Networks of Centres of Excellence

NCE Network Competition

Letter of Intent Guide

The Networks of Centres of Excellence (NCE) Program is a federal initiative administered jointly by the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council (NSERC), the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) in partnership with Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada (ISED) and Health Canada.

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Networks of Centres of Excellence Program

NCE Network Competition

The NCE Secretariat invites potential applicants to submit a Letter of Intent (LOI) for the Networks of Centres of Excellence competition.

Guidelines for Completing a Letter of Intent

This guide is to be used in conjunction with the NCE Competition Guide.

The LOI provides an overview of the goals and objectives of the proposed network. All LOIs will be evaluated according to the five NCE Program Criteria, as well as the competition framework (outlined in the Competition Guide), to determine which applicants will be invited to submit Full Applications.

The LOI should be submitted on behalf of the proposed network by an eligible academic researcher (i.e., “the applicant”, who is normally a proposed Scientific Director) and by the Host Institution. The applicant and Host Institution must be eligible to receive funding from one of the three federal granting agencies. (Further details regarding applicant and host eligibility can be found in the Competition Guide.)

The LOI must clearly define the challenge(s) the proposed network aims to address. It must be co-developed with relevant partners and stakeholders from the private, public and/or not-for-profit sectors. The extent of partner- and stakeholder-integration will be assessed; partners must be aware that their level of involvement, in addition to their cash and/or in-kind commitments, is critical to the success of the network.

Deadline

The deadline for the electronic submission of the LOI for the NCE Network Competition is November 15, 2017. LOIs must be received by the NCE Secretariat by 4:30 p.m. the applicant’s local time.

Applications must be submitted to the NCE on-line electronic application system at https://excellence.nce-rce.gc.ca.

General Formatting and Presentation

Print must be in black ink on a white background, of letter quality (minimum standard), with no more than six 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.

Page size is 8½ x 11 inches (21.5 cm x 28 cm), with margins of 3/4 of an inch (1.905 cm) (minimum) all around. Enter the title of the network at the top of every page and number the pages consecutively.

Graphs and illustrations may be included, but will count as part of the page limits set out below. Either single or double column presentation of text, graphs or illustrations is acceptable. Any extra material will be removed.
What to Include in the LOI

1. **NCE LOI Application Form** (*Fillable PDF Form)*:

The LOI Application Form is available on the NCE web site.

**Section A: Summary Information**

Complete and sign Section A of the LOI Application Form for the NCE Network Competition. (Refer to Appendix A for the meaning of signatures.) The following information must be provided:

- **Applicant**: name, personal identification number (PIN) of one of the three federal granting agencies (if available), the preferred language of correspondence
- **Scientific Director**: name, personal identification number (PIN) of one of the three federal granting agencies (if available), the preferred language of correspondence and the percentage of the total salaried time committed to the network
- **Co-Scientific Director(s) (if applicable)**: name, personal identification number (PIN) of one of the three federal granting agencies (if available), the preferred language of correspondence and the percentage of the total salaried time committed to the network
- **Network title**: name and acronym of the proposed network (in both official languages) as it will be used for publication and communication purposes
- **Keywords**: up to ten keywords related to the proposed network

**Anticipated number of**

- **Participating institutions**: Canadian universities, research centres and post-secondary institutions which have a research mandate and which are eligible to receive funding from one of the three federal granting agencies
- **Participating researchers**: academic researchers from participating institutions involved in network activities, whose research would be funded by the proposed network (excluding graduate students, postdoctoral fellows and research associates)
- **Private sector partners**: companies, industries and private institutions collaborating with the network through signed agreements
- **Public and not-for-profit sector partners**: hospitals, not-for-profit associations, provincial, federal or municipal government institutions collaborating with the network through signed agreements

**Names of Institutions and Representatives for**

- **Five primary partners and/or stakeholders**: provide the names of up to five key non-academic partners/stakeholders (the signatories of the letters of support). Indicate their committed cash and/or in-kind support to the proposed network, if applicable.

**Signatures for**:

- the applicant, the (co-)Scientific Director(s), and President or CEO (or delegate) of the proposed Host Institution. Also indicate the affiliation of the applicant and proposed co-Scientific Director and include the complete mailing address, telephone number, and e-mail address for both.
2. **Description of Proposed Network** *(Free Form):*

*Using the following headers, please provide details for each section while respecting the maximum page limit (Maximum 12 pages).*

**A. Network Vision (Maximum 1 page)**

Describe the proposed network’s vision, including: the challenge(s) the proposed network will address; the network’s strategy to achieve its specific goals and objectives through multifaceted solutions; and the anticipated outcomes, impacts and benefits for Canada and Canadians within a five-to-ten-year timeframe.

Highlight the diversity (sectoral, disciplinary, geographical, cultural, etc.) of leadership and perspectives involved in the co-creation of the network’s strategy and activities and how these will continue to be integrated in the network.

**B. Management of the Network**

Describe the proposed management and governance structures for the network, including a 1-page organizational chart. Provide information about the nature and level of involvement of partners and stakeholders in the management and governance of the network, in particular with regards to strategic planning and the design and execution of network activities.

Briefly outline the administrative and operational structures of the proposed network, with regards to co-ordination of activities, setting schedules, monitoring the network’s progress towards its strategic goals, and allocation of resources.

If the network Host is to be an industry-led incorporated not-for-profit consortium, provide evidence that the organization has in place the required financial controls, policies, procedures and a history of funding academic research.

**C. Excellence of the Research Program**

Network research programs must be challenge-focused, multidisciplinary, and be developed in collaboration with relevant partners from the private, public and not-for-profit sectors. Networks are expected to move beyond traditional discipline-specific approaches, by involving the significant and meaningful participation of researchers and partners from all relevant disciplines, sectors, geographies and cultural perspectives, as required for high value innovation to fully address the multi-faceted challenge(s). Industry, partner, academic and government priorities should be integrated in the conception and design of network research activities, to ensure the uptake and/or effective application of research.

Applicants must be able to demonstrate that the proposed network possesses **world-class capacity** to address the challenge(s) described in the network’s vision.

Give an overview of the network’s proposed research program, including:

- a brief review of the current state of knowledge in the field;
• an explanation of how the proposed research program aligns with the network’s scope, focus and general objectives;
• the integration of research projects and themes into a coherent research program, the outcomes of which will be implemented to produce social and economic benefits for Canadians;
• a description of the role of partners and the broader research community in designing and executing the research program;
• the relationship between the research program and similar work conducted elsewhere in Canada and abroad, as well as an explanation of how existing research collaborations will contribute to and be enhanced through the proposed research program;
• the extent to which the program will contribute to Canada’s reputation for international leadership in the area(s) being addressed by the network; and
• the anticipated incremental value of the network relative to other efforts in the area (e.g., provincial Centres of Excellence, federally funded programs such as CAIP and CFREF, and other research consortia or initiatives).

D. Networking and Partnerships

Networking is critical to promote effective interactions and collaborations between all stakeholders for the goal of the beneficial application of knowledge (e.g. changes in policy, commercialization, improved service delivery, etc.). Networking and partnership activities should be designed to generate solutions to the challenge(s) the proposed network will address.

• Identify the key proposed partners and explain the role each partner will play in the network’s realization of its knowledge mobilization, technology exchange and knowledge exploitation goals.
• Summarize the history of partnerships with complementary organizations. Detail how the proposed network will build on these partnerships and how it will accelerate the development of the proposed network.
• Discuss existing linkages and the network’s proposed strategy to build new linkages among academics, private, public and not-for-profit partners across Canada and abroad.
• Indicate the anticipated level of support from sources other than NCE funding and describe the network’s strategy for achieving the projected levels of contributions.

E. Development of Highly Qualified Personnel

Outline the strategy to capitalize on the network’s structure to develop highly qualified personnel (HQP). Describe the network’s strategy to expose HQP to the full range of economic, social and ethical implications of the network’s activities by involving them in all facets from the initial research discovery to its practical application. Explain the added value of the proposed HQP training activities. Discuss how the network will enhance HQP capacity and career opportunities in relation to the needs of partners and stakeholders and the current knowledge/experience gaps that exist.

F. Knowledge and Technology Exchange and Exploitation (KTEE)

NCE networks are expected to create social and economic benefits through the application of evidence-based knowledge generated from research. This includes the range of activities from those encompassed in knowledge mobilization (activities and tools designed to put knowledge into active
service, often through the establishment of new or modification of existing policies, processes and standards) to those encompassed in commercialization (transformation of knowledge or technology into marketable goods, processes or services). It is not necessary for NCE networks to cover this entire range of activities. To be effective, these activities require the involvement of partners and stakeholders. Applicants are expected to demonstrate that the appropriate activities will be undertaken and the appropriate resources allocated to maximize benefits to Canadians.

- Discuss the new knowledge, products, processes, or services to be developed; the partners and/or stakeholders who will be involved in their development and their application; and the expected social, economic, environmental, cultural and/or wellness-related impacts.
- Discuss how the network will create an environment that encourages collaboration amongst partners.

3. **Explanation of Overlap (Free form)**

   *(Maximum 1 page, if applicable for New Networks; Maximum 2 pages, if applicable for Established Networks)*

   For both new and established networks:

   Where there is a potential for perceived overlap with currently or previously funded initiatives, describe the differences therein. Explain how the network will complement or build on the activities and achievements of the other initiatives, and highlight the network’s added value.

   In addition, for established networks:

   Describe the network’s progress to date and clearly explain the relationship between prior activities and accomplishments, and the proposed objectives, activities and deliverables. Illustrate how the network will build on the successes of earlier cycles to ensure the application of knowledge to deliver measurable impacts to Canadians.

4. **Support Letters**

   **A. Host Institution Letter (maximum 2 pages)**

   A letter, signed by the President or CEO (or delegate) of the institution that proposes to host the network administrative centre (i.e., the Host Institution), must be included. This letter should outline the anticipated support from the proposed Host Institution. Host Institutions play an important role in networks through both direct support of the administrative centre and, normally, participation in network governance through voting membership on the Board of Directors.

   The signature on the letter should match the signature in Section A of the Application Form.

   **B. Letters of Support from Primary Partners and/or Stakeholders (Up to 5 letters, 2 pages maximum per letter)**

   Up to five Letters of Support from the primary non-academic stakeholders listed in Section A of the LOI Application Form may be included (if applicable).
Letters should:

- come from a senior executive with influence over a budget;
- indicate the anticipated level, duration, and nature (cash and/or in-kind) of support for the proposed network;
- describe potential involvement and added-value of the proposed network to the stakeholder’s current and future activities;
- indicate current and past associations with individuals participating in the proposed network’s activities;
- not be template formatted by the applicant; and
- be dated and signed no earlier than May 2017.

5. Financial Overview (Excel Tables and Free Form) (Maximum 4 pages)

Table 1: Anticipated Expenditures (Excel table, maximum 1 page)

Use Table 1 to indicate the anticipated expenditures of both NCE and non-NCE sources of funds (if applicable) for the proposed network (years one to five). Round all values to the nearest $0.1M.

Please note: eligible expenses are the direct costs of research and facility access, stipends for research trainees, the direct costs of research dissemination and science promotion, and other specific expenses associated with the management of an NCE network (see the NCE Program Guide for more information on eligible expenses).

In general, the regulations of the granting agency into whose domain the majority of the network’s research/thematic area falls will apply to that network. In addition, networks must adhere to the regulations and administrative policies found in the Tri-agency Use of Grant Funds document and the NCE Program Guide.

Table 2: Anticipated Funding (Excel table, maximum 2 pages)

Use Table 2 to indicate the cash and in-kind funding available from the non-NCE stakeholders listed in Section A, if applicable (years one to five).

Note: at the LOI stage of the competition, it is not expected that applicants be able to list all anticipated sources of funding.

Explanation of Expenditures and/or Funding (Free-form, 1 page maximum)

Use a maximum of one page to briefly describe the anticipated expenses and/or funding.
Information Webinar

The NCE Secretariat will host webinars in late August and mid-September following the launch of the competition. In order to participate in the webinar(s), all potential applicants must indicate their intention to submit an LOI by August 23, 2017 (by email to info@nce-rce.gc.ca). Please include the following information:

- The name, affiliation and email address of the Scientific Director, and co-Scientific Director if applicable;
- The name of the proposed host institution;
- The working title of the network;
- The challenges the proposed network will address and its anticipated impacts (250 words or less); and
- The subject line of the email should be: NCE LOI

The NCE Secretariat will use this information to invite potential applicants to attend the webinars. The webinar(s) will include models that exemplify the goals of the program, common issues that arise and an opportunity for applicants to ask program- and competition-related questions. More details about the webinar(s) will be included in the invitation to attend. It is expected by the NCE that all potential applicants will attend the webinar(s).

Reminders and Contact Information

In order to participate in the webinar(s), all potential applicants must indicate their intention to submit an LOI by August 23, 2017 (by email to info@nce-rce.gc.ca).

The deadline for the electronic submission of the LOI for the NCE Network Competition is November 15, 2017. LOIs must be received by the NCE Secretariat by 4:30 p.m. the applicant’s local time.

Applications must be submitted to the NCE on-line electronic application system as a single, searchable PDF file at https://excellence.nce-rce.gc.ca. Instructions for merging PDF documents can be found in Appendix B.

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

All relevant documents can be obtained on the Networks of Centres of Excellence program competition page.

For more information, please contact the NCE Program at:

Tia Moffat, Senior Program Manager
Telephone: (613) 996-9251
Fax: (613) 992-7356
E-mail: tia.moffat@nce-rce.gc.ca
Checklist

Each LOI must not exceed 31 pages (32 pages for established networks) and must be submitted in the following order.

☐ NCE LOI Application Form (Fillable PDF Form) (2 pages)
☐ Description of Proposed Network (Free Form) (12 pages maximum)
  ☐ Network Vision (1 page maximum)
  ☐ Management of the Network (including 1 page organizational chart)
  ☐ Excellence of the Research Program
  ☐ Networking and Partnerships
  ☐ Development of Highly Qualified Personnel
  ☐ Knowledge and Technology Exchange and Exploitation
☐ Explanation of Overlap (Free Form) (1 page maximum for new networks, if applicable and 2 pages maximum for established networks)
☐ Support Letters
  ☐ Host Institution Letter (2 pages)
  ☐ Letters of Support (2 pages per letter, max of 5 letters)
☐ Financial Overview (Excel Tables and Free Form) (4 pages maximum)
  ☐ Table 1: Anticipated Expenditures (Excel Table) (1 page)
  ☐ Table 2: Anticipated Funding (Excel Table) (2 pages)
  ☐ Explanation of Expenditures and/or Funding (Free Form) (1 page)
Appendix A: ELECTRONIC SIGNATURES

What do the electronic or original signatures on the application mean?

For the Lead applicant

By signing and submitting my application, I (the Lead applicant):

- certify that the information provided in my funding applications and related documents is true, complete and accurate and that I have represented myself, my research and my accomplishments in a manner consistent with the norms of the relevant field;
- consent to the sharing between the NCE Secretariat and any academic institution to which I am, or may become, affiliated of any and all information, including personal information, in any way related to the application and to the grant/award;
- understand the Access to Information Act and the Privacy Act (including the Use and Disclosure of Personal Information Provided to the NCE Secretariat) as they pertain to grant application information;
- attest that participants listed on the application have agreed to be included;
- certify that I am not currently ineligible to apply for and/or hold funds from Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council (NSERC), the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC), Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) or any other research funding organization world-wide for reasons of breach of responsible conduct of research policies such as ethics, integrity or financial management policies;
- certify that I respect and comply with the Values and Ethics Code for the Public Service, as required only if I am, or was in the last 12 months, a public servant in the federal government;
- accept the terms and conditions set out in NCE Program Guide and the Agreement on the Administration of Agency Grants and Awards by Research Institutions between the federal granting agencies and Canadian institutions;
- will inform the NCE Secretariat and institutional officials of changes in eligibility status;
- agree to comply with the policies and guidelines described in the Requirements for Certain Types of Research, including:
  - research involving humans;
  - research requiring human pluripotent stem cells;
  - research requiring the use of animals;
  - research involving controlled information;
  - research involving biohazards;
  - research involving radioactive materials;
  - research activities having potential effects on the environment; and
  - other related policies;
- will inform the NCE Secretariat and institutional officials of any changes in the nature of the research that may have an impact on certification or approvals on the same policies as in the previous bullet; and
- understand that maintaining public trust in the integrity of researchers is fundamental to building a knowledge-based society. By submitting this application or by accepting funding from CIHR, NSERC and/or SSHRC, I affirm that I have read and I agree to respect all the policies of these agencies that are relevant to my research, including the Tri-Agency Framework: Responsible Conduct of Research. In cases of a serious breach of agency policy, the agency may publicly disclose my name, the nature of the breach, the institution where I was employed at the time of the breach and the institution where I am currently employed.
accept this as a condition of applying for, or receiving, agency funding and I consent to such disclosure.

**For academic participants:**
By accepting to participate in the Network, I (the academic participant) also agree to the above.

**The signatures of the institutional authorities certify that:**
- the institution will abide by the roles and responsibilities as set out in the Agreement on the Administration of Agency Grants and Awards by Research Institutions with the three federal granting agencies;
- the applicant has met, or will meet, the eligibility requirements;
- the institution obtained written approval from other institutions involved in the application process prior to submission; and
- the institution agrees to comply with NSERC's, CHIR's or SSHRC's data protection requirements and has adequate safeguards in place to protect sensitive information entrusted to it by the NCE Secretariat for the purpose of administering applications and awards.

**The signatures of authorized officers of other supporting organizations certify that the organization:**
- agrees with the content of the application and will provide the committed resources; and
- agrees to the release of the public summary of the award and to the publication of the organization's name as a supporter of the initiative.

For further information, see the Questions and Answers on the Consent to Disclosure of Personal Information at address [http://www.nserc-crsng.gc.ca](http://www.nserc-crsng.gc.ca).
Appendix B: Guidelines for Merging PDF Documents

Adobe Pro is required in order to merge PDF documents, which is available for download online on Adobe’s website. Once Adobe Pro has been downloaded, various PDF documents can be merged into a single document.

The Application Form is a protected document, so you will need to follow the steps below in order to merge various PDF documents into one cohesive, searchable document.

1) Preferred method:
   a. Open the completed LOI Form
   b. Select “file” then “print”
   c. When the print options opens select “adobe PDF” as your printer then click on “print”
   d. This will not print the document. It will let you save it as another version
   e. Once you have saved it, you will be able to merge the LOI Form with the other files
   f. In order to merge various files, go to the last page of your newly formatted Form, and click the “Add Page from Another Document” icon in the toolbar; browse to the next PDF document that you want to add, double-click it and choose ‘after’ – the document will automatically be added.
   g. Repeat step F with your subsequent PDF documents until you have one final merged document.

If you do not have the option to merge (which can happen depending on the software you are using, although it is fairly rare), you will have to complete the above steps then use one of the PDF merging websites below:

http://www.primopdf.com/ (recommended – free and easy to use)
http://foxyutils.com/mergepdf/
http://www.pdfmerge.com/

2) Alternate method:
   From the LOI Form
   a. Click File
   b. Click Create
   c. Click ‘Combine files into a Single PDF’
   d. Click ‘PDF portfolio’ in the upper right
   e. Use the ‘Add Files’ button to select all PDFs that you want to merge together (including selecting the document you are currently using as the first one you select)