (Stream 1) competition

This competition was launched in October 2014, with a budget of \$10 million. By May 15, we had received 16 proposals, requesting just over \$10 million from the CFI. As a result, it is highly unlikely we will be able to commit the full budget for the competition. We will continue to work with the college, polytechnic and cégep community to better understand the ongoing low uptake to ensure the College-Industry Innovation Fund continues to meet the needs of the community.

6. Governor General's Innovation Awards

The Canada Foundation for Innovation (CFI) is proud to support the new [Governor General's Innovation Awards](#), announced June 9 by His Excellency the Right Honourable David Johnston. The awards will celebrate the nation's most dynamic thinkers, risk-takers, entrepreneurs and innovators whose ideas are changing Canada and improving the lives of its citizens.

The CFI will manage the adjudication process for the award, drawing on the best practices of its well-established and highly rigorous merit-based review process.

Organizations that have been designated as Nominating Partners by the Office of the Secretary to the Governor General will be invited to submit nominations between September and November 2015, and the adjudication process will take place from November 2015 until March 2016, with the inaugural awards ceremony scheduled for the spring of 2016.

7. CFI's client and stakeholder survey

The CFI recently surveyed a sample of clients (those in administrative roles in institutions, along with project leaders, for both funded and not funded projects) and stakeholders (individuals with a vested interest in the CFI mandate who do not receive CFI funding) to assess levels of satisfaction with the CFI, perceptions of how we are attaining our objectives and views on the design and delivery of our funds. The survey was sent to approximately 1,475 individuals and had a 40 percent response rate.

The vast majority of survey respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with the CFI. Most reported a consistent level of satisfaction over the past year, with 17 percent reporting improved levels of satisfaction and only 9 percent reporting diminished levels of satisfaction. More than 90 percent of respondents indicated that the CFI is recognized as an extremely valuable actor in Canada's Science Technology and Innovation ecosystem, and a majority of stakeholders also believed that the CFI has been effective in achieving its objectives. With respect to the design and delivered CFI funds, responses were positive overall, particularly with the CFI's core funds. In all cases, program delivery was rated more positively than design. Efforts are now underway to maximize the use of the open ended comments provided by more than 200 respondents to ensure we are best meeting the needs of the research community. We would like to thank everyone who took the time to respond to the survey.

8. Infrastructure use study

In the second half of 2014, the CFI conducted an in-depth study to examine the level of use of CFI-funded infrastructure, as well as the factors influencing usage profiles. The project relied on CFI Project Progress Report data and interviews with a sample of researchers and research administrators. The data suggested approximately 75 percent of infrastructure was fully utilized in any given year and the remaining 25 percent was split between under and overutilized. Overall, CFI-funded infrastructure is being fully used by broad and diverse communities of researchers. Both under and overutilization tends to be periodic and typically occurs as part of the normal ramp-up time to full infrastructure commissioning, or due to a lack of resources for operations or an increased need for maintenance in later years. The study confirmed that researchers are conscientious stewards of the infrastructure and endeavour to ensure its optimal use. The report will be available on the CFI website later this summer.

9. Deployment of the CFI Awards Management System “overview” function

The week of July 7, the CFI will deploy a CAMS update. During this period, there may be minor disruptions to the overall system, particularly on July 10. This update will launch the CAMS “overview” functions, which were recently introduced at the CARA conference in Toronto. The overview will provide summary information for an institution, and for a particular project. The update will also change some of the underlying technology behind CAMS. As a result, some minor issues may be introduced to by this release despite our best testing efforts. We ask that you inform the CFI at help.aide@innovation.ca if you encounter any issues.

Scheduled for 2016, the CFI is also working to develop a “reports repository” that will be part of the overview functions, as well a functionality that would allow institutions to view details of their JELF allocation. Some CFI liaisons and account administrators will be consulted to help us determine key information needs that could possibly be addressed through the reports repository.