November 16, 2021 Q&A Session for NFRF-T LOI Webinar

2020 Competition Results

Q: When will the results of the previous competition (NFRFT 2020) be available for the general public? Seeing the types and scope of projects that were funded would be useful for many applicants.

    A: Unfortunately the information is under embargo and we do not have a date for when it will be made public. We are waiting for a ministerial announcement.

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Competition Numbers

Q: How many eligible NOIs did you receive?

    A: We received 233 NOIs

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Q: Are you expecting to invite about the same number (up to 12) to the full proposal stage?

    A: It will depend on how many are submitted at the LOI stage and furthermore are invited to the full application stage

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Eligibility

Q: Can a LOI be submitted if a new opportunity has arisen without a NOI being submitted?

    A: No, all applications must have gone through the NOI stage.

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Q: Can you apply to NFRF Transformation opportunities in the same year as applying for SSHRC and NSERC opportunities?

    A: Yes, you may. Keep in mind you can only apply to 1 Transformation application as an NPI or co-PI

    A: You may not submit an application for the same project to more than one funding opportunity across the three federal funding agencies.

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Q: Can an ECR be NPI

    A: Yes they can be the NPI

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Q: Can an PI be from a non-academic institution?

    A: A Co-PI can, an NPI cannot be from a non-academic institution.

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Q: I may have missed this at the beginning, but just to confirm, postdocs cannot be PIs?

    A: That is correct.

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Q: If we inadvertently listed a post-doc as co-PI, does that disqualify us at this point or can we make changes to co-PIs?

    A: Please email the NFRF team in this regard and we can help you address your specific case

    A: Your RGO should also review to ensure all the participants are eligible before submitting to the agency.

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Q: Your slide on the RGO only noted that the RGO is certifying on behalf of that the NPI is eligible and has the necessary time. Can you confirm if RGOs are also expected to confirm the eligibility of all participants at the LOI stage?

    A: RGOs are asked to confirm that all the participants meet the eligibility requirements.

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Q: Can the project be internationally based only

    A: The NPI's primary affiliation must be with a Canadian institution.

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Q: Can the project be based solely in low- and middle-income countries?

    A: The NPI must be affiliated with a Canadian institution. Also consider the High Reward criterion which considers the project's benefit for Canada, including reputational benefit.

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Q: Can an application include a number of international co-PIs or co-applicants

    A: Yes. We encourage including the best experts in the field from across the globe.

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Q: If a PI from a Canadian university is affiliated with a for-profit company, can they be eligible for Co-PI or Co-app?

    A: The primary affiliation must be with a Canadian University with institutional eligibility with one of the 3 granting agencies. If the individual has a secondary affiliation with a for-profit, eligibility to serve as Co-Pi and/or Co-applicant will be based on specific circumstances. Please email the NFRF for the particular situation for more details.

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Q: What if the NPI moves to another institution?

    A: The NPI can write to NFRF to request the change to their affiliation.

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Q: Can an application switch from administering institution to another between LOI and full application (if invited)?

A: Yes, this is possible.

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Q: Can postdocs be collaborators

A: Yes, as long as they are not supervised by another participant or collaborator.

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Q: Can a collaborator be no longer associated with a Canadian university?

A: Yes, a collaborator can be anyone who will contribute to the project.

A: Can be from any institution/ organization

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Q: Should community partners/stakeholders be listed as collaborators? Do we need letters of support from them?

A: Yes they can be listed as collaborators. There is no need for letters of support

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Q: To which extent should the team have a history of working together before the application?

A: This is not something that is asked for or looked at for submissions. This can be a new working relationship.

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Q: Is there a feeder grant mechanism that people would be expected to have received prior to be successful in the NFRF grant (e.g., any kind of development grant)?

A: There is no such expectation

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Application Requirements

Q: Are the guidelines/requirements the same as the previous round? If not, could you briefly talk about the differences?

A: They are the same this year as last

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Q: Can we change our project description and title from what we submitted for NOI

A: Yes, these sections are unlocked at the LOI stage

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Q: Should applicants repeat any information in the LOI that was included in the NOI? (i.e., brief description of the challenge/problem)?

A: This section will automatically be populated. You may wish to revise those sections if necessary.

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Q: Can the project description from NOI be changed for LOI?

A: Yes, NOI content, including the Outline of challenge and Overview of approach, may be updated at the LOI stage.

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Q: What is the difference between the 10-page proposal at the LOI stage and the proposal for the full application?

A: Please have a look at our full application guide online, you will see the full application requires more detailed information

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Q: Are the references to be in the form of typical letters of support?

A: No, we don't ask for letters of support. These are literature references.

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Q: And are these references/letters accepted over and above the 10-12 pages for the proposal?

A: The references section is unlimited. There is no page limit.

A: But these do not include letters. Letters of support are not a part of the proposal and should not be submitted.

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Interdisciplinarity

Q: Just to confirm - how can we determine that the proposal relates to themes from 2 of the 3 tri-council funding areas?

A: We ask that they cross the mandates of at least 2 of the 3 funding agencies. I would encourage you to have a look at their websites for further guidance. Alternately, the CRDC codes used in your application also help us see the areas of research

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Q: Is there a number of integrated disciplines that seems to be ideal? i.e. a number beyond which the complexity and limited space to discuss the project suffers?

A: It really does depend on your proposed project

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EDI and Personal Information

Q: Can you revisit the fact that we can or cannot share the name of the applicant (i.e. ECR or just the department?)

A: We are asking that their personal information be removed, so as not to identify them.

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Q: Can you clarify -- you consider the name of an ECR to be personal information that should not be included in the LOI?

A: that is correct, when you are filling out the ECR section (not adding a participant)

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Q: But how do we include an ECR as a confirmed member of the team if we do not name them?

A: The two sections are different, one is participation and the other is a section to fill out on meaningful integration

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Q: But are we supposed to also keep personal information away from EDI section?
    A: Correct. Self-identifying information is to be avoided in the EDI section. You can include information about the team members' affiliations, but not their personal information, including their name.

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Q: Can we still mention the affiliation and specific training programs in the EDI?
    A: Yes, team members' affiliations can be included in the EDI section.

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Q: Will there be any consideration for teams populated by racialized researchers?
    A: Yes, the EDI section is central to this stream.

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Q: Can we give stats, e.g. proportion of women without naming them?
    A: yes

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Q: Earlier there was a question: Will there be any consideration for teams populated by racialized researchers? Response: Yes, the EDI section is central to this stream. My understanding though is that EDI is not about the composition of the team, but rather the approach the team will take to issues around EDI. Can you please clarify?
    A: Yes, the EDI section is about the team's commitment and approach to EDI, not its demographics.

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ECRs

Q: What proportion of the team should be ECRs?
    A: the minimum is 1 ECR needs to be confirmed. You can have as many as you wish, but as long as you have 1 confirmed you will be ok to apply.

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Q: Is ECR being NPI a negative point considered by the reviewing committee?
    A: It's not a question of negative/positive. Bur rather demonstrating, that the NPI (ECR in this case) has the acumen and experience to lead a large scale project such as Transformation

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Feedback

Q: Do we get feedback about the LOI?
    A: only LOIs that are discussed will receive feedback.
    A: The committee provides a message only to discussed applications

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Q: Is there any feedback beyond the scores?
    A: Feedback is provided to applications that are discussed at the LOI stage.

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Q: Would that feedback be emailed to the PI?

A: Feedback is made available to the NPI through the Convergence portal.

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Q: Will it be possible to respond to previous review at the full application stage.

A: Not all LOIs receive feedback; however, the full application can reflect any feedback received.

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Q: The scorecard-only feedback is not transparent - you need to do more than this-

A: Unfortunately, with the high number of applications and the work on committee members who are also volunteers, we cannot prepare feedback for every single application

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Q: Evaluation criteria sometimes are not clear. For instance, what is the difference between an exceptional and a very good novelty approach? Can you provide concrete examples?

A: Evaluation criteria are available on our website, under "Evaluation Matrices"

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Q: What does "tackle a well-defined problem or challenge" mean? For example, many scientific projects are open-ended, e.g. origin of life but many engineering projects are problem-solution focused, e.g. climate change mitigation. Would the latter be favoured over the former?

A: It's not about favouring one over the other. I understand that scientific projects can be open-ended. However, for Transformation, the purpose is to address a problem or challenge in your field.

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Q: For EDI/ECR and Interdisciplinary criteria, I saw Mixed scores instead of Pass or Fail. Can you explain?

A: A mixed scored indicates that there wasn't consensus among committee members on the score.

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Q: Does a rating of "mixed" indicate that you received some Pass and some Fail assessments?

A: Yes that is correct

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Q: What rating was needed to get discussed by the committee and therefore received a feedback on a previous application?

A: This will depend on the ratings of applications.

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Q: Based on the 2020 Transformation competition, what are the main reasons for proposals not successful? Any lessons can be shared with us in order to prepare better proposals?

A: I would encourage you to have a look at the successful grants when they are posted.

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Peer Review and Reviewer Suggestions

Q: If your expert review panel is the same as the last round, there is little point in submitting a similar program of research?

A: The composition of the multidisciplinary/multisectoral review panel and the expert reviewers will be different from in 2020.

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Q: Can I add list of reviewers in LOI stage?

A: Yes, suggested reviewers and excluded reviewers.

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Q: Can we recommend people who might be qualified only to comment on 'aspects' of the proposal rather than the entire thing?

A: Absolutely! This is why we ask for 20 suggestions this way you can have the proper expert to weigh in on each project aspect.

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Q: 20 reviewers is a lot. With Indigenous research this might pose a problem due to the relatively low number of people qualified to comment--particularly given that some significant percentage of those people might be on the grant itself.

A: Thank you for your feedback. The suggested reviewers help program staff find the most appropriate reviewers for the applications received. We do ask for at least 10 from a country other than Canada.

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Budget

Q: Does the NFRF budget allow for compensation to site partners/collaborators?

A: Collaborators cannot access grant funds

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Q: For partners to access grant funds, should they be listed as co-applicants then?

A: If they are eligible to be a co-applicant.

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Q: If we have a PI from a university or institution outside of Canada, can we allocate a portion of the budget that goes towards salary support?

A: International researchers may be compensated from grant funds, provided their employer can attest, by letter, that the individual is not being compensated by the employer for time spent on the grant-funded research/activities.

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Q: Are there any restrictions on what can be included in the budget, e.g. large equipment, travel, etc.?

A: I would ask that you email us if you have an idea of something you need to include in the budget and we will be able to ensure we answer you correctly.

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Q: Approximately how many projects do you expect will be funded?

A: Tthe total budget is 144$ million over six years. The number of awards depends on the amounts requested in the successful applications.

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