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Canada

Strategic Science Fund:

Full application guide

May 4, 2022 Version



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1. General information

This guide provides instructions for the full application process for the Strategic Science Fund (SSF). This phase is open to invited applicants only, based on the results of the Letter of Intent Phase.

The 5-year period of SSF funding for this competition is from April 1, 2024 to March 31, 2029. For more information about expected competition milestones, please refer to the *competition page.*

1.1 Deadline

The deadline for submission of all documents via the SSF Portal is September 20, 2022 (11:59 PM, Pacific Time).

1.2 Review process for the full applications

The review and assessment of full applications includes:

- a technical review, including subject matter experts external to the federal government, will identify strengths and weaknesses of each application. This review will include at least 2 reviewers, with additional reviewers engaged where warranted due to the complexity of the applications.
- a multidisciplinary expert panel, including a broad range of expertise from across the public and private sectors, that will consider technical reviews and provide recommendations on a strategic portfolio of proposals to support. The expert panel will also recommend appropriate thresholds for matching funds, and will identify where an adjustment to the proposed budget may be warranted.

Based on the advice of the expert panel, the SSF Program Management Committee and the SSF Steering Committee will make funding recommendations to the Minister of Innovation, Science and Industry and the Minister of Health. There is no appeal process.

Elements considered within the 6 principles at the full application stage are listed below. Please refer to the assessment matrix for further details on how the review criteria will be considered.

1. Strategic value aligned with core federal responsibilities and priorities – the extent to which:

- Successful execution of the proposed strategic plan would significantly advance federal *responsibilities and/or priorities*
- The proposed objectives are effectively linked to federal priorities and responsibilities

2. Added value to federal science, technology and innovation (ST&I) investment – the extent to which:

- There is a strong value proposition
- Other federally-supported organizations and programs in the ecosystem are effectively leveraged

3. Presence at the national level – the extent to which:

- The organization will have reach across the country (including in both official languages) and will incorporate viewpoints from across Canada into its operations
- The organization has engaged key stakeholders in the setting of objectives and delivery of activities
- The organization has established key national partnerships (e.g., co-funders), including demonstrated engagement with relevant provinces and territories
- Regional diversity in the governance and advisory structures of the organization has been appropriately considered

4. ST&I capacity, sound governance and operational efficiency – the extent to which:

- The proposed activities are likely to achieve the expected outcomes
- The organizations will have the right mix of specialized mechanisms and expertise (e.g., scientific, financial, IP, diversity, interdisciplinarity) to deliver on the proposed activities
- Effective governance is in place (or planned), including the breadth of expertise necessary to effectively oversee the proposed functions
- The right policies, recourse mechanisms, guidelines and training have been identified to ensure the organization meets the highest standards of governance and operations in all areas of activities
- Research security and integrity, cybersecurity and physical security have been adequately considered and addressed, including within the selection of proposed partners
- The plan to protect and manage intellectual property to the greatest benefit to Canada is appropriate
- The operational plan has appropriately integrated Equity, Diversity and Inclusion considerations
- A credible plan is in place for the organizational make-up to reflect Equity, Diversity and Inclusion goals, including gender parity (50% women) and significant representation of other under-represented groups[1] (30%) within the Board and Senior Management

5. Critical role of federal funding – the extent to which:

- The application fully justifies the requested level of funds
- The financial plan is viable, with assumptions and risks adequately explained
- The role and importance of federal funding has been effectively explained
- The role of non-federal funding has been effectively explained and the expected matched funding ratio is adequately justified
- There is a reasonably decreased reliance on federal funds over time (where appropriate)

[1] racialized persons including Black Canadians, persons living with disabilities (including invisible and episodic disabilities), Canadians who identify as LGBTQ2, and First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples as founding peoples of Canada are under-represented in positions of economic influence and leadership.

6. Demonstrable impact – the extent to which:

- The selected objectives and associated performance indicators are realistic and achievable within the timeframe
- The plan for ongoing risk and performance monitoring is appropriate, including specific mechanisms to terminate and re-allocate funding (where appropriate)
- For organizations with a track record of federal funding: The organization has established a track record of significant achievement

1.3 Matched funding expectations

It is expected that matched funding ratios will reach similar levels to previous federal funding, and/or will be appropriate in the context of the activities proposed. Please note the updated definitions on Matched Funds and Leveraged Funds in the SSF *program guide*.

1.4 Use of information

- Information submitted as part of this process will be shared with external experts who participate in the review process. Reviewers are subject to the terms of a Non-Disclosure and Confidentiality Agreement and Conflict of Interest *declaration*. It may also be shared with related federal departments and agencies for additional strategic input in the review process. Further, it may be used by Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada and Health Canada in order to inform future policy considerations. If funded, information related to the application will be made public. Refer to the *program guide* for details.
- The Strategic Science Fund is subject to the Access to the Information Act and the Privacy Act. Applicants must mark any commercially confidential information as such, and may also wish to become familiar with the terms of the *Access to Information Act* and the *Privacy Act*.

2. Guidelines for completing the full application

Section A: Summary information – full application form

To complete a full application, begin by logging into the online *Strategic Science Fund (SSF) portal* for Applicants.

On the main homepage of the SSF portal, there are 3 relevant sections: **My Account, My Contacts** and **Full Application**. Instructions on how to complete each of these sections are provided below. Information requested in each section is mandatory. Applicants must ensure they complete all sections to the fullest extent possible, where applicable.

A. My Account

Review all existing fields and update any information (as necessary) from the time this section was completed in the Letter of Intent.

B. My Contacts

Review all existing contacts that were submitted from the time this section was completed in the Letter of Intent. Important reminders:

- The President or an equivalent level of position (e.g., Executive Director) in your organization must be included on this list and must be selected as the Authorized Signing Authority within the Funding Request. This contact will receive email alerts and is the only role allowed to sign the request using “Docusign” e-signature.
- The Authorized Application Contact must be a person authorized to communicate with SSF program staff on questions regarding the application.

C. My Funding Request

For the full application, you must submit a new funding request. It will be pre-populated with certain fields that were completed in the Letter of Intent; however these fields can be revised and updated as necessary.

Tab 1 - Details

Requirements for this section are unchanged from the Letter of Intent. Please refer to the *LOI guide* for details. Review the existing information and make updates as necessary.

Tab 2 – Expenditure forecasts

Review and revise existing information and make updates as necessary.

Tab 3 – Revenue forecasts

In this section, a detailed breakdown of expected revenue must be provided. For each source of revenue (e.g., Each partner, Other Matching Funds [Commercial Revenue, Fundraising] and anticipated SSF Funding), please enter revenue forecasts and complete the associated fields.

For each partner, ensure that the selected purpose of the funding respects the definitions in the SSF program guide.

As information from this section will be used to calculate the total number of expected partners, include all partners in this section (even if they are not expected to be a source of revenue).

Tab 4 – Summary

This section summarizes the information provided in the previous 2 tabs. Review these summary tables to ensure they are accurate and complete.

Tab 5 – Objectives

Expand upon the objectives previously entered during the Letter of Intent stage by including a yearly breakdown of targets. If not already included, add specific objectives and targets related to:

- The timeline and plans for Senior Management and the Board of Directors plans to reach gender parity (50%) and significant representation of other under-represented groups (30%).

- The integration of Equity, Diversity and Inclusion in the proposed activities (see section B.4 below for additional details).

Additional comments or clarification may also be entered.

Tab 6 – Requested documents

Upload the following documentation in a searchable PDF format. For each type of document, a single combined PDF should be provided, and the file name should begin with the number labels below. An index can be added at the beginning of documents under labels 3 to 6.

Label 1: Proposal document

See Section B below for the appropriate headers and sections to include in this document.

Label 2: One-page visual summary

The one-page overview should include the organization's vision for the SSF award, its anticipated impacts and benefits and overall activities and strategies. Its purpose is to serve as a visual marketing/branding tool that provides a snapshot of the potential value of this funding for Canada. Include visual tools such as graphs, charts and/or tables as appropriate.

Label 3: Letters of support

Provide up to 20 Letters of Support from stakeholders, which should include specific commitments to the extent possible. Letters need to:

- Be representative of the key stakeholders described in the **Presence at the national level** section of the proposal document (see section B.3 below). For letters from expected co-funders, it should be sent by a senior executive with influence over a budget.
- Indicate the anticipated level, duration and nature of support for the Applicant's proposed activities, using quantifiable metrics to the extent possible (e.g., amount of cash and in-kind support, expected time commitment, etc.);
- Describe the potential involvement and added-value of the Applicant's proposed activities to the stakeholder's current and future activities;
- Indicate current and past associations with individuals participating in the Applicant's proposed activities;
- Be written and formatted by stakeholders only (i.e., Not be a template formatted by the Applicant); and
- Be dated and signed no earlier than August 13, 2021 (launch date of competition).

Label 4: Documents in support of the operational plan

Include the following:

- An organizational chart and short biographies of the Board of Directors and Senior Management (note: do not include pictures)
- Audited financial statements for the last two fiscal years (if applicable)

- A logic model outlining the main activities, outputs and intended outcomes for the proposed SSF funding, and the linkages among them.

Label 5: Official feedback

Provide official feedback (e.g., evaluation reports, independent assessments) received from funders or other groups.

Label 6: Corporate documents

Provide a copy of the certificate of incorporation, the corporation's bylaws, and minutes of the Board of Directors from the last 12 months (which will be used in the assessment of Capacity, governance and operational efficiency*).* Redactions to protect personal information are permissible.

Section B: Proposal – free form, 50 pages maximum

General formatting and presentation

Print must be in black ink, of letter quality (minimum standard), with no more than 6 lines per inch. The type size for fonts measured in points (pts) must be no smaller than 12 pts. If measured in characters per inch (cpi), it must be no more than 10 cpi. Condensed type is unacceptable.

Use white pages, 8.5 x 11 inches (21.5 cm x 28 cm), with margins of 0.75 of an inch (1.905 cm) minimum all around. Enter the name of the organization at the top of every page and number the pages consecutively. PDF documents must be searchable.

Tables, graphs and figures may be included within the page limits. Any extra material will be removed.

Instructions

Using the following headers below (i.e. B.1 – B.6), provide details for each section while respecting the maximum page limit as indicated in the General Formatting and Presentation section above (the length of each section is at the applicant's discretion so long as all requirements are addressed and the overall maximum page limit for the proposal is respected).

B.1 – Strategic value

Outline the proposed strategic plan, including how it aligns with the strategic priorities and responsibilities of the federal government, and how the proposed activities will advance them.

B.2 – Added value to existing ST&I investment

Describe the overall value proposition of the proposal, linking it with the proposed objectives. Describe how other organizations and programs across the Science, Technology & Innovation ecosystem (and other relevant organizations in the ecosystem in which the organization operates) will be leveraged to deliver the proposed activities. The value proposition includes a description of the issues the organization intends to address; why and how these problems affect the

organization's target audiences; the planned activities and deliverables and their intended benefits; and how the organization is uniquely poised to deliver these benefits. Discuss any potential perceptions of overlap with other federally-supported organizations or programs in the ecosystem.

B.3 – Presence at the national level

Describe the extent to which the proposed activities, including services and platforms, will be accessible nationally in both English and French, and how viewpoints from across Canada will be incorporated into the planning, design, delivery and monitoring of the proposed activities.

Describe how key stakeholders, including clients/end users and other organizations in the relevant ecosystem, have been or will be meaningfully engaged in setting the proposed objectives and in the delivery of activities. Discuss the regional diversity of the Board of Directors.

Describe the key partnerships that have been established, including steps taken to engage all relevant provinces and territories. If relevant, describe the role and involvement of international stakeholders.

B.4 – Capacity, governance and operational efficiency

Outline the proposed operational plan, and explain:

- The specialized mechanisms that will be used to deliver on activities (e.g., a peer review-based review process) and the presence of expertise in these functions
- The administrative systems and expertise within the organization necessary for managing funds (e.g., financial systems, clear delineation of authorities)
- The protocols, standards, training and monitoring plans to ensure research security and the protection of research results, including physical security and cybersecurity, if applicable
- The presence of (or plans to establish) the policies, training and specific recourse to effectively govern and manage the organization (e.g., Conflict of Interest Management, Sexual and Psychological Harassment Policy, Equity, Diversity and Inclusion, Research Management, Responsible Conduct of Research, Open Access, Data Management, outlined in the *program guide*)
- The approach for managing Intellectual Property for the greatest benefit to Canadians
- The presence of the diverse skillset necessary for governing the organization, and the process for Board of Director renewal (including term limits for the chair and directors [and the extent to which they are enforced], how stakeholder input is taken into account in this process, and how individuals intended to benefit from the proposed activities [e.g., those with lived experience] are represented in the process)
- The specific timeline and plans (e.g., as evidenced within hiring policies, succession plans for senior management, recruitment plans) for the organizational make-up to be reflective of overall Equity, Diversity and Inclusion goals, including how Senior Management and the Board of Directors plan to reach gender parity (50%) and significant representation of other under-represented groups (30%).

Describe how the operational plan has taken into account Equity, Diversity and Inclusion considerations such as:

- Mitigating bias (e.g., in hiring, in conducting planned activities such as peer review, by using mechanisms such as double-blind reviews, bias training, and limiting the sharing of information that can lead to bias)
- Research design (e.g., ensuring representative samples for studies)
- The impact on target communities (e.g., demonstrating ability to conduct outreach to those communities, conducting activities in culturally appropriate ways, addressing and mitigating systemic barriers, and keeping communities meaningfully engaged and apprised of the results of their participation)
- Ensuring the collection of data to better understand how diverse groups experience issues; assessing how well the data correspond to the diversity of the population affected by the issue; critically assessing data for its age, source and whether its methodology includes any outdated stereotypes or assumptions
- Taking steps to examine and understand the underlying assumptions about the activities and whether activities will work for various populations; examining and minimizing power dynamics; communicating progress and results in an accessible way for diverse audiences.

B.5 – Need for federal funds and justification for proposed expenditures

Outline the proposed financial plan. Within it, include and justify:

- Assumptions and risks
- The necessary level of funds from the SSF and the scalability of the funding request. Summarize the impact of a 20% reduction to the proposed funding on overall outputs.
- The expected non-SSF sources of funding (including cash and in-kind). Distinguish matched funds and leveraged funds. Distinguish secured and unsecured commitments. If applicable, where fundraising (e.g., donations) forms a material part of expected matching, outline the fundraising strategy.
- The total expected operational costs, including how much would be paid from SSF Funds compared to other sources of funding, and why the overall ratio of administrative and operational costs is reasonable.
- The planned decreased reliance on federal funds over time for the overall program of work **or** a clear and compelling justification for not planning a decreased reliance on federal funds over time, which includes reference to the impediments to raising sufficient alternative sources of funding solely from other funders or revenue sources (e.g., based on market analysis showing lack of incentives, resources of end-user base, regional considerations).

B.6 – Demonstrable impact

For existing organizations with a record of federal funding:

Outline, with specific examples, the extent to which the organization has made progress towards previous objectives. Link previously-funded objectives to the newly proposed objectives. Discuss how the organization has responded to past feedback received from funders.

For all organizations:

Explain the rationale for selecting the Key Performance Indicators and their respective target numbers in **My Funding Request Step 6. Objectives** and the extent to which they will measure

overall success. Explain the overall performance measurement strategy and how the expected results are achievable within the timeframe.

Discuss how performance and risk monitoring of planned activities will be conducted (including whether it will allow for the termination of projects and re-allocation of funding), making links to the operational plan as appropriate. Explain how feedback from the Letter of Intent stage was integrated within the full application.