



Government of Canada
Networks of Centres
of Excellence

Gouvernement du Canada
Réseaux de centres
d'excellence

NETWORKS OF CENTRES OF EXCELLENCE

COMPETITION GUIDE

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Important Program Updates for the Current Competition

Eligibility

Both new networks and established networks are eligible to apply for funding in this competition. Established networks are defined as NCE networks who have been awarded NCE funds for all available funding cycles (ie. two seven-year cycles or three five-year cycles), and whose final NCE funding term has ended or will end by the anticipated release date of new funds (March 31, 2019).

Budget

Approximately 40% of this competition's budget will be allocated to fund new networks that meet the threshold of excellence in all criteria. The budget request must be appropriate for the scope and scale of the activities proposed and the projected deliverables; there are no minimum or maximum budgets for any application in this competition.

Expectations for KTEE

The kinds of KTEE activities an NCE network may pursue include 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.

Expectations for Established Networks

Building on successes from earlier cycles of NCE support, established networks must demonstrate the enhancement and/or expansion of previous activities, scope, and impacts. Established networks must also address how they continue to: (1) fill a gap of strategic importance to Canada; and (2) be relevant in a changing research and innovation landscape.

Review Process

The review of applications in this competition will take into consideration whether the network is new or established.

Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

Networks are expected to promote equity, diversity and inclusion within the structure of the proposed network and its activities.

How to use this Guide

This Competition Guide provides an overview of the NCE Network competition, discusses the competition stages and process, identifies evaluation criteria used by the review committees, and outlines the competition timeline. This guide is a stand-alone document containing information relevant to the entire NCE Competition; however, it should be used in conjunction with the relevant guides for each stage of the competition.

Program Overview

The Networks of Centres of Excellence (NCE) Program invests in Canadian research and entrepreneurial talent to generate, translate and apply knowledge along the innovation continuum that will create economic and social benefits for Canadians. The program plays an important role in mobilizing the best of Canada's research, translational, and entrepreneurial expertise and engaging Canadian and international partners from the private, public, and not-for-profit sectors, by de-risking their investments in network activities. In this way, the program helps to expand global knowledge in strategic areas and enables the creation and implementation of multifaceted solutions to specific social and economic challenges, with the goal of helping build a more advanced, healthy, competitive and prosperous country.

Networks are expected to:

- Be challenge-focused and solution-driven;
- Foster innovative research, training and the co-creation of new knowledge on critical issues of intellectual, social, economic and cultural significance;
- Engage partners in the design and execution of all network activities, including knowledge creation, mobilization and exploitation; and
- Have a strategic, diverse leadership, incorporating all relevant sectoral and disciplinary perspectives.

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)

Competition Stages

There are two stages to the NCE Competition.

1. Letter of Intent (LOI)

The LOI must describe the challenges that the proposed network will address and provide information on the network's vision, objectives, strategic plan, budget, and key participants in management and governance. The LOI must summarize how the proposed network aligns with the five NCE Program Criteria, the Competition Framework, and the NCE Program Goals and Objectives. The LOI stage provides an opportunity to highlight the proposed network's potential for impact in Canada and internationally. The LOI will be reviewed by the NCE Standing Selection Committee and **only** the top rated proposals will be invited to submit an application to the Full Application stage.

2. Full Application (FA)

The FA stage requires detailed information on the network's alignment with NCE Program Criteria and Competition Framework and should clearly describe all aspects of the network's management and governance structure, proposed objectives, and expected outcomes and deliverables.

Applicants invited to submit a Full Application after the LOI review may request NCE funds to assist them in preparing their application. Full Application Preparation (FAP) funding of up to \$25,000 is tenable until the completion of the Expert Panel meeting, and is designed to be used for application-related expenses such as travel, communications and workshops, secretarial, clerical and co-ordination services. To request FAP funding, applicants must submit a one-page budget detailing anticipated expenses, along with a brief rationale of proposed expenses.

Eligibility

Both new networks and established networks are eligible to apply for funding in this competition. **Established networks** are defined as NCE networks who have been awarded NCE funds for all available funding cycles (i.e. two seven-year cycles or three five-year cycles), and whose final NCE funding term has ended or will end by the anticipated release date of new funds (March 31, 2019).

Applicants eligible to receive NCE funding are academic researchers eligible to apply for grants from one of the three federal granting agencies (CIHR, NSERC, SSHRC).

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 NCE funding are:

- **The 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.
- **Private Sector Consortium:** a grouping consisting mainly of for-profit companies to form a not-for-profit entity that has defined goals and objectives as well as governance, financial and accounting structures that are completely distinct from those of its component companies and meet the requirements of the [Agreement on the Administration of Agency Grants and Awards by Research Institutions](#).
- **Networks of Centres of Excellence:** a not-for-profit corporation incorporated under the *Canada Not-for-Profit Corporations Act* and their members and associated researchers. Before funding is released and as a condition of eligibility, networks funded through the NCE Program shall incorporate as a not-for-profit organization with a Board of Directors responsible for the approval of their annual financial reports and audits.

Budget and Duration of Support

The total budget for this competition is currently set at \$75M over 5 years (\$15M/year). Approximately 40% of this budget will be allocated to fund new networks that meet the threshold of excellence. Funding for successful networks will begin, or continue, in 2018-19.

There are no minimum or maximum budgets for any application in this competition. However, NCE networks are always expected to: have ambitious goals that require a networked approach; be multidisciplinary; and have high potential for impact. The budget request must be appropriate for the scope and scale of activities proposed and the projected deliverables. For established networks, the proposed budget should not necessarily be based on historical funding rates.

It is expected that requested funds will be supplemented by cash and/or in-kind contributions from partners.

Network funding is available in 5-year renewable cycles. The progress of each 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 5-year award term.

Competition Timeline

Date	Competition Milestone
August 8, 2017	Competition Launched
August 23, 2017	Registration deadline to participate in webinars
August - September 2017	Webinars for preparation of LOIs
November 15, 2017	LOI Deadline
January 2018	Selection Committee Review
February 2018	Management Committee Meeting Invitations for Full Applications
March 2018	Webinar for preparation of full applications
July 19, 2018	Full Application Deadline
August 2018	Expert Panel Reviews
September 2018	Selection Committee Review
November 2018	Steering Committee Decision
November 2018	Competition results finalized
November 2018 - February 2019	Funding agreements and/or amendments finalized and signed
March 2019	Release of new funds

Competition Framework and Program Criteria

Proposals will be assessed against **five NCE Program Criteria and the Competition Framework**, as well as relevance to the goals and objectives of the NCE program. Networks are evaluated on an ongoing basis during the tenure of a grant against these criteria. All criteria must be fully developed to ensure a competitive application.

Competition Framework

The proposed network must:

- Be challenge-focused and solution-driven;
- Work with partners from the private, public and not-for-profit sectors to identify challenges, develop strategies to address the challenges and implement solutions;
- Demonstrate world-class capacity to address the identified challenges;
- Develop and enhance collaborations with relevant international partners that would contribute to Canada's reputation as an international leader;
- Advance and mobilize knowledge for the benefit of Canadian society; and
- Build on existing relationships with partners and stakeholders.

In addition:

Successful applications will involve the significant and meaningful participation of researchers and partners from **all relevant** sectors and disciplines to fully address the multi-faceted challenges and to fully implement multidimensional solutions.

The added value of the proposed network must be clear, especially where there are overlaps between the proposed network and existing networks or initiatives in Canada or abroad, including those that are currently receiving, or have previously received, funding through the NCE suite of programs.

Established networks, building on successes from earlier cycles of NCE support, must demonstrate the enhancement and/or expansion of previous activities, scope, and impacts. This may include, but is not limited to: a change in research focus to address an emerging area in need of solutions; a scaling up of activities supporting the application of knowledge; and/or a more significant sharing of leadership with partners. Established networks must also address how they continue to: (1) fill a gap of strategic importance to Canada; and (2) be relevant in a changing research and innovation landscape.

Program Criteria:

1. Management of the Network
2. Excellence of the Research Program
3. Development of Highly Qualified Personnel (HQP)
4. Networking and Partnerships
5. Knowledge and Technology Exchange and Exploitation

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 sound 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 that are considered include:

- 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 network's 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 that are considered include:

- 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 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.

Elements that are considered include:

- 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 has been created 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 that are considered include:

- 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 (KTEE)

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

Elements that are considered include:

- 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;
- 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;
- 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.

Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

Networks must support the inclusion and advancement of women and other under-represented groups as one means to foster excellence in research and training. Networks must consider equity, diversity and inclusion in the selection of network researchers, theme leaders, trainees, the management team and members of the governing board and committees.

Full applications must outline the measures that will be implemented to promote equity, diversity and inclusion within the structure of the proposed network and its activities. Examples include strategies for any of the following:

- Increasing gender equity and diversity in the composition of the Board of Directors, board sub-committees, research theme leaders and trainees;

- Ensuring equitable mentorship of all trainees;
- Tracking the outcomes and developing strategies to improve the impact of initiatives to increase diversity; and
- Hosting networking and leadership training events within the network that highlight gender equity and the benefits of diversity.

Review and Decision Process

All applications undergo a comprehensive review by impartial experts to ensure an equitable process for all applications. The NCE Secretariat ensures that representatives from the relevant sectors and disciplines are present to assess applications according to all five criteria of the NCE Program in addition to the Competition Framework.

The review of applications in this competition will take into consideration whether the network is new or established.

Expert Panels

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

- Assess Full Applications against the five NCE Program Criteria, the Competition Framework and NCE Program Goals and Objectives;
- Meet with applicants;
- Review the appropriateness of the requested budget; and
- Provide written evaluation reports that take into consideration the material in the Full Application as well as any additional information gleaned from the meeting with the applicants.

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”) is 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 Competition Framework and NCE Program Goals and Objectives;
- Make recommendations to the Steering Committee regarding which applicants should be invited to submit Full Applications;
- Review Full Applications according to the five NCE Program Criteria, the Competition Framework and NCE Program Goals and Objectives, taking into consideration the Expert Panel Reports; and
- Make recommendations to the Steering Committee regarding which applicants should receive funding and at what level.

NCE Steering Committee

Comprised of the Presidents of the three federal granting agencies, the Deputy Ministers of Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada (ISED) and Health Canada and, as an observer, the President and CEO of the Canada Foundation for Innovation, the Steering Committee will:

- Appoint members to the NCE Standing Selection Committee;
- Based on the recommendations of the Selection Committee, make decisions regarding:
 - the applicants to invite to submit Full Applications;
 - the applicants to receive funding; and
 - funding levels.

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

Program Administration and Governance

The NCE 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 Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada (ISED) 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 NCE 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 Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada (ISED) 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

Applicants are required to provide specific information under Appendix A (Environmental Information). Please review [NSERC's Guidelines on Environmental Review and Assessment](#) and if any of the network's proposed activities fall under these Guidelines, please complete and submit the required documentation in the Full Application.

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

NCE Competition LOI Guide

http://www.nce-rce.gc.ca/Competitions-Competitions/Current-EnVigueur/NCE-RCE-2019/LOIGuide-GuideLI_eng.asp

NCE Competition LOI Application Form

http://www.nce-rce.gc.ca/docs/competitions/NCE-RCE-2019/LOIApplication_eng.pdf

NCE Competition LOI Excel Tables

http://www.nce-rce.gc.ca/docs/competitions/NCECompetition-ConcoursRCE/LOIFormTables_eng.xlsx