



Networks of Centres  
of Excellence

Réseaux de centres  
d'excellence

Canada

## Networks of Centres of Excellence

### Letter of Intent Guide

### 2005 Competition for New NCE Networks

The NCE Program is a federal initiative 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.

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# Networks of Centres of Excellence Program

## **Background**

The Networks of Centres of Excellence (NCE) Program is an integral component of the federal government's Innovation Strategy. It invests in Canadian research and entrepreneurial talent to turn innovation into economic and social benefits for all Canadians.

The NCE Steering Committee invites Letters of Intent for the 2005 Competition for new NCE networks that will address significant issues of importance to Canada. Approximately \$10M per year will be available to support new NCE networks that will develop innovative research approaches crossing traditional disciplinary and sectoral boundaries.

Prospective applicants should refer to the *NCE Program Guide* for detailed information about the NCE Program.

## **Goal**

The goal of the NCE Program is to mobilize Canada's research talent in the academic, private and public sectors and apply it to the task of developing the economy and improving the quality of life of Canadians. This goal is consistent with, and reinforces, the three pillars of the federal Science and Technology Strategy: sustainable job creation and economic growth; improved quality of life; and advancement of knowledge.

## **Expected Results**

This NCE Program goal is accomplished by investing in national research networks that meet the following objectives:

- Stimulate internationally competitive, leading-edge fundamental and applied research in areas critical to Canadian economic and social development;
- Develop and retain world-class researchers in areas essential to Canada's productivity and economic growth;
- Create nation-wide multidisciplinary and multisectorial research partnerships that integrate the research and development priorities of all participants;
- Accelerate the exchange of research results within the network and the use of this knowledge within Canada by organizations that can harness it for Canadian economic and social development.

## **Class of recipients**

Organizations eligible to receive funds are universities, affiliated hospitals and research institutes, and post-secondary institutions having a research mandate. Researchers and organizations that receive NCE funds must meet the general eligibility requirements of one of the three federal granting agencies partnering in the program.

Participants from government and the private sector, while not eligible to receive NCE research funds, are encouraged to play an active role in the network.

An industry consortium may receive funds to administer a network, and may act as Host Institution.

Responsibilities of the Host Institution are described in the *NCE Program Guide*.



## Eligibility of Networks

The objective of the 2005 Competition is to fund new NCE networks. Networks funded for two 7-year funding cycles are ineligible for additional NCE funding other than Research Management Funds (see the *NCE Program Guide* for details). Letters of Intent and Full Applications will be scrutinised for eligibility. Proposals for networks that would be a continuation of a current or previously funded NCE network will be deemed ineligible and rejected from the 2005 Competition for new networks. Only proposals for new networks will be considered in the 2005 Competition.

Where there is significant overlap or reasonable potential for a perception of overlap, between a proposed NCE network and a current or previously funded NCE network, applicants must append a short explanation to their Letter of Intent package. In such a case, the short explanation (maximum 3 pages) should compare aspects of the proposed new network to current or previously funded NCE networks (e.g., the strategic mission, research program, research themes, proposed theme leaders, proposed membership of the Research Management Committee, and proposed membership on the Board of Directors). Quantifiable measures of differences must be provided.

Final decisions on eligibility will be taken by the NCE Steering Committee.

## Competition Process

Each Letter of Intent must present a potential NCE network and describe how it would further the goal of the NCE Program. Letters of Intent will be used to screen potential networks. The deadline for submission is **Monday, September 8, 2003, 5 p.m. EST**.

Based on a review of Letters of Intent, selected groups of applicants will be invited to submit Full Applications for a deadline date of **Monday, March 8, 2004, 5 p.m. EST**. Where appropriate, the NCE Directorate will provide written comments to groups of applicants.

### ***Funding Towards Full Application Preparation (FAP)***

Applicants whose Letter of Intent for a new NCE network passes the initial screening process may request NCE funds to assist them in preparing a Full Application. FAP funding of up to \$25,000 is tenable for six months and can be used for application-related expenses such as travel, communications and workshops, as well as for secretarial, clerical and co-ordination services.

To request FAP funding, applicants invited to submit a Full NCE Application for a new network must submit a one-page letter outlining their required budget including a brief rationale of proposed eligible expenses.

### ***2005 Competition Budget for new NCE networks***

The 2005 Competition for new networks has an approximate total budget of **\$10M per year**. It is anticipated that the successful new networks will be announced in **July 2004** and begin operations in the fall of that same year. To allow for a ramping-up start, the first year of funding will be spread over



18 months. For purposes of planning, use the following:

2004-2005	Year "0"	\$0.5 M
2005-2006	Year 1	\$9 M
2006-2007	Year 2	\$9 M
2007-2008	Year 3	\$10 M
2008-2009	Year 4	\$10 M

### **2005 Renewal Competition**

A renewal competition will be held in parallel with the 2005 Competition for new Networks. The renewal competition will be for potential second funding cycle of NCE networks funded as part of the 1998 cohort (i.e., CAN, CIPI, GEIODE, and MITACS). The renewal competition will have a budget of \$13.5M per year.

A single Selection Committee will evaluate proposals in both the 2005 Renewal Competition and the 2005 Competition for new NCE networks. It will have a total budget of approximately **\$23.5M per year**. Depending on the quality of the proposals (i.e., renewal and proposals for new networks), any funds not used for new networks may be transferred to the renewal networks or vice-versa.

### **Timetable: 2005 Competition for New NCE Networks**

<b>Dates</b>	<b>Milestone</b>
Friday, March 28, 2003	Competition Announced
May 2003	Information meetings in Vancouver, Calgary, Toronto, Ottawa, Montréal, Halifax. Visit <a href="http://www.nce.gc.ca">www.nce.gc.ca</a> for details.
Monday, Sept. 8, 2003	LOI Deadline
Nov. 2003	Invitations for Full Applications
Monday, March 8, 2004	Full Application Deadline
April 2004	Expert Review Panels
July 2004	New NCE networks Announced
Sept./Oct. 2004	Funding and Network Agreements signed
Fall 2004	NCE networks begin operations



## Program Criteria

To ensure that the program objectives are met, proposals are assessed against the five criteria outlined below. Networks are also evaluated on an ongoing basis during tenure of a grant against these same criteria. Research excellence is a necessary condition for the initial or continued funding of an NCE network. It is not a sufficient condition, because the goals of the program are also reflected in the four additional criteria.

The five program criteria are described below.

### ***Excellence of the Research Program***

- The excellence, focus and coherence of the research program;
- The achievements of the researchers and their ability to contribute to the research program;
- The value added by the network approach, in terms of the quality of the research and achievement of the goals that can be pursued;
- The extent to which the program will contribute to Canada's ability to lead in areas of research with high economic and social impact;
- The extent to which new and emerging social and ethical issues, where relevant, will be addressed in the research program;
- The relationship of the research program to similar work conducted in Canada and abroad.

### ***Development of Highly Qualified Personnel***

- The ability to train and retain outstanding researchers in research areas and technologies critical to Canadian productivity, economic growth, public policy and quality of life;
- Training strategies that promote multidisciplinary and multisectorial

research approaches and encourage trainees to consider the economic, social and ethical implications of their work.

### ***Networking and Partnerships***

- Effective research and technology development links between academic institutions, federal and provincial agencies and private sector participants;
- Multidisciplinary, multisectorial approaches in the research program;
- Evidence that an effort has been made to include all suitably qualified groups;
- Optimization of resources through the sharing of equipment and research facilities, databases and personnel;
- Presence, nature and extent of contributions from the private sector and federal and provincial agencies, and prospects for increasing commitments as the work progresses.

### ***Knowledge and Technology Exchange and Exploitation***

- Likelihood that new products, processes or services can be commercialized by firms operating in Canada and that these will strengthen the Canadian industrial base, enhance productivity, and contribute to long-term economic growth and social benefits;
- Prospect for social innovation and the implementation of effective public policy through collaboration with the public sector;
- Effective collaboration with the private and public sectors in technology, market development, and public policy development;
- The impact, or potential impact, on the partners' science and technology capabilities and practices;
- Effective management and protection of intellectual property resulting from network-funded research.



## **Management of the Network**

Each network must possess an organizational structure appropriate for the management of the research and business functions of a complex multidisciplinary, multi-institutional program. These elements must 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;
- Effective research planning and budgeting mechanisms;
- Effective internal and external communications strategies.

## **Review and Decision Process**

### **NCE Steering Committee**

The NCE Steering Committee is comprised of the presidents of the three federal granting agencies and the deputy minister of Industry Canada. The Steering Committee will:

- Appoint members of a Selection Committee;
- Decide which groups to invite to submit Full Applications for new NCE networks;
- Decide which new NCE networks will receive funding;
- Establish NCE funding levels.

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

### **Selection Committee**

The Steering Committee will appoint a Selection Committee as part of the peer-review process. This committee will be composed of international-calibre experts with broad expertise representing the

domains of the three granting agencies. All Selection Committee recommendations are provided to the Steering Committee. The Selection Committee will:

- Review Letters of Intent according to the five published NCE program criteria;
- Recommend groups to receive invitations to submit Full Applications;
- Review Full Applications according to the five published NCE program criteria;
- Recommend new NCE networks for funding and funding levels;
- Provide a confidential report to each group that submitted a Full Application;
- Provide an overview of the competition for the public.

The names and affiliations of the members of the Selection Committee will be included in the final report of the Selection Committee. This report will be available at [www.nce.gc.ca](http://www.nce.gc.ca) after the new networks are announced (see *Timetable*, above).

### **Expert Panels**

The NCE Directorate will appoint an interdisciplinary Expert Panel to review each Full Application. Each Panel will:

- Meet with representatives of one group of applicants;
- Assess one Full Application based on the five published NCE program criteria;
- Provide a written report and detailed evaluation of strengths and weaknesses for each program criterion;
- Comment on the appropriateness of the requested budget.

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





## Guidelines for Completing a Letter of Intent

The Letter of Intent provides information on the proposed NCE network in relation to the goals and objectives of the NCE Program. It will be used in the screening process to determine which groups will be invited to submit Full Applications. It will be evaluated according to the five published NCE program criteria.

The Letter of Intent **must** be developed in collaboration with relevant stakeholders. The applicants must clearly indicate how the proposed NCE network research will integrate industry, user-sector, university and government priorities. Private and public sector participants should be informed that their level of involvement as well as their cash or in-kind commitments will be critical to the success of the network.

Up to five letters of support **may** be included from **non-academic** stakeholder organizations. They should indicate briefly the nature of the anticipated support and potential involvement in the proposed NCE network. Each letter of support **must** not exceed two pages.

**Deadline**                      **Monday, Sept 8, 2003**

The Letter of Intent must be received at the NCE Directorate by **5 p.m. EST**.

**Number of Copies**      One original plus five copies. Staple, do not bind.

**Mailing Address**              Networks of Centres of Excellence  
10<sup>th</sup> Floor, mailroom  
350 Albert Street  
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 1H5

## General Presentation

Print must be in black ink, of letter quality (minimum standard), with no more than six lines per inch. The type size for fonts measured in points (pts) must be no smaller than 12 pts. If measured in characters per inch (cpi), it must be no more than 10 cpi. Condensed type is unacceptable.

Use white paper, 8½ x 11 inches (21.5 cm x 28 cm), with margins of ¾ of an inch (1.75 cm) (minimum) all around. Enter the title of the network at the top of every page and number the pages consecutively.

Graphs and illustrations may be included, but will count as part of the page limits set out below. Either single or double column presentation of text, graphs or illustrations is acceptable. **Any extra material will be removed.**

The Letter of Intent must provide the following information:

### 1. **Summary** (Use Section A of the NCE 2005 LOI application form)

The LOI application form is available on the NCE Web site at [www.nce.gc.ca](http://www.nce.gc.ca). The following information **must** be provided:

- **Scientific Director:** name, mailing address, telephone and fax numbers, and, e-mail address for the proposed Scientific Director; letters of intent must identify a single Scientific Director.
- **Title:** name and acronym of the proposed network (in both official languages) as it will be used for publication and communication purposes;
- **Keywords:** up to ten key words related to the proposed network.



- Anticipated number of researchers: anticipated number of researchers involved in network activities at participating institutions who would be funded by the proposed network (excluding graduate students, postdoctoral fellows and research associates).
- Anticipated number of participating institutions.
- Budget Grand Total, NCE funds: the grand total from Section B, line 10.
- Details of Letters of Support: for up to five letters of support from stakeholders, provide a list of the signatories and their organizational affiliations.
- Signatures: The Scientific Director and the President or CEO of the proposed Host Institution.

## 2. Socio-economic Context (Maximum 1 page)

To assist the Selection Committee in its evaluation of the Letters of Intent using the five program criteria, a summary of the context within which the network would be positioned is required.

Define the problem areas, and the incremental economic and social benefits to Canada, of the network and the network's proposed research.

## 3. Network Vision (Maximum ½ page)

To assist the Selection Committee in its evaluation of all program criteria, describe a vision of what the network proposes to achieve, including specific goals and objectives. The vision should describe the expected end-results of the research after seven years, especially with respect to the expected outcomes and impacts on partners and the user sector.

## 4. Excellence of the Research Program

To assist the Selection Committee in its assessment of research excellence, background information about the lead proponents is required.

*Biographies: Scientific Director and Theme Leaders (Maximum 2 pages)*

- Provide a list (or table) of the names and affiliations of the proposed Theme Leaders who have agreed to participate in network activities.
- Summarize relevant accomplishments of the Scientific Director and Theme Leaders in brief biographies (up to 200 words each).

*Strategic Plan (Maximum 2 pages)*

Network research programs must be developed in collaboration with relevant stakeholders, and must integrate industry, user-sector, university, and government priorities. Applicants should develop research approaches that promote interdisciplinary collaboration. Give an overview of the network's proposed strategic plan and research program, including:

- a brief review of the current state of knowledge in the field;
- the scope, focus and general objectives of the proposed research program;
- the integration of projects and themes into a coherent research program;
- the relationship of the research program to similar work conducted elsewhere in Canada and abroad;
- the anticipated incremental value of the network relative to other efforts in the area (e.g., provincial Centres of Excellence, CIHR Institutes, other research consortia or initiatives);
- a discussion of the anticipated collaboration with other groups, if appropriate.





## 5. Development of Highly Qualified Personnel (Maximum ½ page)

Outline the network's strategy to develop highly qualified personnel and increase the marketability of trainees in relation to the needs of the user sector. Discuss the capacity of the user sector to absorb personnel trained by the network.

## 6. Networking and Partnerships (Maximum 1 page)

Networking is intended to integrate research teams and research programs and to promote effective interactions and partnerships with the user sector outside the university community.

- Discuss the linkages in existence and the strategy to build new linkages among universities, industry and governments across Canada; if foreign expertise is required, provide details;
- Indicate the anticipated level of support from other sources and describe the network's strategy for achieving the projected levels of contribution; and
- Discuss the nature and anticipated extent of involvement of the industrial and user sector in the research.

### *Letters of Support from non-academic Stakeholders (Maximum 2 pages per letter)*

Up to five letters of support **may** be included from **non-academic** stakeholder organizations. Letters of support must make explicit reference to the proposed network, and should:

- come from a senior executive with influence over a research budget;
- make commitments especially in terms of financial and/or in-kind support;

- show how the proposed NCE would help their organization; and
- indicate current and past associations with the applicant.

## 7. Knowledge and Technology Exchange and Exploitation (Maximum 1 page)

- Discuss the potential for new products, processes or services that can be commercialized by firms operating in Canada. Outline how these products or services strengthen the Canadian industrial base, enhance productivity, and contribute to long-term economic growth and social benefits.
- Discuss how the network will create an environment that encourages opportunities for collaboration with the private and public sectors. Provide concrete examples such as the application of research to technology, market development, health systems or public policy innovations.
- Discuss the potential impact, over a seven-year period, on Canada's productivity, health and social systems and/or public policy.

## 8. Management

(Maximum 1 page including ½ page organizational chart)

The basic requirements of network management are provided in the *NCE Program Guide*, the *NCE Funding Agreement* and the *NCE Network Agreement*. All are available on the NCE Web site.

A strong management with clearly defined responsibilities for shaping the strategic plan and direction of the network is essential.

- Describe the proposed management structure of the network.



- Discuss the nature and anticipated extent of involvement of the industrial and user sector in research planning, direction and management of the network.
- Outline the administrative and operational structures of the proposed network, with regard to co-ordination of activities, setting schedules, monitoring the network's progress towards its strategic goals, and allocation of resources.

*Preliminary budget allocation*

- Use Section B of the NCE 2005 LOI application form to indicate the anticipated expenditures of NCE funds for the network as a whole. Round all estimates to the nearest \$0.1M. Provide preliminary estimates for years "0" through 4. See the *NCE Program Guide* for information on eligible expenditures and use of NCE funds.
- Please note that the first year of funding will be spread over 18 months (see section *Competition Process*).
- In Section C of the Letter of Intent application form for the 2005 Competition, provide any required explanation of the preliminary budget allocation. Use only the space provided (approximately ½ page).

*Host Institution covering letter  
(maximum 2 pages)*

A letter, signed by the proposed Scientific Director and the President or CEO of the institution that proposes to host the network administrative centre,

must be included. This letter should outline the nature of anticipated support from the proposed Host Institution. Host Institutions play an important role in NCE networks, through both direct support of the administrative centre and by participating in network governance through ex-officio voting membership on the Board of Directors.

The signatures on the letter should match the signatures on Section A of the Application Form.

**Reminder**

The deadline for submission of the Letter of Intent for new NCE networks is **September 8, 2003, 5 p.m. EST**. Send the original plus five (5) copies to the NCE Directorate:

**Networks of Centres of Excellence  
10<sup>th</sup> floor, mailroom  
350 Albert Street  
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 1H5**

Tables, graphs and figures may be included within the page limits noted above. **Any extra material will be removed.**

The *Letter of Intent Guide 2005 Competition for New Networks*, the NCE LOI Application Form, and details about the NCE Program can be obtained at [www.nce.gc.ca](http://www.nce.gc.ca). For more information, please contact the NCE Program at:

**Telephone: (613) 995-6010**  
**Fax: (613) 992-7356**  
**E-mail: [info@nce.gc.ca](mailto:info@nce.gc.ca)**



## Checklist

Each Letter of Intent **must not exceed** 23 pages including the Application Form, organized by section, as follows. A three-page optional Appendix may be appended, if there is significant overlap with a current or previously funded network, to demonstrate that the Letter of Intent is for a new NCE network (see discussion on *Eligibility of Networks*, above).

	1	1 page	NCE 2005 LOI Application Form (Section A)
	2	1 page	Socio-economic Context
	3	½ page	Network Vision
	4		<b>Excellence of the Research Program</b>
		2 pages	<i>Biographies of Scientific Director and Theme Leaders</i>
		2 pages	<i>Strategic Plan</i>
	5	½ page	<b>Development of Highly Qualified Personnel</b>
	6		<b>Networking and Partnerships</b>
		1 page	<i>Discussion</i>
		10 pages	<i>Up to five letters of support from non-academic stakeholders (up to two pages each)</i>
	7	1 page	<b>Knowledge and Technology Exchange and Exploitation</b>
	8	1 page	<b>Management</b> (including ½ page organizational chart)
		1 page	<i>NCE 2005 LOI Application Form (Sections B and C)</i>
		2 pages	<i>Host Institution letter</i>

