

Institutional Core Facilities - Application Process and Guidelines

In 2022, the Core Facilities Working Group recommended coordination and support for Institutional Core Facilities (ICFs) at the University of Toronto. ICFs may be eligible to receive central support as determined by their home Division and the ICF Governance Committee*. This document is intended to assist with the completion of an ICF application.

**Note that the final support/resources for each ICF will be needs-based and finalized in consultation with the facility manager and academic director, once the facility has been approved as an ICF.*

Who Should Apply:

The following criteria are to be used as guiding principles in the determination of an Institutional Core Facility (ICF) at the University of Toronto:

- Is broadly accessible to all users from across UofT and affiliated hospitals, irrespective of their administrative affiliation and with no requirement for collaboration or co-authorship amongst users;
- Supports multiple divisions with the host division typically representing less than 50% of facility use;
- Has a defined and transparent governance and management structure with dedicated technical and/or operational staff;
- Has specific technical expertise or equipment that is highly needed by the research community.

How to apply – Step 1 (initial assessment):

The [U of T ICF Application Form](#) is to be completed by the Manager and/or Director of the facility and submitted online directly through REDCap.

The following sections are included in the ICF Application Form. Optional sections are noted with an asterisk. Additional information to help complete each section with the details needed for evaluation is provided below. Questions can be sent to core.facilities@utoronto.ca.

Facility Details

- Facility Name
- Facility Website
- Location (Building & Room Number)
- Host Division
 - If more than one Division is supporting the facility, please list all in this section
 - Note that in the ICF pilot phase, applications will only be accepted from the 5 Divisions currently listed in the Application Form. Based on the data, we expect this program to develop and expand in future application years.
- Has this application been endorsed by the Vice-Dean, Research of the host Division?
 - It is expected that facilities will discuss their plans to apply to become an ICF with their division(s) in advance and all applications will have the support of divisional leadership.
- Academic Director
 - If none currently exists, note N/A

- Facility Director (or Manager)
 - If none currently exists, note N/A

Facility Criteria

- ICF criteria
 - Please check all criteria that are applicable to the facility in its **current** operational format. Note that supporting information for each point will be requested. Exclusion of some criteria will not deem a facility ineligible for ICF status but may be used in future growth planning.
- Link the Facility's research objectives to University of Toronto's [Institutional Strategic Research Plan](#).
- Facility infrastructure and/or technical expertise
 - Please describe the specialized equipment or technical expertise currently in the facility that serve the research community. Do not include planned equipment or services.
 - VPRI should already have a list of your facility's equipment on file. **This section in the application is not meant to be an exhaustive list but should highlight unique or high-value or high-use infrastructure that contributes to the demand of the facility.** It can indicate any equipment that is vital for operations or services provided by the facility that are of value to the UofT community or external users.
 - Note that if approved as an ICF, the equipment list of the facility will be included in the institutional equipment inventory database accessible through the [VPRI Core Facilities website](#) and will need to be updated on an annual basis.
- Facility services
 - Please provide a description of the services provided by the facility.
 - Services can include fee-for-service offerings as well as complementary services or expertise provided by facility staff (i.e., sample preparation, data analysis, project technology development or trouble shooting).
- Facility support for training of research personnel including students*
 - ***This is an optional section.*** If none currently exists, note N/A.
 - If applicable, outline the resources (staff time, in person or online training modules, etc.) provided by the facility.
 - Include details such as:
 - If the training is **required** for facility use or optional
 - If the training is done in groups or one-on-one
 - If the training time is billed to the user
 - If training must be renewed/updated and how often
- A list of current users and their affiliations (upload attachment)
 - Upload a PDF with a list of current users
 - "Current" is defined as usage within the last 12 months.
 - For UofT affiliated users, multiple researchers from the same lab should be counted as a single user (e.g. Professor XXX lab) and the total number of hours for the lab calculated.
 - A template for the user list is provided here but can include other information if

downloaded from an existing platform.

User (lab) name	Institution	Division/Dept (if internal)	Hrs of use (per yr)	

- **Note that the list does not need to be exhaustive but should show the cross-divisional use of the facility and approximate usage by different labs, and divisions/departments.**
- Please indicate how the usage time has been tracked and calculated.

- The organizational structure of the facility (upload attachment)
 - Upload one file (PDF) showing the organizational structure of the facility including all current technical staff, the facility manager, and any advisory or governing bodies for the facility.

- Members of advisory committee*
 - ***This is an optional section.*** If none currently exists, note N/A.
 - If applicable, name the members of the advisory or governance committee of the facility, including their division/department affiliation (if internal) or organization (if external)

How to apply – Step 2 (full assessment):

Who Should Apply:

Those facilities that pass the initial assessment criteria will be asked to complete additional details including the following:

- Metrics to measure usage and effectiveness of facility and a description of how they are collected, determined and analyzed.
- *Current costs (based on the most recent fiscal year actual expenses) for operating and maintaining the facility, including:
 - Warranties or service contracts
 - Renewal of research equipment
 - Consumables and space
 - Software used for booking, billing and measurement of usage
 - Salaries for dedicated technical and administrative personnel
- *Fee schedule (both internal and external) with explanation and rationale of how fees have been determined and how often these are reviewed and revised.

**Templates for these sections will be provided to those facilities asked to the full assessment stage.*

What happens next:

- Full applications will be reviewed for completion by the Senior Strategist, Research & Financial Director for ICFs. Facility directors or managers will be contacted for follow up (if needed)
- The ICF Governance Committee members will review applications and a final list of ICFs will be approved unanimously by the committee
- Those facilities that are approved as ICFs will meet with the Senior Strategist, Research to review the existing operational and financial needs of the facility co-create an MOU that outlines the key supports for the facility (both services and financial support) to be provided by VPRI.
- The MOU will be signed by the academic director, as representative from the facility, the Vice-Dean(s), Research, from supporting Division(s), and the AVP, Research from VPRI.
- Included in the MOU will be a specific plan for increasing metrics (e.g. usage, revenue, training, etc.) of the facility toward self-sustainability such that progress towards these can be measured on an annual basis through ICF reporting.

Post-award Reporting Requirements:

The Facility Director will submit a progress report to the ICF Committee on an annual basis. The report will be customized to reflect the business plan and KPIs outlined in the ICF's MOU, but will include some of the following:

- Demonstration that the facility continues to meet the needs of the research community
- Any changes to equipment during the reporting period or envisioned in the following year
- A summary of meetings of the Advisory Committee (or other governance body) and any

resulting directions or plans

- An updated list of users
- Objectives for the upcoming year
- A three-year rolling plan that describes proposed changes to important operations, regulations and acquisition (or disposal) of equipment
- A report on KPIs and achievements including key user surveys
- Financial information for the current year with any explanation of significant variance, budget for upcoming year and quantification and plans for any reserves. Include both expenses and sources of funds;
- Current fee schedule (internal and external) with explanation and rationale for both changes or maintenance of existing fees;
- Planned grant applications or pursuit of partnership agreements to support the facility
- Requests for university support for renewal of research equipment or certain operational needs, where required*.

* External funding sources such as research grants, particularly CFI-IFs, will continue to be the first option for funding research infrastructure and operations. Requests for central university funding in support of new or renewal of research equipment, or certain operational needs, may be made as part of the annual reporting process to the ICF Governance Committee. **The Governance Committee will have oversight of an annual disbursement of Core Facility Support Fund and will make decisions on OTO funds for renewal of research equipment or certain operational needs, where required.**