

Business-led Networks of Centres of Excellence (BL-NCE)

Goal: The BL-NCE program will establish up to five (5) new large scale collaborative networks in priority strategic research areas holding out long-term competitive advantage to consortia of Canadian firms, supported by networks of academic and government researchers. The BL-NCEs will differ from existing NCEs in that they will be for a shorter term, business-led and focused on identified business research needs.

Day-to-day administration of the BL-NCE Program is provided by the NCE Secretariat.

Priority Areas: There is no restriction on the Canadian industrial sector that can apply for a Network. However, as established in the S&T Strategy and the Budget 2007, the research undertaken by the proposed Networks must be in one or more of the five (5) priority research areas, namely:

- Environmental science and technologies;
- Natural resources and energy;
- Health and related life sciences and technologies;
- Information and communications technologies; and
- Management, business or finance.

Eligible to apply: Not-for-profit consortia, that represent the interests of private sector enterprises with substantial R&D operations in Canada or potential to benefit from R&D (ideally comprising a mix of sizes of enterprises, research-providers and research-users). Must be incorporated at the time of funding.

Budget: The 2009 Competition Budget is \$46M over a four (4) year period ((\$11M 2008-09, \$11M 2009-10, \$12M 2010-11, \$12M 2011-12) and is expected to fund up to five (5) BL-NCE networks over this period at an approximate level of \$2M per year.

Eligible costs: Up to 75% of eligible networking, administration and outreach costs in support of the operation of the Network and up to 50% of eligible direct costs of research and commercialization activity.

Cost-sharing: The balance of the funding is expected to be contributed by the private sector either as cash contributions or cash-equivalent in-kind contributions.

Timeline:

Competition Launched	November 6, 2007
LOI Deadline	January 30, 2008
PSAB/Steering Committee Review	March 2008
Invitation to Stage 2	April 2008
Full Proposal Deadline	July 31, 2008
Expert Panel Site Visits	September 2008
PSAB Recommendation/Steering Decision	November 2008
Funding Released & New BL-NCEs Launched	early 2009

Application process:

Stage 1 - Letter of Intent (LOI)

Applicants who have submitted high quality LOIs, as judged against the criteria, will be invited to submit a full proposal.

Stage 2 – Full proposal

Those invited to the full proposal stage will have 4 months to prepare the submission.

Review process:

A Private Sector Advisory Board (PSAB) has been formed to review the LOIs and make recommendations to the NCE Steering Committee¹. who will make the decision on those to invite. Full proposals will undergo a rigorous review including a full Expert panel review and consultation process, as well as being reviewed by the PSAB. The NCE Steering Committee will make the final funding decision.

¹ Networks of Centres of Excellence (NCE) Steering Committee, is made up of the Deputy Minister of Industry Canada, the presidents of the three granting agencies—the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council (NSERC), the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR), and the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC)—and the President of the Canada Foundation for Innovation (CFI) (as an observer).