

Q&A CFI IF SSHA Info sessions

Overview

What's the CFI IF success rate?

- The CFI provides an overall competition envelope that is divided across all research institutions in Canada based on their share of Tri-Agency funding. CFI usually attempts to maintain a national success rate of 30-35%. However, it is anticipated that the ability of institutions to submit additional SSHA projects outside of their institutional envelope may decrease this success rate from previous competitions.

Is there a commitment to support from CORIS, ie: will there be an Institutional Research Facilitator (IRF) supporting the SSHA application at the proposal stage?

- CORIS may assign a Research Facilitator, Institutional Initiatives to submitted files, depending on the nature and number of the submitted Expressions of Interest.

We hope CFI will continue with an SSHA stream in the next round, but we don't know.

What's the advantage of applying for this round vs waiting for the next round, considering there might not be another SSHA round?

- There is no guarantee that CFI IF will continue to offer the SSHA stream in future IF competitions. The next anticipated IF competition will be in 2028.

How does CFI define "science", as this is the term used throughout? Is it meant in the broad sense or more STEM focused?

- It is meant in the broader sense of the term in order to include research in all disciplines.

What happens if the equipment already exists in Ontario but is not accessible by Carleton researchers or their community partners, and we need the infrastructure at Carleton?

Does the applicant need to explain that?

- The Innovation Fund focuses on projects that will generate benefits to Canada and Canadian research institutions. Any requests for infrastructure that duplicates infrastructure already available in Canada should be motivated by the innovative research that will be enabled – and is currently not possible – without the additional CFI investment.

Budget

Given the minimum threshold (\$1 million) and that this stream is taking place outside the regular envelope, is there a project cost range prospective applicants should be thinking about?

- While the CFI IF call for proposals is still forthcoming for the 2025 competition, we anticipate that applicants should consider the minimum threshold from previous rounds.

Where is the remaining 20% of funding from after the 40% covered by CFI and the 40% covered by the province?

- It is covered through cash contributions from eligible partners and/or eligible CFI in-kind discounts offered by vendors. For full details on the eligibility of partners and/or in-kind contributions please see the CFI's [Policy and Program Guide](#) or contact your research facilitator.

If a researcher's research is interdisciplinary, for example between social sciences and humanities and health, is it better to apply under one area of expertise (SSH or health), the other, or both?

- We don't yet have the details of the CFI IF SSHA stream, but they have said that to be eligible under the SSHA stream, applicants must have their primary field in an SSHA discipline. We anticipate that this means that interdisciplinary projects are eligible as long as the primary field is in SSHA, and the primary contribution to knowledge is in SSHA.

If the project is renovation- or building-oriented, how does the 20% recommended limit for building and renovations factor in? Is the percentage similar for the Ontario (provincial) funding and institutional contributions? Can it be more? What's typically the upper limit or considered acceptable?

- The CFI and Ontario both prioritize funding research infrastructure. As such, any construction or renovation costs must be essential for the installation of the requested equipment and/or essential for the proposed research. The 20% limitation is a general guideline provided by Carleton based on a typical amount on many successful CFI awards. Amounts over this limitation are eligible but must be robustly justified based on the essential needs of the research design and/or equipment.

Is the funding of personnel new under this program?

- The funding of personnel to install and set-up the infrastructure is not new to CFI. What is new to the SSHA is allowing the funding for personnel to operate and maintain databases as part of the core infrastructure costs. Please note that this is not funding for personnel to conduct the research, but to operate and maintain the infrastructure over the duration of the CFI-funded project (5 years).

In addition to grouping the budget items, should applicants speak to what they need based on functionality vs a specific item?

- Yes, the focus on the budget justification should be on the functionality needed to enable the innovative research being proposed.

If the institution, in this case Carleton, provides funding that is related to equipment, could this be considered as an institutional contribution at the time of application to the CFI IF?

- Institutional cash contributions are eligible as long as they are supporting eligible costs of an infrastructure project. Please see the CFI's [Policy and Program Guide](#) or contact your research facilitator for more advice on eligible costs.

Is high-powered cloud computing an eligible cost?

- The CFI expects advanced research computing (ARC) infrastructure to be integrated into the national ARC platform, through processes facilitated by the [Digital Research Alliance of Canada](#) (the Alliance). High-performance storage and/or cloud computing, among other systems and resources, are both considered by CFI to be ARC infrastructure. If you anticipate that your project will include ARC resources, please contact your research facilitator as soon as possible. They will be able to connect you with CORIS to support engaging with the Alliance.

Is it eligible to rent or lease infrastructure as opposed to purchasing it outright?

- Renting/leasing equipment falls into a grey area for CFI. There would need to be a very strong justification as to why the infrastructure would be leased and not purchased, as the underlying goal with CFI funding is to enhance the research capacity of institutions.

Space

Space is an issue on campus. Will successful applicants be able to access space allocations through OVPRI?

- Unfortunately, OVPRI has no available space to allocate to CFI IF projects, including in the SSHA stream. Applicants should speak with their academic Faculty about available space for their projects.

Will OVPRI have someone to assist applicants with securing space? For example, as a liaison with FMP. Is there someone centrally who can help?

- For applicants who submit an Expression of Interest, they will be connected with available supports via CORIS, including, where applicable, connections to FMP. Please note that while colleagues in FMP are available to assist, they are similarly unable to guarantee space for CFI IF projects. Applicants are encouraged to first speak with their academic Faculty about the availability of space. Requests for additional support should come to CORIS via the Faculty.

Does the responsibility for finding and securing space lie in one place (e.g.: FMP) or from multiple units?

- The majority of space on campus is already allocated to academic Faculties, departments, and other administrative units. FMP cannot allocate space that is under the control of another department or Faculty. Applicants are encouraged to first speak with their academic Faculty about the availability of space. Requests for additional support should come to CORIS via the Faculty.

Team

Is international cooperation or partnering with non-Canadian institutions possible for the CFI IF? How does it work and to what extent can international partners be involved?

- CFI has very broad rules about who can be an eligible team member and it is inclusive of international partners and academics. If the infrastructure is envisioned to be housed outside of Canada, a strong case must be made for the benefits to Canada and Canadian researchers for the choice of a location outside of Canada.

How does the career stage of a researcher (ECR, mid-career, established) factor into the importance of quality of the research/team and having a team with a track record of funding?

- CFI expects teams to be equitable, diverse and inclusive, including demonstrating inclusive engagement with early career researchers. Generally speaking, most Co-Leads of CFI grants are well-established researchers with expertise in managing large-scale research projects. The team should reflect the diversity in your field(s) of study, and ideally the Canadian population as a whole.

Ontario

What are the Ontario criteria for the 40/40/20 split? Do they have their own adjudication criteria? How does an applicant get the 40% from Ontario?

- Ontario runs its own parallel competition to CFI called the Ontario Research Fund – Large Infrastructure Program. Applicants who are anticipating requesting the 40% funding from Ontario should plan for this second application, which is often due on a similar timeline to the CFI application. Details are still forthcoming for 2025.

Operating Costs

For individuals who have existing and sufficient funding to support the direct cost of their research, the timeline of their funding and CFI IF application and implementation might be an issue. Their grants might reach their end of life before then (e.g.: SSHRC PG). If an individual's grants' end dates are prior to the CFI IF being operationalized, do they need to show they have already secured new grants?

- This requirement is about being able to establish that your team (as a whole) has a solid track record in securing sufficient operating research funding to maintain the facility over its lifespan. This will be evaluated based on the team's recent track record in securing sufficient operating funding and a feasible plan to maintain or exceed current levels of operating funding to support the direct research costs and ensure sustainability of the facility.

Regarding the internal criterion of having research funding to run the program: I interpret that as the applicant needs to have a large, multi-year grant in hand. Is that correct? How does this work with SSHRC grants that are typically 3-5 years in duration?

- The team, as a whole, should have a solid track record of securing larger, multi-year external research funding. There should be a feasible plan to maintain or exceed the current levels of funding to ensure there are sufficient resources for direct research costs and the sustainability of the facility.

Assessment & Evaluation

Would the MAC adjudication still be predominantly STEM experts for the SSHA stream?
Does CFI plan to change that?

- As the CFI IF 2025 Call for Proposals is still forthcoming, we do not yet know how they will change the adjudication process for the SSHA stream.