

UofT CFI Innovation Fund 2025

Pre-Proposal Instructions

Pre-Proposal packages to be submitted by the Vice/Associate Dean/Principal Research
by no later than **10 July 2024**
via email attachment to rso.vpr@utoronto.ca

A Pre-Proposal is required for each initiative seeking an allocation from the UofT CFI Innovation Fund 2025 'envelope' whether the proposal will be led by UofT or by another eligible institution.

Please refer to the IF2025 [Call for Proposals](#) to ensure that the submission addresses this competition's objectives, expectations, and assessment criteria including emphasis on EDI.

You are also strongly encouraged to review the [CFI Policy & Program Guide](#), which sets out CFI eligibility requirements and permitted expenses etc.

Document format

The pre-proposal submission will include the following documents in **PDF format**:

1. Project Information Form (template)
2. Project Summary (up to 1 page)
3. Project Proposal (maximum 9 pages)
4. Budget Justification (maximum 2 pages)
5. Project Budget: infrastructure and IOF budgets (template)

For the Project Summary, Project Proposal and Budget Justification, please adhere to the following:

- 8.5" x 11" pages only
- 12-point, black font, single spaced and no more than 6 lines per inch
- Margin of no less than 2.5 cm (1 inch) around the page. The header and footer may be within the margin.
- PDF files only (no encryption or password protection)

1. Project Information Form

This form is very similar to the EoI form submitted in June (with the addition of links to each researcher's academic website in lieu of a CV) and provides an opportunity to update and/or confirm those information points.

As in the CFI form, the Pre-Proposal may include two Project Leaders. The first named project leader should normally be from the UofT Division/Faculty leading the proposal. The proposal may include up to 10 Principal Users, *including* the Project Lead(s).

Where a proposal will be led by another institution, the form should indicate both the U of T lead, as well as the overall project lead & their institution. If the other institution is located outside Ontario, and UofT is the only participating institution in Ontario, the UofT lead will be responsible for submitting the matching application to Ontario.

2. Project Summary (up to 1 page)

In plain language, appropriate for a multidisciplinary review committee, provide a general description of the research or technology development to be undertaken and a general overview of the infrastructure being requested.

This summary should also concisely address the extent to which the proposal meets the stated **competition objectives**:

1. Enable internationally competitive research or technology development through the equitable participation of expert team members
 - (for the SSHA stream: Enhance the capacity of institutions to conduct the research or technology development program over the useful life of the infrastructure)
2. Enhance the capacity of institutions to conduct the research or technology development program over the useful life of the infrastructure
 - (for the SSHA stream: Enhance the capacity of institutions to conduct the research program over the useful life of the infrastructure)
3. Generate benefits for Canadians

3. Project Proposal (up to 9 pages)

Use this section to address the assessment criteria related to the three *stream-specific* objectives identified above and as discussed in Section 3 of the Call:

Objective 1: address Research or Technology Development; Team (for SSHA stream: Research only)

Objective 2: address Infrastructure; Sustainability

Objective 3: address Benefits

There is no specified allocation of pages to each objective and related criteria; however, please be sure to address the points and criterion standards set out in *Section 3* of the Draft Call. The Proposal should include any images, figures or diagrams you wish to include. Additional pages will not be circulated for review.

4. Budget Justification (up to 2 pages)

In this Call, CFI has placed increased emphasis on timing – reserving the right to withdraw support from projects that have not finalized their awards within 9 months of funding decision and setting timelines for project completion. Projects not sufficiently developed to meet these timelines should be held back for the next competition (next full proposal deadline expected to be Fall 2027).

To prepare a Pre-proposal Budget:

1. Referring to the Excel Budget form discussed in Section 5 below, describe the requested infrastructure, its proposed location, and how it will enable the research or technology development activities. Provide a clear and concise budget justification for the items requested. Please reference items with their respective line item number and description. While it is recommended that the applicant bundle items into functional groups, the budget justification should provide a cost breakdown for the major components within any grouping.
2. Describe the availability of similar infrastructure within the institution, the region and the country.
3. Describe how the use of the proposed infrastructure will be maximized and how it will strengthen multi-disciplinary approaches, collaborations, and partnerships within and among institutions and sectors (private, public, and non-profit).
4. Describe the operations, management and long-term sustainability of the infrastructure.
5. For proposals that include construction or renovation costs, include:

- Confirmation that necessary approvals are in place to use the space(s) identified, including specifying when the space will be made available to the project for necessary construction and/or renovation works or for equipment installation to begin;
- A description of the space, including the location(s), size and nature (wet lab, dry lab, office, greenhouse, etc.) of the space;
- A breakdown of the overall cost of the construction or renovation project, categorized by major cost component. These costs should be determined after consultation with appropriate staff who work in the space/planning area of your department/division. Please provide a brief explanation as to how the cost was determined and by whom.

If you have drawings of the spaces, these may be provided in addition to this 2-page document.

5. BUDGET (Excel forms)

The Excel file ("IF2025 Pre-Proposal Budget") contains two budget sheets for completion. Applicants are strongly encouraged to read the [CFI Policy & Program Guide](#) for guidance on eligible (and ineligible) expenses and contributions.

CFI has extended the range of eligible items to include funding to operate, access and maintain databases. Proposals submitting to Stream 3 (core facility) may also include some expenses for operations and management.

The first tab ("Detailed Budget") sets out the equipment and other items included in the main infrastructure project budget and for which funding is requested. The second tab ("Budget Example") provides a very simple example of how the budget sheet should be completed.

The third tab ("O&M Budget") is to show how the *total* operations and maintenance expenses for the requested infrastructure will be covered over the first 5 years of operations. This table will include spending using the CFI IOF (infrastructure operating funds) automatically provided to CFI awards, as well as other contributions needed to operate and maintain the infrastructure in a 'research ready' state. The fourth tab ("O&M Example") provides a simple worked example of a completed budget.

Project budget

Please complete the "Detailed Budget" tab in the Excel form listing all of the items requested in the proposal.

The total cost of each item includes both cash and in-kind contributions. CFI will contribute up to 40% of the TPC in cash; an application is normally made to Ontario to match the CFI contribution. The remaining minimum 20% contribution is typically the sum of vendor deep discounts, but may also/instead include cash or other [contributions](#) from partners. *There is no competitive benefit to requesting less than 40% from CFI.*

- Cash will come from CFI and also usually Ontario (or other provincial funders, if you are partnering with institutions outside Ontario), but may also be provided from other sources (including the University). The value of the CFI cash and provincial 'match' are normally the same. University contributions are typically listed as 'cash', even if they are what you may consider to be 'in-kind' (e.g. personnel)
- [In-kind](#) contributions are non-cash contributions from equipment vendors or other partners. Vendors will often provide deep discounts on prices. Other partners may provide other supports, such as personnel, or equipment: all contributions must be included as a line item in the main budget.

It is recommended that items be bundled into functional groups or systems, where appropriate. List only the eligible infrastructure acquisition and development costs.

List the total eligible cost of each item. This cost should include taxes, shipping, and installation. Note that taxes do not apply to an in-kind contribution/discount; Costs must be close estimates of fair market value. Refer to the CFI Policy & Program Guide (<https://www.innovation.ca/awards/policy-and-program-guide-and-supplemental-information>) for information on how in-kind contributions must be assessed.

If the infrastructure will be used for purposes other than research or technology development, list only pro-rated research or technology development costs.

Given CFI and Ontario decision timelines, assume purchases will not normally be possible until 2026, although eligible purchases made since 1 November, 2023 may be included.

Operations & Maintenance (O&M)

Please complete the “O&M Budget” tab in the Excel form.

CFI continues to emphasize the importance of sustainability, which will be important in describing ongoing operations and maintenance costs of the infrastructure. This table outlines total annual costs and sources of support committed to ensuring effective O&M of the infrastructure for the first five years after it becomes operational.

The table should include the IOF provided by CFI (in the ‘institutional’ line). For most projects the IOF alone will not cover the full O&M expenses over 5 years so you should show other sources of funding/support. Note the CFI IOF funding is assured and will not be reduced by CFI, even if the IOF and other revenue together exceed the 5-year O&M budget. You should not expect to receive IOF funding for at least two years after the project is finalized with CFI.

The table should not include costs related to research and/or technology development.

Academic divisions are responsible for ensuring operation & maintenance of all awarded infrastructure for a minimum of 5 years from acquisition, or its useful life, whichever is later.

Additional Considerations

Research Security

Institutions applying for CFI funding have research security obligations at the time of application under both the Government of Canada’s [National Security Guidelines for Research Partnerships](#) and the [Policy on Sensitive Technology Research and Affiliations of Concern \(STRAC\)](#). The [CFI approach to research security](#) will help to determine whether a risk assessment form including a risk mitigation form will be required for projects moving forward to the national level competition.

Given that these projects normally include a second application to the [Ontario Research Fund Large Infrastructure](#) program, projects moving forward are also subject to Ontario’s approach to [mitigating economic and geopolitical risk](#).

Research Services will be working closely with the VPRI Research Security Team to ensure that any research security considerations associated with projects under review in this competition are identified and addressed. Please see the VPRI [Safeguarding Research](#) website and contact researchsecurity@utoronto.ca should you have any questions.

Advanced Research Computing

If the computing request is at least \$100,000, CFI imposes additional requirements.

Institutions may submit proposals including advanced research computing infrastructure and related resources to carry out a research or technology development project. However, proposals that focus predominately on collective and shared advanced research computing infrastructure will not be accepted as those would normally be supported by the through the national [Digital Research Alliance of Canada](#) (DRAC) platform.

CFI expects that new or additional research computing resources funded through this competition, and costing more than \$100,000, will normally be housed, managed and operated by the DRAC. However, the CFI recognizes that there are instances where research computing infrastructure is best housed, managed and operated by institutions.

CFI expects all institutions to consult with the DRAC when planning to request advanced research computing infrastructure. For such cases, please visit the [DRAC's](#) website (<https://alliancecan.ca/en/services/advanced-research-computing/grant-consultations/policy-guidance-integrated-hardware-contributed-systems>) for information on the established process to facilitate collaboration with institutions.

Advanced research computing infrastructure normally includes systems or resources such as:

- Capacity or throughput computing
- Capability computing supporting tightly coupled, fine-grained applications
- Shared memory systems
- Systems supporting very large memory requirements
- High-performance storage
- Long-term storage
- Cloud computing
- Computing using specialized accelerators, including GP-CPU and others
- High-performance visualization systems
- Systems suitable for computational steering and interactive use

CFI has determined that the threshold for such systems is \$100,000, where the advanced research computing infrastructure encompasses both the software and environment needed for a given discipline to effectively utilize these types of infrastructure such as high levels of data security and integrity.

Principal User CVs

CVs are not required for the Pre-Proposal. The tables in sections 2 and 3 of the information sheet should include a link to the academic website of each researcher listed.

Submitting the Pre-Proposal

Pre-Proposals must be submitted to Research Services by no later than **5pm Wednesday, July 10, 2024**. Given the intense timelines for internal review and in fairness to all applicants, **late and/or incomplete submissions will not be accepted.**

The submission should be made by email attachment to rso.vpr@utoronto.ca and must be submitted by the Vice/Associate Dean/Principal Research of the lead academic division.

Please address any questions to:

Kevin Hamilton, Director, Institutional Initiatives (kevin.hamilton@utoronto.ca) or Elizabeth Nguyen, Research Funding Officer (elizabeth.nguyen@utoronto.ca).

Last updated: RSO, 14 May 2024