



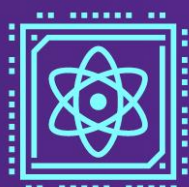
Government  
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Canada

# Strategic Science Fund: **Letter of Intent Guide**

October 29, 2021 Version



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Version date	Summary of updates
August 13, 2021	(First version)
October 29, 2021	Section 1.1 Deadline <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Updated letter of intent deadline</li></ul>
	Section 2.2 A. Core Eligibility <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Clarification of core eligibility requirement at the LOI stage</li></ul>

## 1. GENERAL INFORMATION

This guide provides information and instructions on the Letter of Intent (LOI) process for the Strategic Science Fund (SSF)'s inaugural competition. The five year period of SSF Funding for this competition is April 1, 2024 to March 31, 2029.

### Important Note for applicants with existing Federal Funding arrangements:

Federal Funding arrangements in the context of the SSF generally refer to sunseting grant or contribution agreements for an overarching program of work (e.g.: created through a federal budget, sunseting federal program) that is not renewable as an alternative source of federal funding to the SSF. They do not include small-scale funding (e.g.: in support of small projects with limited scope). If in doubt, contact SSF Staff.

### Applicants with existing Federal Funding arrangements:

- are not expected to request SSF funding for Fiscal Years in which they will already be receiving federal funds.
- must present an application that includes the full five-year period, integrating existing funding into a coherent narrative. Note that existing Federal Funding arrangements will not be jeopardized by this application process.

For more information about expected competition milestones, refer to the Competition Page.

The Letter of Intent is a screening tool to determine which eligible organizations will be invited to submit a Full Application. Applicants must clearly demonstrate how the proposal meets eligibility and merit criteria.

### 1.1. Deadline

The deadline for submitting Funding Requests using the “Complete Draft” function via the SSF portal is January 14, 2022, 11:59 PM (Pacific Standard Time).

### 1.2. Review Process for the Letter of Intent

The Letter of Intent will be assessed in consultation with relevant Federal Departments and Agencies. Please refer to the [LOI Assessment Matrix](#) for further details on the review criteria that will be used during the assessment. Elements under review at the Letter of Intent stage include:

#### *Strategic Value aligned with Core Federal Responsibilities and Priorities – the extent to which:*

- The proposed objectives are clearly linked to federal priorities and responsibilities.
- Key linkages between different priorities have been considered.
- Successful execution would significantly advance priorities.

#### *Added Value to Federal Science, Technology and Innovation (ST&I) Investment – the extent to which:*

- There is clear added value to existing Federal ST&I investments.

- It is clearly outlined why no alternative federal sources of funding can be accessed.
- The organization is better placed to directly deliver the proposed programs or activities rather than a federal department or agency.

*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.
- Key stakeholders are engaged in the setting of objectives and delivery of activities.
- Regional diversity of the Board of Directors has been considered.

*ST&I Capacity, Sound Governance and Operational Efficiency – the extent to which:*

- The organization will have expertise present to deliver on the proposed objectives.
- Appropriate advisory structures, policies, guidelines and training will be integrated (e.g. research ethics, research security, equity diversity and inclusion).
- The organization has made a clear commitment to equity, diversity and inclusion.

*Critical Role of Federal Funding – the extent to which:*

- The application outlines a clear need for federal funding as an anchor to secure financial and in-kind commitments from partners.
- The proposed budget explains high-level assumptions (e.g. level of expected co-funding).

*Demonstrable Impact – the extent to which:*

- There is a convincing rationale for selecting the Key Performance Indicators and related targets.
- *For organizations with a track record of federal funding:* There is an indication of success at reaching past objectives.

The Strategic Science Fund's *Program Management Committee* and *Steering Committee* will make decisions on which proposals to invite to the Full Application stage based on the results of the LOI assessment. These committees are led by officials from Health Canada and Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada.

### 1.3. Co-funding / Matching Funds Expectations

It is expected that co-funding / matching funds will reach (or exceed) levels of matching reached in the context of previous federal funding (if applicable), and / or will be appropriate in the context of the activities proposed. Refer to Program Guide for further details.

While it is not expected that all co-funding commitments will have been secured at the Letter of Intent stage, the high-level assumptions for expected levels of co-funding outlined in the proposal should be reasonable (see section 2.2, *F. Critical Role of Federal Funding and Justification for Proposed Expenditures*).



## 1.4. Use of Information

Information submitted as part of this process may be shared with other federal departments and agencies for the purpose of reviewing the LOI. Should the Applicant advance to the Full Application stage, LOI information will also be shared with external experts who participate in the review process (after signing a Non-Disclosure and Confidentiality Agreement and Conflict of Interest [declaration](#)).

If invited to the Full Application, the name of the organization and their authorized representative will be shared publicly.

## 2. GUIDELINES FOR COMPLETING THE LETTER OF INTENT

### 2.1. Letter of Intent

To complete a Letter of Intent application, begin by logging into the online Strategic Science Fund (SSF) portal for Applicants. Please note that the browser Internet Explorer 11 is not supported by the portal. Details on supported web browsers can be found [here](#). The online application can be saved and returned to later for completion up until the point that it is submitted.

On the main homepage of the SSF portal, there are three sections that must be completed for the Letter of Intent application to be submitted: **My Account**, **My Contacts** and **My Funding Request**. Instructions on how to complete each of these sections are provided below, as well as in the information boxes in the SSF portal. Information asked for in each section is mandatory. Applicants must ensure they complete all sections to the fullest extent possible, where applicable.

Please note that Applicants that are invited to submit a Full Application in the second stage of the process will be allowed to update the information provided for the Letter of Intent during the time of submission of the Full Application. It is understood and expected that anticipated revenues and expenditures may evolve between the Letter of Intent and Full Application.

#### A. My Account

This section requires information on the organization that is applying and submitting a Letter of Intent. Please enter the name and acronym of the organization in both official languages, as it will be used for publication and communication purposes. Additional information that should be entered includes a brief description of the organization, business number (if applicable), address and phone number.

#### B. My Contacts

In this section, please add the primary contact(s) that are authorized to represent the organization for the Letter of Intent application, as well as the Full Application, if your organization is invited to apply. For each contact, provide their first and last name, title, phone number, email and language preference. The President or an equivalent level of position (e.g. Executive Director) in your organization must be included on this list.

Please note that once you move onto the **My Funding Request** section, you will select from this list of contacts a person to be the Authorized Application Contact and the Authorized Signing Authority.

The President or equivalent must be selected as the Authorized Signing Authority. 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 Letter of Intent application, as well as the Full Application, if your organization is invited to apply.

### C. My Funding Request

Follow the steps below to create your funding request. Drafts must be completed by the deadline. When “Complete Draft” is selected, a completeness verification will be undertaken by SSF Secretariat staff, after which a digital signature from the Authorized Signing Authority will be requested using “DocuSign”.

#### Step 1 - Details

For the Letter of Intent, you must submit a new funding request. Once you start a new request, a new web page will open. All sections, with the exception of System Information that will be automatically populated, will need to be completed.

Certain sections have limits to the number of words or characters that are entered. The Summary of Proposal has a maximum of 3500 characters. For Keywords, please list two to ten keywords.

For the Summary of Proposal, please include the objectives of the proposed activities and a summary of the overall approach to achieving these objectives. Highlight the novelty and expected significance of the work, and any other key elements that may have been included in the proposal document (see part 2).

In order to establish a baseline for Recipients’ progress on equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI), the SSF requires EDI data collection for the organization’s board of directors and senior management. Note that information provided within this annex will help measure progress on EDI in the context of future reviews. The applying organization must provide self-disclosure forms that incorporate the categories and sub-categories outlined in the EDI data section to this group for completion. Respondents should be able to answer anonymously. For an example, please see the Government of Canada’s [self-identification form](#) for federal public servants.

While the completion of these forms is voluntary, it should be emphasized that the collection of this information is an essential part of efforts to improve EDI in science and research. For further information, please see the Tri-Agency’s policy on [Self-Identification Data Collection in Support of EDI and Canada’s 50-30 Challenge](#).

Based on these self-disclosure forms, the organization must aggregate and report EDI information in the SSF portal. The total number of board of directors and senior managers should be entered followed by the total number of this group that chose not to complete a self-disclosure form. Of those that completed the self-disclosure form, the total number that identify in each of the designated categories should be entered.

This self-identification information is collected, used, disclosed, retained and disposed of in accordance with the *Privacy Act* and the *Access to Information Act*. The information will be managed in accordance with Treasury Board Secretariat policies, directives and guidelines on information management and protection of personal information, and with the Agency's retention and disposition schedules.

### *Step 2 – Funding Request Roles*

In this section, please add the roles for the Letter of Intent application contacts and suggested expert reviewers. For application contacts, there are three roles you can specify, which are the Application Author, Authorized Application Contact and Authorized Signing Authority. The Authorized Application Contact and Authorized Signing Authority were identified in the **My Contacts** section, but will be repeated in this section. For reviewers, you can suggest experts suitable to become reviewers in the Full Application stage or suggest experts that should not be asked to review proposals at this stage. Suggested reviewers may or may not be used for the Full Application stage of the process.

Please list a minimum of ten reviewers that your organization suggest be contacted to review proposals at the Full Application stage. Applicants are encouraged to suggest a diverse cross-section of potential reviewers with appropriate expertise (e.g. Canadian and international, established and early career, women, gender-fluid, non-binary and Two-Spirit people, LGBTQ2+ individuals, Indigenous Peoples, racialized peoples, people with disabilities, the patient community and/or people with lived experience, academic and non-academic institutions) to review and comment on the proposal. These individuals must not be in a conflict of interest with the organization. Please see the Tri-Agency's [Conflict of Interest and Confidentiality Policy of the Federal Research Funding Organizations](#) for further guidance on this topic.

### *Step 3 – Expenditure Forecasts*

In this section, provide details regarding expenditure forecasts for proposed activities in each year in the five-year period that a successful Applicant would receive funding from the SSF (using the numbers 1 to 5, with Year 1 corresponding to 2024-25). Please describe the expenditure as SSF or non-SSF if the expenditure is incurred using SSF funds or non-SSF funds, respectively. Define the type of expenditure using the drop-down list of categories. Please see the SSF Program Guide for further details on eligible activities and types of eligible costs.

### *Step 4 – Revenue Forecasts*

In this section, please enter revenue forecasts for each year in the five-year period, including SSF funding and non-SSF cash and in-kind contributions. As noted at the beginning of the guide, applicants with existing Federal Funding arrangements are not expected to request SSF funding for Fiscal Years in which they will already be receiving funds. Contributions must be entered for each indicated sector, including the private sector, academia, federal government, provincial or territorial government, hospitals and research institutes, and other (includes contributions from all other sectors that are not listed).

### Step 5 – Summary

This section summarizes the information you provided in Steps 3 and 4. Please review these summary tables to ensure they are accurate and complete.

### Step 6 – Objectives

Please provide past performance objectives and SSF funding objectives in this section. All Applicants must list the objectives that they want to achieve by using the requested funds from the SSF. For each objective, list the potential targets that would be linked with the objective, subject to further refinements of the approach leading to the Full Application. Additional comments for clarification may also be entered.

Past performance objectives must be completed by organizations that have previously been recipients of federal funding. If your organization has received federal funding in the past, please list the associated objectives that this funding was provided to achieve.

For each past performance objective, you must list the associated planned targets for the objective, the actual targets that were met for the objective and an explanation for any discrepancy between planned and actual targets.

### Step 7 – Requested Documents

Upload the following documentation, which must be in a searchable PDF format:

- **Official Feedback:** Provide official feedback (e.g. evaluation reports, independent assessments) received from funders or other groups
- **Proposal Document:** Please see part 2.2 below for the appropriate headers and sections to include in this document
- **Letters of Support:** Provide up to five Letters of Support from primary stakeholders, which should include specific commitments of cash and in-kind contributions. Please note that it is not expected that the entire amount of proposed matched funding/co-funding will be accounted for through Letters of Support. Letters need to:
  - Be sent by a senior executive with influence over a budget;
  - Indicate the anticipated level, duration and nature (cash and/or in-kind) of support for the Applicant's proposed activities;
  - Describe the potential involvement and added-value of the Applicant's proposed activities to the stakeholder's current and future activities;
  - Describe the anticipated involvement of the stakeholder in the Applicant's proposed activities and the stakeholder's expected contribution to achieving the Applicant's objectives;
  - Indicate current and past associations with individuals participating in the Applicant's proposed activities;
  - Be written and formatted by the primary stakeholders; and
  - Be dated and signed no earlier than August 13, 2021 (launch date of competition).



## 2.2. Proposal Document – Free Form, 20 Pages Maximum

Using the following headers, please provide details for each section while respecting the maximum page limit (Applicants are responsible for including the appropriate number of pages in each section in order to ensure all criteria are addressed). Tables, graphs and figures may be included within the page limits. Any extra material will be removed.

The document must be in a searchable PDF format. 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 margins of  $\frac{3}{4}$  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.

### A. Core Eligibility

Confirm that the organization is incorporated or in the process of incorporating as a not-for-profit corporation, incorporated in Canada.

### B. Strategic Value

Outline the proposed objectives for this funding. Link these objectives to specific [federal government priorities](#) (e.g. from the Speech from the Throne, Departmental Plans, mandate letters), engagements and agreements (e.g.: Paris Agreement, UN Sustainable Development Goals, UN Declaration for the Rights of Indigenous Peoples). Discuss the extent to which the SSF-funded activities will advance priorities, including the organization's role in advancing cross-cutting priorities.

### C. Added Value to existing ST&I Investment

Describe the overall value proposition of the proposal and its link with the proposed objectives, as well as how other organizations and programs 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. Note any potential perception of overlap with other currently or previously funded organizations. Explain why government cannot or could not deliver this type of activity within existing or new programs.

### D. Presence at the National Level

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

Confirm how key stakeholders (including clients/end users) 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.

## E. Capacity, Governance and Operational Efficiency

Describe the specialized interdisciplinary expertise at the scientific and managerial [Finance, IP, diversity] levels of the organization and how this expertise will be sufficient to deliver on the proposed objectives. Describe how the organization has established structures, policies, guidelines and training (e.g. advisory committees to the board; organizational policies and training on research ethics, research security and integrity, and EDI) to ensure it meets the highest standards of governance and operations. Examples for EDI include recourse mechanisms for cases of discrimination and harassment, unconscious bias training for staff and funded researchers, and review and hiring processes that are designed to prioritize and mitigate biases against members of systemically marginalized communities.

Include short biographies of senior management. Do not include pictures.

Describe the organization's commitment to principles of EDI and explain how it is applied in practice across areas of activities. Examples of an organization's commitment to principles of EDI include how EDI is considered in setting research priorities; in research selection processes; and by funded researchers in undertaking their work. Confirm to what extent its board and senior management currently align with the goals of gender parity (50%) and significant representation (30%) of other under-represented groups, and outline planned actions and an expected timeline for reaching these goals.

## F. Critical Role of Federal Funding and Justification for Proposed Expenditures

Articulate the need for federal funding in relation to the funding from other partners. Indicate if secured partner funds are contingent upon receiving funding from the SSF.

Outline alternative federal sources of funds considered for the proposed objectives and provide a rationale for accessing the SSF for funding the proposed objectives. If applicable, summarize past sources of federal funds and the level of associated co-funding / matching reached. If applicable, indicate why the presence of federal support in the application cannot be considered alternative sources of funding to the SSF (e.g. due to being small-scale funding in support of small projects with limited scope, or due to representing the participation of federal researchers).

Briefly justify the proposed budget (including assumptions relating to expected partner contributions and the expected level of co-funding) that was outlined in [My Funding Request Step 3. Expenditure Forecasts](#) and [Step 4. Revenue Forecasts](#). Justify the use of planned expenditures under the category 'Other'.

## G. Demonstrable Impact

Explain the rationale for selecting the Key Performance Indicators and their respective target number in [My Funding Request Step 6. Objectives](#). Describe the link between the Key Performance Indicators and the extent to which they will measure overall success.