



Government of Canada
**Networks of Centres
of Excellence**

Gouvernement du Canada
**Réseaux de centres
d'excellence**

NETWORKS OF CENTRES OF EXCELLENCE

2015 COMPETITION GUIDE

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How to use this Guide

This 2015 Competition Guide provides an overview of the NCE Network competition, discusses the logistics associated with the competition process, identifies the evaluation criteria used by the review committees, and outlines the competition timeline. The competition guide is a stand-alone document that contains all relevant information about the 2015 competition, the Letter of Intent (LOI) stage and Full Application (FA) stages. Throughout the competition the NCE Secretariat also releases additional 'Application Guides' that correspond to the different stages of the competition. These Application Guides describe how to complete the respective application for a competition stage and should always be used in conjunction with this 2015 Competition Guide.

Background

The Networks of Centres of Excellence (NCE) Program invests in Canadian research and entrepreneurial talent to translate and apply knowledge to produce economic and social benefits for Canadians. The Program plays an important role in mobilizing some of Canada's best research talent found in the Canadian academic community, and in engaging Canadian and international partners of the private, public, and non-profit sectors. Together, they expand the global knowledge frontier to generate and implement multifaceted solutions to complex Canadian issues, which increases the benefit of research and research training for the benefit of society.

The NCE Program goal, objectives, and expected results and outcomes are detailed in the NCE Program Guide found on the website (www.nce-rce.gc.ca)

Context

New Competition

The NCE Steering Committee invites potential applicants to the 2015 New Competition to submit a Letter of Intent (LOI). The LOI must describe the problem(s), challenge(s), or opportunity(ies) that the proposed Network will address, as well as the proposed Network's vision, socioeconomic context, budget and key participants. It should also summarize how the proposed Network will address the five NCE Program Criteria, the NCE Program goals and objectives and the competition framework.

Timetable

| Dates | Milestone |
|-----------------------|-----------------------------------|
| March 2013 | Competition Announcement |
| August 1, 2013 | LOI Submission Deadline |
| September 2013 | Selection Committee Review |
| September 2013 | Steering Committee Review |
| October 2013 | Invitations for Full Applications |
| June 11, 2014 | Full Application Deadline |
| August 2014 | Expert Panel Reviews |
| September 2014 | Selection Committee Review |
| September 2014 | Steering committee Review |
| March 2015 | Release of Funds |

Eligible Recipients

Eligible recipients must meet the general eligibility requirements of one or more of the three federal granting agencies partnering in the Program.

Recipients eligible to receive a NCE grant are:

- *Network host*: 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), or a private-sector consortium that hosts a network, and associated researchers
- *Networks of Centres of Excellence*: 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 and have an established Board of Directors responsible for the approval of their annual financial reports and audits, before funding is released.

Competition Process

Based on a review of all LOIs submitted to the 2014 NCE Network Competition, selected applicants will be invited in **the Fall of 2013** to submit a Full Application with a submission deadline of June 11, 2014.

Applicants whose LOI passes 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.

Budget

New networks will be eligible to receive funding for up to two five-year terms for a total of ten years. Progress for each new network will be assessed annually, and may result in continued funding, conditional funding, or the phasing out of a network before the end of the award.

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 network driven by the needs of the partners. In this third cycle, the network and partners define the knowledge mobilization and/or knowledge and technology exchange and exploitation plan and research agenda. The proposed plan will be assessed on its viability and whether it has the potential to successfully mobilize the Network's knowledge and technologies to the user community.

Competition Framework and Program Criteria

To ensure that the NCE Program goals and objectives are met, proposals are assessed against the five NCE Program Criteria, and the relevance to the NCE Program goals and objectives. Networks are evaluated on an ongoing basis during tenure of a grant against these same criteria. Research excellence is a necessary condition for the initial and the continued funding of a network; however, it is not the sole condition, because the goal of the Program is also reflected in the four additional criteria.

Review Criteria:

Applicants are required to meet the five NCE Program Criteria:

- Management of the network
- Excellence of the research program
- Development of Highly Qualified Personnel (HQP)
- Networking and partnerships
- Knowledge and technology exchange and exploitation

In addition, the proposed Network must:

- 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;
- 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;
- advance knowledge and/or technology in the Network's area(s) of focus for the benefit of Canadian society;
- outline the impacts the Network will provide within the timeframe of the proposed funding cycle through its multifaceted programs, partnerships and knowledge mobilization activities;
- build on existing relationships with partners and the receptor community, and
- outline a plan for lasting value and long term impacts beyond the conclusion of NCE funding.

Networks are expected to be multidisciplinary and to involve the significant and meaningful participation of researchers whose expertise falls under the domains of two or more of the federal granting agencies, where appropriate.

1. Management of the Network

Each network must have an organizational structure appropriate for the management of the research and business functions of a complex multidisciplinary, multi-institutional program.

A strong governance model with a good management structure is essential to the success of a network.

If an industry-led Not-for-Profit Corporation is proposed as the Host institution for the proposed network, it must be able to demonstrate that it has in place the proper policies, procedures and financial controls to administer funding to academic institutions.

Elements being considered are:

- a board and committee structure to ensure that appropriate policy and financial decisions are made and implemented;
- the presence of effective leadership and expertise in the research and the business management functions;
- a defined strategic and operational plan highlighting the proposed networks objectives and milestones;
- a defined governance process;
- demonstrated and effective policies and controls to administer funding;
- effective research planning and budgeting mechanisms; and effective internal and external communications strategies.

2. Excellence of the Research Program

The Network's research program must be driven to address Canadian needs and problems, and is therefore expected to be multidisciplinary and multisectoral.

Elements being considered are:

- the excellence, focus and coherence of the research program;
- the balance between research into new discoveries and the application of research breakthroughs to address practical problems facing Canadians;
- the achievements of the researchers in the continuum of research and their ability to contribute to the realization of the Network's objectives;
- the value added by the Network's multifaceted approach, in terms of having all the critical linkages in place to generate world-class research breakthroughs, to apply that knowledge to practical solutions, and to commercialize innovations that produce social and economic benefits;
- the extent to which the program will contribute to Canada's abilities and reputation for international leadership in areas of high economic and social importance to Canada;
- the extent to which new and emerging social and ethical challenges are an integral part of the research program; and
- the relationship of the proposed research program to similar work conducted in Canada and abroad.

3. Development of Highly Qualified Personnel (HQP)

The training and retention of HQP is imperative to maximize the effectiveness of the Networks' contribution to the wealth, wellness and well-being of Canadians. The Training Program proposed by the Network is expected to add value to the formal training initiatives already available through the academic community and should aim at helping HQP find employment in the Canadian economy (i.e., private sector partners, government, etc.). The multidisciplinary and multisectoral nature of a network should be utilized to provide unique mentorship and training opportunities to maximize HQP retention and integration in all facets of the workforce.

Elements being considered are:

- the ability to attract, develop and retain outstanding researchers in research areas and technologies critical to Canadian productivity, economic growth, public policy and quality of life; and
- training strategies that expose HQP to the full range of economic, social, and ethical implications of the Network's research by involving them in activities from the initial research discovery to its application through to practical social and economic benefits.

4. Networking and Partnerships

The Network must demonstrate that it has brought together the key individuals and organizations needed to generate and implement multifaceted solutions to the complex Canadian challenges it is designed to address. It must be built on existing relationships with partners and the receptor community that will accelerate the formation and activities of the proposed network.

Elements being considered are:

- effective research and technology development links between national and international academic institutions, federal and provincial agencies, non-governmental organizations and private sector participants;

- the history of partnerships with complementary organizations and how the proposed network will build on these partnerships and how it will accelerate the development of the proposed network.
- multidisciplinary, multisectoral approaches in the research program;
- demonstration that the right partners/individuals are at the table to address the proposed issue, including international partners when applicable;
- optimization of resources through the sharing of equipment and research facilities, databases and personnel; and
- presence, nature and extent of contributions from the private, public and not-for-profit sectors, and from international partners, as well as the prospect for increasing commitments as the work progresses.

5. Knowledge and Technology Exchange and Exploitation

NCE Networks are expected to generate social and economic benefits by ensuring the rapid flow of ideas and innovations from researchers to Canadian receptors. Applicants are expected to demonstrate that the appropriate activities will be undertaken and the appropriate resources allocated to maximize those benefits.

Elements being considered are:

- the new products, processes or services to be commercialized by firms operating in Canada as a result of the Network's activities and the extent to which these will strengthen the Canadian economic base, enhance productivity, and contribute to long-term economic growth and social benefits;
- the social innovations to be implemented as a result of the Network and the extent to which these will contribute to more effective public policy in Canada;
- effective collaboration with the private, public and not-for-profit sectors in technology, market development, and public policy development;
- the extent to which the Network will help the partners develop strong receptor capacity to exploit current and future research breakthroughs;
- effective management and protection of Canadian intellectual property resulting from Network-funded research; and
- the extent to which additional/complementary knowledge, and/or technology a foreign counterpart is contributing to Canada by an international partner, when international partnerships are relevant.

Review and Decision 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.

Expert Panels

The NCE Secretariat will assemble interdisciplinary and multisectoral Expert Panels to review Full Applications. Expert Panels will:

- assess Full Applications according to the five NCE Program Criteria, the NCE Program goals and objectives, and any framework identified for the specific competition;
- meet with applicants;
- provide written reports of their evaluations of Full Applications; and
- comment on the appropriateness of the requested budget.

The reports from the Expert Panels will be provided to the NCE Standing Selection Committee, the NCE Steering Committee, and ultimately to the respective applicants. During the deliberations of the Selection Committee, the Chair or a designated member of each Expert Panel will be available to respond to questions and provide additional information.

NCE Standing Selection Committee

The NCE Standing Selection Committee (hereafter “Selection Committee”) will be composed of international-calibre, highly accomplished individuals with broad expertise representing the domains of the three federal granting agencies, across all sectors. All Selection Committee recommendations are provided to the Steering Committee. The Selection Committee will:

- review LOIs according to the five NCE Program Criteria, the NCE Program goals and objectives, and any framework identified for the specific competition;
- make recommendations to the Steering Committee regarding which applicants should receive invitations to submit Full Applications;
- review Full Applications according to the five NCE Program Criteria, the NCE Program goals and objectives, and any framework identified for the specific competition while considering the applicants’ Expert Panel Reports; and
- make recommendations to the Steering Committee regarding which applicants should receive funding for new networks and at which funding levels.

NCE Steering Committee

The NCE Steering Committee is comprised of the Presidents of the three federal granting agencies, the Deputy Ministers of Industry Canada and Health Canada and, as an observer, the President and CEO of Canada Foundation for Innovation. The Steering Committee will:

- appoint members of the NCE Standing Selection Committee;
- based on the recommendation of the review process:
 - decide which applicants to invite to submit Full Applications for new networks;
 - decide which applicants will receive funding for new networks;
 - establish funding levels; and
- prepare a report for publication at the end of the competition process. This report will be available on the NCE website after the new networks are announced.

Decisions of the NCE Steering Committee are final. There is no appeal process.

Program Administration and Governance

The 2015 Network Competition falls under the Networks of Centres of Excellence (NCE) program, which is administered jointly through 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 Industry Canada and Health Canada. More information on the NCE Program's goals and objectives can be found at http://www.nce-rce.gc.ca/NCESecretariatPrograms-ProgrammesSecretariatRCE/NCE-RCE/Index_eng.asp.

As an initiative of the NCE Program delivered by the NCE Secretariat, the 2015 Network Competition builds upon the foundation of successful tri-agency collaboration. The NCE Networks are governed by a tri-agency steering committee (NCE Steering Committee) made up of the Presidents of the three granting agencies, the Deputy Ministers of Industry Canada and Health Canada, and the President of the Canada Foundation for Innovation (as an observer). Day-to-day administration of the NCE program is provided by the NCE Secretariat.

Environmental Review and Assessment

On July 6, 2012, the Canadian Environmental Assessment Act (CEAA) 2012 came into force. As a result, the review process for applications submitted to NSERC has been revised. Grant applicants are required to provide more specific information under a completely revised Appendix A (Environmental Information). Appendix B (CEAA Pre-Screening Checklist) no longer exists. In addition, the NSERC Policy on Environmental Assessment has been revoked and replaced by [NSERC's Guidelines on Environmental Review and Assessment](#).

Please review the Guidelines and if any of the Network's proposed activities fall under these Guidelines, please complete and submit the required documentation.

Information Webinar

The NCE Secretariat will host a webinar in between the LOI and Full Application stages. Only applicants who have submitted a LOI will receive an invitation to attend. The webinar will include models that exemplify the goals of the program and an opportunity for applicants to ask program- and competition-related questions. More details about the webinar will be included in the invitation to attend. It is expected by the NCE that all applicants will attend the webinar.

Contact

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On-line Resources

NCE website

<http://www.nce-rce.gc.ca>

NCE Program Guide

http://www.nce-rce.gc.ca/ReportsPublications-RapportsPublications/NCE-RCE/ProgramGuide-GuideProgramme_eng.asp

Information Regarding In-kind Eligibility

www.nserc-crsng.gc.ca/NSERC-CRSNG/Policies-Politiques/orgpartners-orgpartenaires_eng.asp

<http://www.cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/3758.html>

Tri-Agency Use of Grant Funds

http://www.nserc-crsng.gc.ca/Professors-Professeurs/FinancialAdminGuide-GuideAdminFinancier/FundsUse-UtilisationSubventions_eng.asp

Tri-Agency Responsible Conduct of Research

http://www.nserc-crsng.gc.ca/NSERC-CRSNG/governance-gouvernance/rcr-crr_eng.asp

Environmental Review and Assessment

http://www.nserc-crsng.gc.ca/NSERC-CRSNG/Policies-Politiques/enviroassess-enviroeval_eng.asp

2015 LOI Guide

http://www.nce-rce.gc.ca/Competitions-Competitions/Current-EnVigueur/NCE-RCE-2015/LOIGuide-GuideLI_eng.asp

2015 LOI Application Form

http://www.nce-rce.gc.ca/docs/competitions/NCE-RCE-2015/LOIApplication_eng.pdf

2015 FA Guide

http://www.nce-rce.gc.ca/Competitions-Competitions/Current-EnVigueur/NCE-RCE-2015/FullApplicationGuide-GuideDemandeDetaillee_eng.asp

2015 FA Application Form

http://www.nce-rce.gc.ca/docs/competitions/NCE-RCE-2015/FullApplicationForm-FormulaireDemande_eng.pdf