

Canada Foundation for Innovation – Innovation Fund

The competition for the Canada Foundation for Innovation (CFI) Innovation Fund is currently closed and the timeline for applications for the CFI Innovation Fund has not been released. However, the Vice President, Research recognizes that the CFI is likely making decisions regarding upcoming CFI competitions and that many other institutions are in the process of developing proposals in advance of a formal announcement from CFI. The University of Lethbridge will follow the lead of institutions such as [University of Guelph](#) by releasing a call for Letters of Intent (LOIs) for the next CFI Innovation Fund Competition. In the words of one of our colleagues at the CFI, “chance favors a prepared mind”.

Innovation Fund (IF) Program Description

In 2017, the CFI announced the Call for Proposals for the 2017 Innovation Fund (IF), “Striving for Global Leadership and Reaping the Benefits”. In the upcoming competition, the objectives are expected to be similar to those of past programs, including encouraging institutions and researchers to:

- Strive for global leadership by conducting world-class transformative research and technology development in their areas of institutional strategic priority.
- Forge and foster productive, value-added partnerships within and among institutions, sectors and disciplines that will nurture creativity and innovation, resulting in the effective and sustainable use of the research infrastructure and facilities.
- Identify and develop plans and potential pathways to social, health, environmental and economic benefits for Canada, including better training and improved skills for highly qualified personnel.

The CFI also places priority on the following types of projects:

- Transformative infrastructure projects that will underpin cutting-edge research and have a structuring effect on Canada’s research landscape.
- Projects with promising and innovative directions in research or technology development in areas where Canada currently is, or has the potential to be, competitive on the global stage.
- Initiatives that allow institutions and their researchers to build on and enhance an emerging strategic priority area, accelerate current research and technology development work or take established capabilities to a globally competitive level.

Institutions are expected to submit proposals in areas for which they have a proven record of, or a strong potential for, commitment and excellence. The CFI expects that effective collaboration with partners, where appropriate, will strengthen every aspect of a proposal.

Eligible Infrastructure

The CFI funds research infrastructure (ie. research equipment, software subscriptions, installation, etc). An eligible project involves the acquisition or development of research infrastructure to increase research capacity, enabling the pursuit of world-class research. Construction costs to build new space or to renovate existing space which is essential to house and effectively use the infrastructure are eligible. The specific eligibility criteria will be released by CFI in the upcoming CFI IF call for proposals.

Project Costs and University of Lethbridge Allocation

The CFI Innovation Fund is an allocation-based competition whereby each institution has a predetermined maximum amount of funding able to be requested from the CFI across the entire institution. Based on the previous competition, the University of Lethbridge’s allocation is expected to be \$3,500,000. This amount represents the maximum amount provided by CFI to support infrastructure costs (and roughly equates to submitting proposals of **\$8,500,000** in total combined project costs). In 2017, the CFI only considered proposals whose total project costs were greater than **\$750,000**. For the upcoming competition, the University of Lethbridge expects to support between one to three projects, depending upon the size of our allocation and the quality of the projects.

The CFI Innovation Fund is a matching program. Therefore:

- CFI usually provides up to a maximum of 40% of the total eligible costs of the infrastructure project.
- Applicants request up to 40% of the total eligible costs from the Alberta Innovation and Advanced Education Research Capacity Program (see links below).
- The remaining 20% of the project costs require matching funds (cash or in-kind) that can be sourced from vendors (typically in-kind contributions through discounts), start-up funds or other sources (external, industry, private), but not tri-council (NSERC, SSHRC, CIHR) or Canada Research Chair (CRC) grants.

Timeline

November 15, 2018	Letter of Intent Deadline
December 15, 2018	Notice of Decision for LOI
December 2018 – January 2019	Proposal development plan

Application Process

The CFI encourages institutions to use their strategic research plans to establish priorities that build on their distinct advantages. The internal selection process is designed to strategically manage our institutional allocation and increase the likelihood of success of the projects submitted. The selection process will include review and recommendations by the Office of Research & Innovation Services, the President’s Executive, the appropriate Dean(s), and a decision by the Vice-President Research.

The University of Lethbridge will select those projects that will be submitted to CFI in upcoming competition based on the review of the Letters of Intent (LOIs). Only those projects selected by the University will be invited to apply once the CFI IF competition is launched. When the competition has been announced, each Project Leader will need to demonstrate how the project meets the standard of excellence for each competition objective and associated assessment criterion.

Project Leaders will need to submit the Letter of Intent following the guidelines below by November 15, 2018. LOIs can be submitted via email to penny.dagnone@uleth.ca. Project Leaders will be notified of decisions on the projects selected by December 15, 2018. Following the Notice of Decision for the LOIs, the VPR and Office of Research & Innovation Services will meet with the successful Project Leaders to discuss a plan for proposal development.

Expression of Interest

The categories of the LOI are based on the objectives of the 2017 CFI IF competition. Please note that the upcoming call for proposals from CFI may not ultimately reflect the criteria below. Project Leaders must provide a **maximum five-page** description of the proposed project. The use of the LOI Headings provided in the table below is highly recommended. Projects will be evaluated based on their fit with the CFI Criteria outlined under each heading.

LOI Heading	Heading Description	CFI Criteria
1. Research or Technology Development	Describe the proposed project including how the proposed activities are innovative, feasible, have the potential to lead to breakthroughs, and will enhance international competitiveness.	Research or technology development activities are innovative, feasible, have potential to lead to breakthroughs, and will enhance international competitiveness.
2. Infrastructure and Budget	Describe the major pieces of infrastructure requested. Link requested infrastructure research activities. Outline need and timeliness. Include a budget of the total project costs and cost of individual major items.	The infrastructure is necessary and appropriate to conduct the research or technology development activities.
3. Team	Describe expertise and capabilities of team members, collaborations and/or partnerships that will support the proposed research.	Team is composed of established or emerging leaders and has needed expertise and breadth, including relevant collaborations, to conduct the research or technology development activities.
4. Institutional Capacity and Track Record	Describe how the project builds on an existing or emerging area of strength at the UofL. Is the area identified in our Strategic Research Plan? Outline the UofL track-record of investment in this area (ie. previous investments in infrastructure or space, faculty hires, creation of Centres & Institutes) and national or international collaborations.	The proposal builds on existing capacity and track record of key investments in people and infrastructure in the area of institutional strategic priority described in the proposal.
5. Management and Sustainability	Briefly describe the potential users of the infrastructure and anticipated operation and maintenance requirements. Outline sources of support for operation and maintenance costs (e.g. user fees, industry contracts, faculty/departments, or other sources).	The infrastructure is optimally used within and among institutions, sectors and disciplines and is sustainable through tangible and appropriate commitments over its useful life.
6. Benefits to Canada and Alberta	Describe anticipated outcomes and benefits of the research to Canada and Alberta. Identify the partnerships with end users (current or anticipated) that will increase the economic, health, social, and/or environmental impact of the proposed research activities. Include details on the training plan and resulting improved skills for	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 for Canadians.

	highly qualified personnel. Describe how the proposed research will help achieve one or more of the expected outcomes of the Alberta Research and Innovation Framework (ARIF). See pgs 7-9 for Innovation Targets.	
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Helpful Links

- Information on the 2017 CFI Innovation Fund: [CFI Innovation Fund](#).
- Information on the Province of Alberta matching program: [Alberta Innovation and Advanced Education Research Capacity Program](#). This program can provide up to 40% of the total project cost for CFI funded projects.
- [Alberta Research and Innovation Framework \(ARIF\)](#) – this document provides list of shared outcomes and innovation targets for provincially supported research and innovation organizations.

Questions?

- Please contact Penny D’Agnone (penny.dagnone@uleth.ca, 403-382-7198) in the Office of Research and Innovation Services.