

# Frequently Asked Questions

## 2009 Competition for New NCE Networks

### Scope

#### **1. Why did the NCE Secretariat introduce changes to the 2009 Competition?**

Every five years, the Networks of Centres of Excellence (NCE) Program undergoes an evaluation to ensure that it is meeting its mandate and continues to provide value to the Canadian taxpayer. The program underwent two separate reviews in 2007: first a formal program evaluation as per the terms and conditions of the Program and as required by the Treasury Board, and an independent International Advisory Committee (IAC) review mandated by the NCE Steering Committee. Both exercises produced recommendations to update the Program and better align it with the Government's Science and Technology (S&T) Strategy. The criteria for the new NCEs that will be created through this competition are in line with those recommendations. The criteria are designed to increase accountability and place greater emphasis on finding concrete, multifaceted solutions to (a) complex Canadian problem(s), challenge(s) or opportunity(ies).

#### **2. The 2009 Competition places a greater emphasis on developing solutions. What is meant by this?**

Networks funded under this program will focus on generating solutions for broader Canadian issues, rather than be discipline-driven. It is expected that networks will address complex issues with multi-faceted approaches, be solution-driven and involve the receptor community in addressing the problem(s), challenge(s), or opportunity(ies) and in implementing the solutions.

#### **3. Did the NCE Secretariat consult with the research community or the private sector before going ahead with this competition?**

Extensive stakeholder consultations took place as part of the program evaluation and the IAC review, which produced the recommended revisions.

### Target Areas

#### **1. What research areas are being targeted for the 2009 Competition?**

Four priority areas were established in May 2007 by the S&T Strategy, *Mobilizing Science and Technology to Canada's Advantage*. In 2008, a report by the Science, Technology and Innovation Council (STIC) established by Industry

Canada recommended 13 further research sub-priority areas, which were accepted by the Government of Canada. The NCE Steering Committee has determined that these 13 sub-priorities will be targeted for the 2009 NCE Competition.

## **2. What are the S&T Strategy priority areas?**

- Environmental science and technologies
- Natural resources and energy
- Health and related life sciences and technologies
- Information and communication technologies

## **3. What are the STIC sub-priority areas?**

Within the S&T priority areas, the sub-priorities are:

### *Environmental science and technologies:*

- water (health, energy, security)
- cleaner methods of extracting, processing and using hydrocarbon fuels, including reduced consumption of these fuels

### *Natural resources and energy:*

- energy production in the oil sands
- Arctic (resource production, climate change adaptation, monitoring)
- biofuels, fuel cells and nuclear energy

### *Health and related life sciences and technologies:*

- regenerative medicine
- neuroscience
- health in an aging population
- biomedical engineering and medical technologies

### *Information and communication technologies:*

- new media, animation and games
- wireless networks and services
- broadband networks
- telecom equipment

## **4. How should these target areas be addressed in the LOI?**

Proposed networks must address (a) key problem(s), challenge(s) or opportunity(ies) in one or more of the STIC sub-priority areas.

## **Budget**

### **1. What is the budget for the 2009 Competition?**

The target budget for the 2009 Competition is \$75 million over 5 years.

## **2. How many new networks will be funded under the 2009 Competition?**

It is anticipated that three to four networks may be funded and begin operations in 2009. The 2009 NCE Competition is looking for a balanced portfolio of networks, and is therefore expecting to support a maximum of one new network in a given S&T priority area.

## **3. Are networks renewable for a further mandate?**

New networks are funded for a five-year term. Upon successful completion of that term, networks are eligible to apply for a second five-year term.

For networks funded for two consecutive five-year terms, a third (and final) term could be available where the Network has developed and built on its partnerships to progressively transformed itself into a partner-driven network. In a partner-driven network, the partners become the lead applicants. The partners define the business plan and the research agenda. The proposed business plan will be assessed on its viability and whether it has the potential to successfully translate the Network's knowledge and technologies to the user community.

## **4. Will funds be available for applicants with successful LOIs to assist them in preparing their Full Applications?**

Applicants whose LOIs pass the initial screening process may request NCE funds to assist them in preparing a Full Application. Full Application Preparation (FAP) funding of up to \$25,000 is tenable for four months and can be used for application-related expenses such as travel, communications and workshops, as well as for secretarial, clerical and co-ordination services.

To request FAP funding, applicants invited to submit a Full Application will be asked to submit a one-page letter outlining their required budget including a brief rationale of proposed expenses.

## **Eligibility**

### **1. Who can apply to the 2009 Competition?**

LOIs should be submitted on behalf of the proposed Network by an academic researcher (i.e., "the applicant", who is also the proposed Scientific Director for the Network) who is eligible to receive funding from one of the three federal granting agencies, and by the proposed host institution.

### **2. Who is eligible to receive funding?**

Organizations eligible to receive NCE funding are: Canadian universities and post-secondary institutions with a mandate for research and their affiliated

institutions (including hospitals, research institutes and other not-for-profit organizations); a private-sector consortium that hosts a network and its associated researchers, or; a not-for-profit corporation incorporated under Part II of the *Canada Corporations Act*, and their Network members and associated researchers. As a condition of eligibility, networks funded through the NCE Program shall incorporate as a not-for-profit organization.

### **3. Must the network be incorporated at the time of application?**

Proposed networks do not need to be incorporated at the time of application. At the LOI stage, the NCE Secretariat will accept applications from organizations on behalf of the Network to be incorporated. The application needs to clearly describe the proposed governance structure of the proposed Network, and how that structure meets the incorporation requirement. All networks that are successful in the competition must provide proof of incorporation as well as proof of an established Board of Directors before receiving NCE funds.

## **Host**

### **1. Can an NCE have two host institutions?**

No.

### **2. What is typically the role of the host institution?**

Where appropriate, the host institution houses and provides the necessary support for the network administrative centre. The host ensures that the network has suitable accommodation, as well as access to appropriate computer, communications and financial administration systems. The host is also responsible for the release of funds to participating institutions and the administrative centre in accordance with decisions of the networks' Board of Directors.

## **Partners**

### **1. What kind of international collaboration is the 2009 Competition looking for?**

One of the objectives of the NCE Program is to create national and international partnerships that bring together key individuals and organizations who will generate and implement multifaceted solutions to complex Canadian challenges. Another objective is to increase Canada's international visibility and reputation by attracting world-class collaborations and developing partnerships with international counterparts, where appropriate. Applicants should take these objectives into consideration when developing their proposal.

## **2. What should the letters of support indicate?**

Letters of support from partners/contributors must:

- Come from a senior executive with influence over a research budget;
- Indicate the level, duration, and nature (cash and/or in-kind ) of anticipated 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 6 months prior to the LOI submission deadline.

## **3. Is there a maximum number of support letters at the LOI stage?**

Only five letters of support should be submitted for the LOI stage of the Competition. These letters should come from the five primary non-academic stakeholders who have committed to contribute to the proposed Network.

## **4. What would be considered appropriate partner contributions to the total budget of the proposed Network?**

There are no predetermined rules or set amounts for partner contributions. These differ for each proposed network and its sector of operations. Both cash and in-kind contributions are seen as valid. Each stated commitment will be assessed on an individual basis. However, in some cases, cash contributions may demonstrate a genuine commitment to and interest in the outcomes of the network's program.

## **5. Can an incorporated company started by a university researcher be involved in a network?**

Yes. However, the researcher would have to declare his/her conflicts of interest, and could not be present during discussions and decisions at the management level related to the review and budget of the research projects in which his/her company is involved. The network's Board of Directors or its conflict of interest sub-committee is charged with the responsibility of managing conflict of interest, and determining and implementing the appropriate course of action. The goal is to avoid situations where there is a conflict of interest, or a perception of conflict of interest, without discouraging the entrepreneurial spirit of researchers.

## **Network Management/Participants**

### **1. Should individuals who will be involved in the management of the Network be identified in the Letter of Intent (LOI)?**

Although it may be helpful, it is not required to identify specific individuals at this stage of the competition. We expect a summary of plans for an effective management structure for the proposed Network. A one-page organizational chart must be provided.

### **2. What kind of skills should the Scientific Director bring to the Network?**

Excellent management skills, scientific leadership and strategic thinking are some key skills to look for. The Scientific Director is responsible for providing scientific leadership and direction to the Network. Other duties may include: chairing the research management committee; recruiting the Network Manager; promoting research collaboration among individuals; acting on behalf of the network with the NCE Secretariat; and promoting the network to the scientific community, to the private and public sectors, and to the general public.

### **3. Can a researcher be involved in more than one network or in more than one project within the same network?**

A researcher may be involved in more than one project within the same network and may also be involved in projects in more than one network. There are several examples of this among existing NCEs. Obviously, the researcher must have the time to contribute adequately to the various projects.

## **Other**

### **1. How should new networks position themselves in comparison to similar initiatives in Canada or abroad?**

In both the LOI and Full Application stages of the competition, we expect applicants to clearly define the relationship between their proposed Network and similar initiatives elsewhere in Canada and abroad. Where there is significant overlap or reasonable potential for perceived overlap between a proposed Network and (a) currently or previously funded initiative(s), applicants must append a short explanation (maximum three pages) to their LOI. This explanation should describe, both qualitatively and quantitatively, the differences between the proposed Network and the currently or previously funded initiative(s). Describe how the proposed Network will compliment or build on the activities of the other initiative(s), as well as the incremental value of the proposed network.

### **2. What is the competition process?**

Applicants must first submit a LOI. Letters of Intent will be screened by the NCE Selection and Steering Committees. Based on a review of all LOIs submitted to the 2009 Competition, selected applicants will be invited to submit Full Applications.

Full Applications will be evaluated by international, interdisciplinary and multi-sectoral Expert Panels, who will provide written reports to the Selection and Steering Committees for final consideration.

### **3. Who makes the final funding decision?**

The NCE Steering Committee makes the final decision, based on the recommendations of the NCE Selection Committee. Decisions of the NCE Steering Committee are final. There is no appeal process.