

2012 COMPETITION FOR NEW NCE NETWORKS QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

SCOPE

1. The 2012 Competition places a greater emphasis on developing solutions. What is meant by this?

Networks funded under this program will demonstrate world-class capacity to address the problem(s), challenge(s) or opportunity(ies), and develop and enhance collaborations with relevant international partners that would contribute to Canada's abilities and reputation for international leadership in areas of importance to Canada. It is expected that networks will address complex issues with multi-faceted approaches, be solution-driven and involve partners and the receptor community in identifying and addressing the problem(s), challenge(s), or opportunity(ies), and in implementing the solutions.

TARGET AREAS

2. What research areas are being targeted for the 2012 Competition?

Four priority research areas were established by the 2007 S&T Strategy. Based on these, the 2008 Science, Technology and Innovation Council (STIC) report established 13 research sub-priority areas, which will be the target areas for the 2012 NCE Network Competition.

3. 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

4. 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

5. How should these target areas be addressed in the Letter of Intent (LOI)?

New networks must contribute to one or more of the 13 STIC sub-priority areas within the relevant S&T priority area(s). Moreover, it is understood that all research fields covered by SSHRC, CIHR and NSERC are important in the advancement of knowledge and innovation in these target areas. Applicants should consider all dimensions of these target areas in the broadest sense of the social, economic, technological and wellness elements that they represent. Applicants are responsible for the clear articulation of the networks' key problems, challenges or opportunities, and the interpretation of how they align with these target areas.

BUDGET

6. How many new networks will be funded under the 2012 Competition?

It is anticipated that four to five new networks may be funded in the 2012 NCE Network Competition. The 2012 NCE Competition is looking for a balanced portfolio of networks. Subject to requests submitted and funding available, it is therefore anticipating a maximum of one new network in a given S&T priority area will be supported.

7. Are networks renewable for additional terms?

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 transform 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.

8. 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 until the completion of the Expert Panel meeting and can be used for application-related expenses, such as travel (for application preparation and to attend the Expert Panel meeting), communications and workshops, as well as for secretarial, clerical and co-ordination services.

To request FAP funding, applicants must submit a one-page letter outlining their required budget, including a brief rationale of proposed expenses.

ELIGIBILITY

9. Who can apply to the 2012 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.

10. 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.

11. 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 not-for-profit incorporation under Part II of the *Canada Corporations Act*, as well as proof of an established Board of Directors, before receiving NCE funds.

HOST

12. Can an NCE have two host institutions at once?

No.

13. What typically is 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

14. What kind of international collaboration is the 2012 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. The excellence and extent of any proposed international collaborations, as appropriate, should be integrated in the network's strategic plan.

15. 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 four months prior to the LOI submission deadline.

16. 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.

17. 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.

18. Can an incorporated company started by a university researcher be involved in a network?

Many factors contribute to the eligibility of researcher owned companies. Eligibility is often decided on a case-by-case basis by the network's Board of Directors, using the network's conflict of interest policy(ies) and the guidelines of the three granting agencies as resources. 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

19. Should individuals who will be involved in the management of the network be identified in the Letter of Intent?

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.

20. 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.

21. 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

22. 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 one page) 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.

23. What is the competition process?

To ensure that only excellent research is funded and that all applications are treated fairly, the NCE program uses a comprehensive review process, in which proposals are assessed by impartial experts in the specific fields. In addition, the NCE Secretariat ensures that representatives from the relevant sectors are also present to assess all five criteria of the NCE program.

Applicants will submit LOIs, which will be screened by the NCE Standing Selection and Steering Committees. Based on a review of all LOIs submitted to the 2012 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.

24. 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.