

In the fall of 2015, the Canada Foundation for Innovation (CFI) conducted a pan-Canadian consultation, during which we received valuable suggestions for how to improve our College-Industry Innovation Fund (CIIF). We have already incorporated some of the suggestions for application and review requirements. Namely, the proposal requirements have been significantly streamlined to reduce the burden on both applicants and reviewers. Given that some institutions are quickly growing and expanding their applied research activities and expertise, the CFI was also encouraged to consider removing the limit of one application per competition. After careful consideration, we are pleased to announce that the CFI will allow colleges to submit up to two proposals under each CIIF stream starting March 2017. Please note that in the event that a college decides to submit more than one proposal per competition, the two must not fall within the same strategic applied research area. A revised CIIF Call for Proposals for stream 1 will be published in early December 2016 to reflect these improvements.

### **Lessons learned**

We continue to analyze the outcomes of previous CIIF competitions and, based on our observations, would like to reiterate two key concepts.

#### Productive college-industry partnerships

The CIIF seeks innovative projects that will enhance the long-term capacity of colleges to support business innovation in Canada. It aims to do this by providing colleges with state-of-the-art, industry-relevant research infrastructure to foster partnerships with the private sector in a specific area of strategic priority for the institution. College-industry partnerships remain the cornerstone of this fund, and close collaboration between the college and private-sector partners, regardless of their size, is considered essential to enabling business innovation. Colleges should submit CIIF proposals that respond to important sector industry needs and which go beyond the need of a single private-sector partner. It is common occurrence for the industry partners described in progress reports after the infrastructure is operational to be completely different from the industry partners originally named in the CIIF proposal. The CIIF is meant to help build long-term capacity at the institution, to enable colleges to work with a variety of industry partners in a specific sector (or sectors), rather than to focus on the research infrastructure needs of a specific project collaboration with a single partner.

Moreover, while it is not uncommon for colleges to also offer services to industry partners using CFI-funded research infrastructure, partnerships remain the key objective of the CIIF. Acquiring research infrastructure for the main or sole purpose of offering services to industrial clients does not meet the intent or objectives of the CIIF. Such proposals will be rejected at the Notice of Intent and application stage.

Furthermore, colleges should exercise caution when offering services to industrial clients using CFI-funded infrastructure, particularly when those services might be in direct competition with other private-sector firms offering similar services. Again, this does not meet the intent or objectives of the CIIF.

#### Planning activities for successful project implementation

While we recognize that CIIF projects involve considerable time and effort to plan, colleges are expected to have completed planning and development work for such projects at the application stage. The time spent properly planning CIIF projects will result in a higher funding success rate, reduced time for project implementation and, most importantly, a quicker turnaround to address private-sector needs. Within the application time frame, colleges must have determined and clearly identified their research infrastructure needs and also have assessed all related risks and identified associated mitigation strategies. For these reasons, careful, long-term planning is critical before submitting a proposal to the CIIF.

Best regards,

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