

Update

November 2023



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2023 Major Science Initiatives Fund workshop

The 2023 Major Science Initiatives Fund (MSIF) workshop took place in Saskatoon from November 2 to 3, 2023. This event brought together approximately 130 representatives from research facilities funded through the MSIF, including members from their governing boards, administrative institutions, and funding partners.

Attendees had the opportunity to network and engage in discussions covering good practices, challenges and plans for the optimal operation and maintenance of these vital research facilities. Participants also had the chance to embark on guided tours of research facilities of national importance located at the University of Saskatchewan.

Our approach to research security

The CFI is committed to ensuring that Canada's research institutions have the infrastructure they require to participate and contribute to world-class research and discovery. We recognize that open and collaborative research is indispensable to pushing the boundaries of science and addressing complex economic and societal challenges. At the same time, the CFI acknowledges that there may be risks involved in pursuing research and innovation, including theft, interference or unwanted transfer of knowledge which result in ways that individuals and research teams do not intend. It is therefore important for researchers, institutions and funders alike to be aware of potential research security risks, and to take the necessary steps and precautions to ensure the security of the Canadian research ecosystem.

Our approach

To mitigate risks to national security related to the projects it funds, the CFI is taking a two-pronged approach by:

- Addressing risks related to partnerships with the private sector in line with the Government of Canada's National Security Guidelines for Research Partnerships
- Addressing infrastructure-specific risks.

Addressing risks related to partnerships with the private sector

In line with the Government of Canada's **National Security Guidelines for Research Partnerships**, starting in 2023–24, we will progressively implement new measures at the proposal submission, review and post-award stages. In particular, we will gradually implement the requirement to submit a Research Partnerships' Risk Assessment Form (**RAF**) with a funding proposal for projects involving private-sector partners that meet at least one of the following criteria:

- The partner has an active role in the research activities described in the funding proposal (e.g., sharing of intellectual property, providing expertise, actively participating in research activities, contributing financially to the research activities); or
- The partner houses all or part of the research infrastructure; or
- The partner contributes more than \$500,000 to the research infrastructure through a cash or in-kind contribution to any single item.

CFI staff will assess and validate the RAFs against risks to national security identified by the Government of Canada. When the CFI cannot ascertain the risk or cannot determine if the proposed mitigation measures are sufficient, we will refer the proposal and the RAF to the appropriate Government of Canada agency for further review.

Additional mitigation measures may be required from the recipient institution depending on the outcome of that assessment. In extreme cases, funding might be denied if the risks to national security cannot be adequately mitigated.

Applicant institutions already submitted an RAF along with each funding proposal for the Biosciences Research Infrastructure Fund – Partnership with Stage 2 of the Canada Biomedical Research Fund (CBRF – BRIF Stage 2) last September. We will implement a similar process for the Northern Fund when it launches in January 2024, and for the John R. Evans Leaders Fund later in the summer or fall of 2024. Additional guidance will be provided in the fund-specific documents for these funding opportunities.

In the **call for proposals** for the 2023 Innovation Fund competition, we informed applicant institutions that they will be required to ensure the security and integrity of projects, notably by:

- Conducting due diligence to identify potential security risks to the project, including, as applicable, physical security, personnel, cybersecurity, data, intellectual property and partnerships
- Identifying and implementing measures to mitigate any identified risks, reflecting best practices in risk management and operations.

In accordance with these expectations, we have recently notified recipient institutions that they will be required to submit an RAF before finalizing their 2023 Innovation Fund awards. Details of this process are available under “Manage your award” on the **Innovation Fund** page of our website.

Addressing infrastructure-specific risks

In the coming months, the CFI will lead a dialogue with institutions to identify risks and appropriate mitigation strategies that are specific to the presence and use of research infrastructure. More targeted measures may be implemented at a later date based on the outcome of those discussions.

Updates on the Innovation Fund

National funding announcement for the 2023 Innovation Fund decisions

We have been notified that the 2023 Innovation Fund decisions will be included in a Government of Canada national announcement in the coming weeks. We will keep you informed of details as we have them. In the meantime, as usual, please keep your funding results under embargo until they are announced to the public.

2023 Innovation Fund - By the numbers

At its June 2023 meeting, the CFI Board of Directors approved 100 projects through the 2023 Innovation Fund competition representing an investment by the CFI of \$392 million in research infrastructure across Canada. In addition, \$689 million in matching funds were leveraged from private-sector, provincial and other partners to bring the overall investment to \$1.1 billion in support of Canada’s research community.

The option to name two team leaders on an Innovation Fund proposal was implemented in 2020 to promote diversity in team leadership. In the 2023 Innovation Fund competition, 84 percent (\$330 million) of the CFI investment was awarded to projects with two team leaders. This represents a nine percent increase from the 2020 Innovation Fund competition.

Looking back to look forward

We have taken the last few months to look back at the 2023 Innovation Fund competition and we are now developing the 2025 draft call for proposals for this funding program.

In the 2023 competition, the majority (73 percent or \$285 million) of the CFI investment of \$392 million is associated with projects where the primary field of research is in natural sciences and engineering (NSE). Conversely, only a small fraction of projects relate to social sciences, humanities and arts (SSHA). While the overall success and funding rates are 34% in the 2023 Innovation Fund competition, those of projects in SSHA are considerably lower. It should be noted that the success rates for the latter are much more sensitive as the sample size is small. The SSHA community is important to the CFI, and we are working to better serve their needs in the 2025 Innovation Fund competition.

Out of the 100 funded projects, 51 indicated that some or all of the research infrastructure requested would go in a core facility. The estimated percentage of the total investment going to a core facility varies between four percent and 100 percent (average of 79 percent) per project. This represents an estimated CFI investment of \$167 million in core facilities, which represents approximately 42 percent of the total CFI amount awarded for this competition. Core facilities and scientific platforms are always in need of infrastructure renewal and operations and maintenance funding to refresh their operations. This is another area the 2025 Innovation Fund will endeavour to support.

We are also exploring ways to promote the use of the research infrastructure we fund beyond academia to broaden the impact of those research projects. We will continue to consult with our stakeholder communities and look forward to starting a new cycle of the Innovation Fund with a draft call in spring 2024.

Biosciences Research Infrastructure Fund

The deadline to apply to the Biosciences Research Infrastructure Fund, delivered in partnership with the Tri-agency Institutional Programs Secretariat (TIPS) and its Canada Biomedical Research Fund (together, CBRF – BRIF Stage 2), was September 7, 2023. The purpose of this joint program is to continue growing a strong, competitive biomanufacturing and life sciences sector in Canada, and to ensure Canada is prepared for future pandemics. The funds will support high-risk, applied research, training and talent development partnership projects (through CBRF), as well as the bioscience infrastructure needs of postsecondary institutions and research hospitals (through BRIF).

In total, 103 applications were submitted to the joint competition, with 58 submitted to the BRIF portion with requests for research infrastructure funding. A total of \$660 million in funding was requested from the CFI. Of the BRIF proposals, 52 percent requested \$8 million or more from the CFI.

Applications to CBRF – BRIF Stage 2 came from across Canada, with 32 percent from Western Canada, 47 percent from Ontario, 18 percent from Quebec and three percent from Eastern Canada.

From October 30 to November 29, 2023, 14 Scientific and Technical Review Committees will convene to assess the scientific merits of the applications. Meritorious applications will move on for review by the Strategic Review Committee (SRC), which will meet on February 5 to 7, 2024. The SRC will recommend applications for funding. The CFI Board of Directors will make funding decisions at a special Board meeting on February 29, 2024.

Northern Fund

The Northern Fund draft call for proposals was launched on June 28, 2023. This fund will provide Northern researchers and communities in Canada with access to research equipment for projects that address the priorities of Northern communities. These research projects will be conceived, developed, led and managed by Northern institutions, researchers and communities. We thank the institutions and organizations that provided feedback on the draft call for proposals. Your comments and suggestions will guide us in finalizing the call for proposals and delivering the Northern Fund. We expect to publish the final call for proposals in January 2024.

New opportunity through the College Fund

We are pleased to inform the college community of a new opportunity. In collaboration with the CFI, Mitacs will offer all CFI College Fund recipients a streamlined process to apply to their Accelerate internship. Funded colleges will be able to access this streamlined process for up to four years following notification of a CFI College Fund award. After this period, colleges may still apply to Mitacs through the regular application process. Please contact your local Mitacs advisor for more details.

Annual reporting requirements and institutional payments

We would like to thank institutions for submitting their project progress reports (PPRs) and financial reports, with submission rates of 98.6 percent for PPRs and 80 percent for financial reports.

We rely on the data collected through the PPRs to develop our annual Report on results. Available on the CFI website, this report is one of the key accountability tools we use to demonstrate to our stakeholders the outcomes of CFI research infrastructure funding. PPRs also serve as a source of data to report to Innovation, Science and Economic Development (ISED) on indicators of the CFI performance measurement strategy.

We use the financial report data as a basis for annual financial analyses which informs our risk-based approach for making payments to institutions. We also use the financial reports in the management of projects. We perform follow-up procedures on issues we identify from the reports. Your response to these issues is important and we encourage you to address them as soon as possible.

The submission deadline for interim financial reports and Infrastructure Operating Fund annual reports was June 15. Note that an Infrastructure Operating Fund annual report is due annually on June 15, regardless of whether your institution had any actual or forecasted expenditures to report.

For institutions with PPRs or financial reports still outstanding, please submit these as soon as possible. Please be advised that if these reports were not received by November 15, 2023, future instalments for all CFI-funded projects (including new awards to be finalized, if any) will be held back. Instalments will resume once all overdue reports have been submitted and any other outstanding items have been resolved.

Reminders were sent in October to the CFI account administrator and the CFI liaison advising them of any outstanding reports. You can also consult your institutional overview page in the CFI Awards Management System at any time to view your overdue reports.

Research in energy and high-tech: Driving the new sustainable economy

Join us virtually or in person in Calgary on November 21 for our annual public meeting and discover how research and innovation are transforming energy and high-tech, two drivers of Canada's economy.

Our President and CEO, Roseann O'Reilly Runte, will moderate a discussion with:

- Peter Tertzakian, best-selling author of *A Thousand Barrels a Second* and *The End of Energy Obesity* and Founder of ARC Energy Research Institute; and,
- Mark Blackwell, investing partner at international venture fund, Builders VC, promoter of high-tech start-ups and one of 2022's Top 40 Under 40 as recognized by Calgary's *Avenue* magazine.

The speakers will share their perspectives on the extraordinary changes happening in the energy and high-tech sectors in Canada, and will offer insights on how research and innovation will help in this evolution.

[Learn more and register.](#)

Navigator is celebrating 10 years! Please join us!

Since its launch in 2013, the CFI's [Research Facilities Navigator](#) has helped connect hundreds of innovators with the research expertise, services and state-of-the-art equipment they need to solve their R&D challenges. Now featuring 840+ facilities from 128 postsecondary, non-profit and government institutions, it has grown to become Canada's most comprehensive resource for innovators in all sectors looking for research support to help them innovate and succeed.

To help us mark the occasion, we're asking researchers who are part of the Navigator to create a short "selfie" video that highlights the impact of the Navigator on their work and the value it has to Canada's innovation community. We plan to roll them out over the course of a year beginning at the end of November. Please contact [Danielle Fremes](#), Senior Stakeholder Relations Officer, for information on how to participate or find out more [here](#).

Promoting investments in climate change and environmental sustainability

In September, we launched a new campaign called [Ready for a changing world](#) which highlights the research CFI funding has enabled in the area of climate change and environmental sustainability. We are excited to showcase research infrastructure projects in these fields and the impacts they have had through stories, case studies and podcasts — plus a new webinar series geared toward postsecondary students.

We have been in touch with communicators at your institutions to help support our campaign and have encouraged institutions to help reach your student populations with information about our webinar series, [Future you: How to build your career in environmental sustainability](#).

Each webinar showcases four people who have worked in CFI-funded labs and have gone on to work in a range of environmental jobs. The sessions are intended to inspire students to consider careers in this sector, which is so important to their future. Our next webinar takes place on November 28.

[See details for the next webinar.](#)

Help us promote how you're greening your infrastructure

Next spring, we plan to showcase the innovative ways institutions are greening their CFI-funded research infrastructure. Whether you're using the energy generated by equipment to heat campus buildings, or you've found creative ways to extend the life of your research equipment and facilities or given old research infrastructure a new use at the end of its life — we would love to hear about any innovations you have put into practice to make your labs and equipment a little more environmentally conscious.

Please reach out to Director of Communications, [Elizabeth Shilts](#), with any ideas or questions.

Important upcoming dates

You can always find key dates for all the CFI's funding opportunities on our website. Here are a few important dates coming up:

November 20, 2023	CFI Board of Directors meeting
January 2024	CFI issues the Northern Fund call for proposals
February 15, 2024	Deadline to submit proposals for the John R. Evans Leaders Fund – unaffiliated proposals
February 29, 2024	CFI Board of Directors meeting – special meeting for the Biosciences Research Infrastructure Fund
March 19, 2024	CFI Board of Directors meeting

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