



Questions and Answers

GENERAL

1. Can a Letter of Intent (LOI) or Full Application be submitted in either English or French?

Yes. As with all granting agency programs, the LOI and the Full Application may be submitted in either official language. Within one application, a group may choose to submit some parts in English and other parts in French (e.g. the PDF forms may be in English for some researchers and in French for others).

2. How many new networks will be funded in the 2005 NCE Competition for new networks?

Based on recent funding averages, we expect to support the establishment of two new NCEs.

3. What is the difference between the proposals required for the renewal competition and the 2005 Competition for new networks?

For the renewal competition, no LOI is required. Networks seeking renewal will be asked to submit a progress report and a full length strategic plan with research projects. For the 2005 Competition for new networks, groups must first submit an LOI. If selected, they will then be asked to submit a detailed strategic plan 40 pages in length.

4. After the 2005 Competition, when will the next one be held?

Unless the NCE Program budget is increased, there may not be a competition for new networks until 2012.

5. Are there different categories of funding under the NCE program?

The NCE program has two categories of funds. Research Management Funds (RMFs) are provided to networks successfully completing the end of an NCE funding cycle. RMFs are restricted to covering some network administration and networking costs, and may not be used to support research itself. Funding towards Full Application Preparation (FAP) is provided to applicants whose LOI for a new NCE network passes the initial screening process. FAP funding of up to \$25,000 can be used for application-related expenses such as travel, communications and workshops, as well as for secretarial, clerical and coordination services.

6. How should new networks position themselves in comparison to ongoing similar initiatives in Canada or abroad?

In both the LOI and Full Application, we expect that groups of applicants will clearly define the relationship between their proposed network and similar initiatives elsewhere in Canada and abroad. The incremental value to be added by the proposed network must be explained. For example, what do you envision as the functional working relationship with similar groups?





7. What about the involvement of a researcher in more than one project within the same network? What if a researcher is already involved in an existing network?

A researcher may be involved in more than one project within the same network and may also be involved in projects in two networks. There are several examples of this among existing networks. Obviously, the researcher must have the time to contribute adequately to the various projects.

8. Can a position such as a Canada Research Chair be considered a contribution?

No. Although it is worth mentioning as it is evidence of a positive environment, such a position would exist with or without the NCE Program. We are interested in incremental contributions that will only occur because of the network.

9. Should individuals who will be involved in the management of the network be identified in the LOI or in the Full Application?

In the LOI, we expect a summary of your plans for an effective management structure for the proposed network. A half-page organizational chart must be provided. In the Full Application, we expect additional details that clearly and precisely indicate the expertise of key people who will be involved at various management levels, their expected responsibilities and their anticipated salary ranges. You do not need to identify a specific candidate for the position of Network Manager, but we need to know the expertise that you will be seeking and the scope of the manager's responsibilities.

10. Can NCEs that are finishing their final cycle of funding in 2005 re-apply in the 2005 NCE competition for new networks?

The objective of the 2005 Competition is to fund new NCE networks. Networks funded for two seven-year funding cycles are ineligible for additional NCE funding other than Research Management Funds (see the *NCE Program Guide* for details). LOIs and Full Applications will be scrutinized 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 LOI package. In such a case, the short explanation (to a maximum of three 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.

11. What should the letters of support indicate?

Letters of support normally:

- come from a senior executive with influence over a research budget;





- | make a commitment especially in terms of financial or in-kind support;
- | explain how the network would help the organization; and
- | indicate past associations with the network.

12. Can small institutions host an NCE?

Yes. Small institutions can host NCEs, as long as they can provide the necessary infrastructure.

13. Can an NCE have two host-institutions?

No.

14. Can a group from the social sciences put forward an LOI?

Yes, the NCE is open to all disciplines, including the social sciences. One objective of the program is to transfer knowledge to partners from the public sector, with the aim of creating new policies and programs.

15. What kind of skills should the scientific director bring to the network?

Excellent management skills, scientific leadership and strategic thinking.

FULL APPLICATIONS

16. What time-commitment is expected from the scientific director?

During the first year, the scientific director's responsibilities are extensive. The work includes implementing the network administrative centre, and establishing the full Board of Directors and the Research Management Committee. For this reason, each scientific director must allocate sufficient funds within his or her budget to employ a professional Network Manager (i.e. the equivalent of the COO) and the required administrative staff.

17. There is a \$25K award for the preparation of the Full Application. How much time do we have to spend these funds and how can they be used?

The \$25K award to assist you in preparing a full network application is tenable for up to eight months, beginning from the formal invitation to submit a Full Application until the Expert Panel review. The funds can be used for application-related expenses such as travel, communications and workshops, as well as for secretarial, clerical and coordination services. Application-related expenses may include participation in the Interdisciplinary Expert Review Panel meeting. No new expenses or commitments can be incurred under this grant following the review of the Interdisciplinary Expert Review Panel, and funds outstanding at that time must be returned to the NCE Directorate.

18. Do the Full Applications need to include a list of all members for the Board of Directors?

Yes. This is a change from previous NCE Competitions. Proposed members of the Board of Directors must be listed in Book 1, Section B (Alphabetical List of Key Individuals). Short





biographies for these individuals must be provided in Book 3.

19. Who can sit on the Research Management Committee of a network?

A network's Research Management Committee is usually chaired by the Scientific Director and is composed of researchers from the network as well as representatives from the user sectors – industry and government. In the Full Application, proposed members of the Research Management Committee must be listed in Book 1, Section B (Alphabetical List of Key Individuals).

20. How important is the geographical distribution of the investigators or groups of investigators?

It is important to identify the best talent in Canada for the network. However, some networks have nodes of excellence in certain areas that might not cover all of Canada. (For example, AquaNet, which involves the east- and west-coast aquaculture industry, includes investigators mainly from these regions where there is particular interest and expertise is in aquaculture.)

21. Should all experts in the field participate in the network? What happens if this results in more than 200 investigators?

The network must have a clear vision with stated objectives. This vision must strike a balance between being too wide and ambitious and being too focused. It is important to be able to meet the strategic plan and involve the investigators needed to achieve this. The Network needs to be selective and include the best investigators.

EXPERT PANELS

22. Will there be a separate Expert Panel for each Full Application?

Yes.

23. Does the Expert Panel review include a visit to the host institution of a proposed network and network partner organizations?

No. The review meeting will be held at a hotel or other location as decided by the NCE Directorate. The NCE Directorate, in consultation with the group invited to submit a full NCE application, will decide the city and date of the review meeting.

24. Will we have the opportunity to suggest names for the Expert Panels? How many Expert Panel members will be selected from our suggestions?

Yes. We try to have two or three individuals from your list as members of the Expert Panel. In some cases, however, there may be no members on the Panel from your list.

25. Should we suggest mainly scientific experts for the Expert Panel?

No. The Panel will be comprised of experts in research areas of the proposed network: research management; knowledge and technology transfer; commercialization; and public policy. We would appreciate your suggestions on experts in all these fields. Please note





that with six to eight Expert Panel members, it is not possible to cover all areas of proposed research in a proposed network.

26. Can you give examples of conflicts of interest for potential members of the Expert Review Panel?

- anyone proposed as a Network Investigator in the proposed network;
- any individual who is likely to benefit financially from network activities;
- representatives of the host institution; and
- representatives of the proposed network's private sector partners.

The participation of individuals from the same institution as a Network Investigator will be considered on a case-by-case basis by the NCE Directorate. Since networks involve many researchers from a variety of Canadian institutions, the rules for conflicts are not as straight forward as those for the individual or team grants in regular programs of the granting agencies. Should you have additional questions on conflict of interest, please contact the NCE Directorate.

27. For the review meeting, who will cover travel expenses of the network representatives?

The \$25K grant from the NCE may be used to cover these expenses. The NCE Directorate will cover the meeting room and meals during the course of the meeting. Representatives of partners normally pay their own expenses, and this can be considered as their contribution to the proposed network.

PARTNERS AND STAKEHOLDERS

28. Can one company be involved with more than one proposal in the competition?

Yes. A company's involvement or commitment could imply a different type of interaction with each of the proposals. For example, the company's researchers could collaborate with university researchers in one or more research projects in one network. The company could also participate in a network as an associate or affiliate industry partner, which could give it access to some of the network research. The company could also have input into the direction of this research through participation in Research Management or Industrial/Partner Advisory Committees, as well as through its involvement in the application of the research at the market stage.

29. Can an incorporated company started by a university researcher be involved in a network?

Yes. However, any such researchers would have to declare their conflicts of interest, and they could not be present during discussions and decisions at the management level related to the review and budget of the research projects in which their companies are involved. Our goal is to avoid situations where there is a conflict of interest, or a perception of conflict of interest, without discouraging the entrepreneurial spirit of researchers.

30. Can we receive support from foreign partners or involve foreign researchers?

Yes. In the context of the NCE Program, international collaboration is welcome. Applicants





must clearly demonstrate the advantages that such collaborations would bring to the network and to Canada. International collaborators, however, bring their own resources to the collaboration since NCE funds can only flow to researchers at eligible Canadian institutions.

A network can receive support from foreign companies on the understanding that any outcomes of the network research program must follow the “Benefit to Canada” guidelines. Confidentiality of information will have to be carefully examined.

Moreover, applicants must justify and demonstrate how foreign researchers would bring needed expertise to the network. Issues of intellectual property and the exchange of confidential information or materials will also have to be addressed.

31. What would be appropriate in terms of the partners’ contribution to the total budget of the NCE?

There are no predetermined rules. It differs for each proposed network and its sector of operations. Both cash and in-kind contributions are seen as valid contributions. Each stated commitment will be assessed on an individual basis. However, in some cases, cash contributions may demonstrate a real commitment to and interest in the outcomes of the network program.

POST-DECISION: FUNDED NETWORKS

32. What rules will determine which granting agency should be chosen for the administration of the network?

In general, the rules and policies of the granting agency into whose domain the network’s research falls will apply to that network. Networks whose research falls under the mandate of more than one agency must choose and adhere to the rules and policies of a single agency.

33. When do new networks submit the NCE Funding Agreement or NCE Network Agreement?

These agreements are submitted after the final funding decision is announced. Networks will prepare their Network Agreement and Funding Agreements with text provided by the NCE Directorate. The Funding Agreement will be signed by the granting agencies, the host institution and the network. The Network Agreement will be signed by at least three-quarters of the participating institutions (i.e. institutions eligible to receive research funds from the granting agencies) prior to the release of NCE funds.

34. What kind of management structure is needed for an NCE?

Descriptions of the NCE management structure are provided in the *NCE Program Guide* and the *NCE Funding Agreement*. Both documents can be found on the NCE Web site at: http://www.nce.gc.ca/comp/comp2005_e.htm.

35. Once a network is launched, how do we take care of intellectual property?





Intellectual property (IP) is covered under the Network Agreement, which is a standard document signed by all participating institutions. All investigators must sign an acknowledgement of the Network Agreement before they receive NCE funding. The Funding Agreement can be found on the NCE Web site at:

http://www.nce.gc.ca/comp/comp2005_e.htm.

The Network Agreement lists the guiding principles of IP and respects each institution's IP policies. The network should also act as a facilitator between the universities, the partners and the investigators. Part of its mandate should be to educate the investigators about IP issues and to carefully monitor the management of the network's funded IP by each of the institutions

