

NEW STRATEGIC INITIATIVES FOR INNOVATION 2015-2016

Note: In the event of a discrepancy between the English and French versions of this program, the French version prevails.

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|---|-----------|
| DESCRIPTION | 2 |
| OBJECTIVES | 2 |
| ELIGIBILITY CONDITIONS | 2 |
| SUBMITTING APPLICATIONS | 4 |
| INTEGRITY OF THE EVALUATION PROCESS | 5 |
| DESCRIPTION AND NATURE OF FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE | 6 |
| ANNOUNCEMENT OF RESULTS | 7 |
| FOLLOW-UP | 8 |
| GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS | 8 |
| FALSE OR MISLEADING INFORMATION | 8 |
| RESEARCH ETHICS AND COMPLIANCE | 8 |
| INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY | 9 |
| RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE FRQNT | 9 |
| FOR INFORMATION | 10 |
| APPENDIX 1: RESEARCHER STATUS | 11 |

DESCRIPTION

1. With its new Strategic Initiatives for Innovation (SII) program, the Fonds de recherche du Québec - Nature et technologies (FRQNT or Fonds), in collaboration with program partners, intends to provide financial support for research collaborations between university, college and government researchers and the users of research with the objective of significantly increasing research activities, improving the quality of training of highly qualified personnel and enhancing innovation and technology transfer in response to the needs of research users in Québec's priority sectors.
2. This program is an initiator for promoting the consolidation of a critical mass of scientific and technological expertise working in a given industry or in related and complementary fields, leading to technology transfer.

OBJECTIVES

3. The SII program aims to:
 - facilitate the pooling of academic (university, college), government and industry expertise with a view to enhancing innovation and meeting the needs of research users;
 - foster the development of partnerships for innovation between academic research institutions (universities and colleges) and research users;
 - support the transfer of knowledge and technology to user partners (government and industry);
 - assist in the development and realization of a targeted research project identified by the group and the research users, with the objective of obtaining research results that meet the needs of users and foster innovation within their organizations;
 - contribute to the training of a highly qualified workforce.

ELIGIBILITY CONDITIONS

4. Only applications for financial assistance in the areas of research covered by the FRQNT are eligible (Common Rules and Regulations, Section 3.1).
5. The SII should be composed of researchers from different institutions along with end users of the research. Members in the group may be university (CHU, CHUN, CHUT), or college (CHC) researchers; professorial fellow (CHO); or affiliated (CHA), government (CHG), institutional (CE), industrial (CHI) outside Quebec (CHH), visiting (VIS) or collaborating (COL) researchers (see definition of researcher status in Appendix 1).

Eligibility of lead researcher

6. The lead researcher (applicant) must have a regular position in a Québec university or college. Only university (CHU, CHUN) or college (CHC) researchers may be responsible for an application.
7. To qualify for a grant, the applicant must be a Canadian citizen or permanent resident of Canada under the *Immigration and Refugee Protection Act, 2001, c.27*. Otherwise, the candidate must demonstrate at the time of submission of the grant application that he holds a permit attesting that he has legal status and the right to work in Canada. Furthermore, grant applicant must provide proof that he has an employment relationship (regular, full-time position) with a university, college or research institution located in Québec.
8. Funding of the first year of a grant award will not begin until the researcher has demonstrated that he has applied for a Québec Selection Certificate (CSQ) from the appropriate authorities. Furthermore, to qualify for the second year of a grant award, the researcher must have taken the necessary steps to obtain permanent resident status.
9. University and college researchers must be Québec residents within the meaning of the Act and Regulations respecting health insurance. Researchers from the Université du Québec en Outaouais who live in Ontario are exempted from this condition.
10. The SII must receive **significant financial support in cash** from user partners of the research results. This support must be equal to or greater than the amount of the grant requested from the FRQNT.

Eligibility of partners

11. Eligible partners are companies, public or private organizations, foundations or charities as well as provincial, federal or foreign ministries except the Ministère de l'Enseignement supérieur, de la Recherche et de la Science (MESRS).
12. The following institutions are not recognized as eligible partners:
 - Companies that are part of the Register of enterprises ineligible for public contracts (RENA) as published by the Secrétariat du Conseil du trésor du gouvernement du Québec;
 - University or college institutions;
 - All entities that receive funding from the FRQNT or more than 50% of whose funding comes from the Ministère de l'Enseignement Supérieur, de la Recherche et de la Science (MESRS). For entities that receive less than 50% of their funding from the MESRS, eligibility is assessed on a case by case basis.

Conflict of interest

13. Applicants must demonstrate that they are not in conflict of interest with the proposed partner(s). For example, there is conflict of interest when the applicant or a member of the team holds a decision-making position within the user partner or could derive personal benefit.
14. Upon the submission of their application, the candidates will be requested to complete a conflict of interest declaration. The Fonds reserves the right to require additional documentation to support this declaration.

SUBMITTING APPLICATIONS

15. The letter of intent and the application for financial assistance for this program may be transmitted to the FRQNT at any time. The request is submitted by the institution acting on behalf of the member institutions of the SII.

Letter of Intent

16. The letter of intent must be submitted to the FRQNT by completing the form provided for this purpose and available on the FRQNT website. It is analyzed by the members of the FRQNT' scientific advisory board (*Conseil scientifique*), which may call on external experts if necessary.

Evaluation criteria of the letter of intent

17. The letter of intent is evaluated based on the following criteria and indicators :
 - Identification of expected research results;
 - Contribution of knowledge and results in priority sectors for Québec;
 - Innovative approach in comparison to other groups or existing networks in the field, including FRQNT strategic clusters;
 - Distinctiveness of the application for FRQNT funding compared to other programs at both the provincial and federal levels;
 - Development of a relevant critical mass of scientific and technological expertise and of research users in Québec;
 - Integration of students within the project;
 - Development of partnerships between university/college and users;
 - Concrete involvement of research user partners;
 - Financial support in cash of user partners.
18. The evaluation of the letter of intent is an eliminatory step.

19. If the letter of intent is accepted, the lead institution will be invited to submit a program application. The application must be submitted by the institution using the form provided for this purpose on the FRQNT website, to which the CVs of the principal members (Common Canadian or NSERC CV, in PDF format) must be attached.

Evaluation criteria for financial support

20. Applications are reviewed by a scientific peer committee. Applications are analyzed according to the following criteria and weighting scheme:
- Scientific quality of the research project (30 points)
 - Quality of the research strategy;
 - Innovative, beneficial or emerging nature of the research project;
 - Methodological approach and feasibility of the timeline.
 - Expected benefits of the research project (30 points)
 - Emergence of new research niches;
 - Impact on the advancement of knowledge and on the resolution of social, economic, cultural and technological issues;
 - Integration of college, undergraduate, graduate students and postdoctoral fellows within the research project, and response to the need for creating highly qualified personnel;
 - Dissemination and exploitation of results, transfer of knowledge and technology.
 - Quality of the SII group (20 points)
 - Quality of researchers;
 - Relevance and importance of the knowledge acquired by the group in relation to the project;
 - Adequacy and balance of member skills in relation to the research area;
 - Complementarity and synergy between researchers and users of knowledge and research results;
 - Inter-institutional involvement.
 - Quality of the organization and management (20 points)
 - Management Leadership;
 - Realism and appropriateness of the budget;
 - Leverage and diversification of funding sources.

INTEGRITY OF THE EVALUATION PROCESS

21. The FRQNT board members are not involved in the process of scientific evaluation.
22. Candidates or institutional authorities should not at any time contact the evaluation committee chairperson or members unless communication between these bodies and

the candidates is provided for in the evaluation process. Similarly, evaluators must not contact applicants (except as expressly specified in the evaluation process. The FRQNT has the right to withdraw an application from competition if there is any attempt to lobby the committee or sway the evaluation process. See Policy on Responsible Conduct in Research for more details.

23. Every person recruited to sit on an evaluation committee must comply with standard rules of confidentiality regarding the application packages, committee makeup, deliberations and recommendations. The evaluation committee chairperson, members and outside experts are required to disclose any conflicts of interest and must sign a written statement in this regard.

DESCRIPTION AND NATURE OF FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE

Operating grant:

24. The financial assistance awarded consists of an operating grant of up to **\$300,000** for **three years**.
25. The financial assistance awarded consists of supporting research work and associated transfer activities.
26. Any balance remaining upon expiry of the funding period may be carried over, but only for one more year and only if this is permitted by the user partners.

Remuneration:

- Undergraduate and college students
- Master's students
- Ph.D. students
- Postdoctoral fellows
- Research professionals
- Research technicians
- Researcher with no recognized institutional affiliation

Scholarships and complementary scholarships:

- Undergraduate and college students
- Master's students
- Ph.D. students
- Postdoctoral research trainees

Other expenses:

- Travel and lodging expenses (see also specific work-life balance measures in the Common Rules and Regulations, article 8.5)
- Research and supplies material, and costs of analysis

- Shipping costs for research material and equipment
- Equipment and space rental or usage fees
- Telecommunications fees
- Data processing supplies and purchase of databanks
- Production, publishing and printing costs
- Translation
- Purchase of small equipment (less than \$7,000)

Note: Expenses related to the dissemination of research results to the public and those generated through ethics activities are also eligible.

Statutory supplements for college researchers and inter-institutional teams

27. In addition to the operating grant, statutory supplements may be granted to teams in the following cases:
- \$ 7,000 per year for each college researcher whose contribution to the team is evaluated as positive by the evaluation committees. The purpose of the supplement is to defray part of the cost of research work and it is issued to the college;
 - \$3,000 per year per inter-institutional team that takes in researchers from colleges or universities in Québec's outlying regions. The purpose of the supplement is to defray the research-related travel costs of researchers and students involved.

The following are considered establishments in outlying regions: Université du Québec à Chicoutimi, Université du Québec à Rimouski, Université du Québec en Abitibi- Témiscamingue, Université du Québec en Outaouais, and colleges in these or other outlying regions.

ANNOUNCEMENT OF RESULTS

28. Recommendations of the scientific committee are submitted to the FRQNT Board of Directors, which makes the funding decisions. These decisions are final and cannot be appealed.
29. The FRQNT informs the applicant by email of the acceptance or rejection of his letter of intent and request for financial assistance. A candidate wishing to obtain additional information can contact the FRQNT program administrator.
30. The list of grant recipients is published on the FRQNT website.
31. The Fonds receives annual appropriations from the Québec government to fund its grant programs. It then undertakes annual commitments, conditional on the availability of funds.

FOLLOW-UP

32. The SII must submit a brief annual report on the activities carried out and the budget used for the project. This annual report is assessed and must be deemed satisfactory by the FRQNT in order for financial support to be maintained. Furthermore, proof of the financial contribution of the project partners must be filed annually to maintain the FRQNT payments.

GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

33. The applicant must meet the general eligibility requirements at the time of submission and the [Common Rules and Regulations](#) throughout the period covered by the grant. These are available on the FRQNT website.

FALSE OR MISLEADING INFORMATION

34. Under the *Act respecting the Ministère de l'Enseignement Supérieur, de la Recherche, de la Science et de la Technologie* (L.R.Q., c. M-15,1,0,1), any applicant who provides false or misleading information to obtain or procure financial support is guilty of an offence and liable to a fine. If found guilty, the individual is barred from receiving financial support for a five-year period.
35. Where a legal entity commits such an offence, any of its directors or representatives who knew about the offence are considered to be parties to the offence and are also subject to a fine, unless they prove to the court's satisfaction that they did not agree with the commission of the offence. Moreover, such a declaration constitutes a breach of responsible research conduct.
36. The Fonds have the right to impose any penalty or take any additional measures they deem expedient. The Fonds may also take legal action to recover fraudulently obtained funds and collect damages.

RESEARCH ETHICS AND COMPLIANCE

37. All projects involving human subjects or biological materials or administrative, scientific or descriptive data from human subjects, require the approval of the Research Ethics Board (REB) of the principal applicant's institution or of a REB recognized by that institution (Common Rules and Regulations, item 5.3). The recruitment of human participants is strictly conditional upon REB approval.
38. All projects involving animal subjects or biological materials from animal subjects require the approval of the Committee on Animal Care of the principal applicant's institution. The decisions of this committee must comply with the standards and guidelines of the Canadian Council on Animal Care (CCAC) and the institution where the research is carried out must be accredited by the CCAC.

39. Furthermore, where applicable, researchers must report any environmental impacts of their research and employ reasonable efforts to minimize them. To this end, they must obtain the required authorization and permit before the start of the project.
40. To this end, any required authorization and permits must be obtained before the start of the project.

INTELLECTUAL PROPERTY

41. The sharing of intellectual property rights and exploitation rights must be agreed upon to the satisfaction of the parties and must comply with the principles defined by the Quebec government in the Action Plan: Managing Intellectual Property in Universities and institutions of the health and social services network where research activities are hosted (MRST 2002). (This document is available on the FRQNT website).
42. It is understood that the applicant and members of the academic staff are not employees of user partners. They retain their attachment to their university or college and the academic freedom that grants them this status.
43. The Fonds do not retain or claim any proprietary rights to intellectual property and waive all royalties and/or fees for the benefit of public institutions where research is conducted. Institutions must exercise their ability to demand, on behalf of the public, a share in the possible results of commercial development of discoveries that flow from the research funded by the Fonds. Thus, researchers, students, universities, colleges and other research institutions receiving funding from the Fonds formally agree to the principles set out in this Action Plan. They also undertake to publicly disseminate their research results and to acknowledge all support received from the Fonds.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE FRQNT

44. The FRQNT is not liable for any direct or indirect injury arising from processing of grants, scholarships or other applications, and, without limiting the generality of the above, is not liable for any direct or indirect injury arising from unauthorized disclosure by the FRQNT of the information contained in candidates' files. Despite all the precautions taken by the FRQNT to protect information that must be kept confidential, certain countries to which information is transmitted may not have security procedures such as asymmetric cryptography or encryption.

Act respecting access to documents held by public bodies and the protection of personal information

45. The FRQNT is subject to the Act respecting access to documents held by public bodies and the protection of personal information (R.S.Q., c. A-2.1).

46. Candidates can obtain further information on access procedures, the protection of personal information and the recourse provided for in the Act by contacting the person responsible for the Act at the FRQNT:

Me Mylène Deschênes, B.C.L., LL.B., LL.M.
Directrice, affaires éthiques et juridiques
responsableacces.nt@frq.gouv.qc.ca

FOR INFORMATION

| | |
|------------------------|-----------------------|
| Program administrator: | Estelle Campagnac |
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APPENDIX 1: RESEARCHER STATUS

University researchers (CHU) and (CHUN)

University researchers are regular faculty members in a Québec university, have a Ph.D. or equivalent or have a position equivalent to that of a professor, and are authorized by their institution to direct or co-direct graduate research theses or dissertations. The remuneration of CHU researchers is included in the regular budget of their university.

Researchers subsidized by a Canadian or Québec funding agency are also considered CHU researchers. University researchers who satisfy "New researchers start-up program" (Établissement de nouveaux chercheurs) eligibility criteria are considered new researchers (CHUN).

Retired university researcher (CHUT)

Retired university researchers must, for the duration of the grant, be guest, associate or emeritus professors in a Québec university and be authorized by their institution to direct research projects and supervise graduate students.

College researcher (CHC)

A college researcher is a full-time faculty member at a general or vocational college, a private government-approved college, or a government school that offers postsecondary education. A college researcher can also be a part-time or full-time researcher in a college centre for the transfer of technology.

Professorial fellow (CHO)

A professorial fellow must hold, or have a firm offer of appointment to, a position in a Québec university. This may be a regular tenure-track professorial position or a position for a period of at least three years. The appointment of the professorial fellow must be ratified by the authorities responsible for the approval of academic appointments in accordance with the statutes of the university concerned.

The position held must allow the CHO to conduct research without the supervision of another researcher and to supervise or co-supervise undergraduate, master's or Ph.D. students and postdoctoral researchers.

Affiliated researcher (CHA)

Affiliated researchers who are faculty members or researchers in a Québec university but who are not part of the regular staff and who have a Ph.D. or equivalent.

Government researcher (CHG)

Government researchers are researchers from a government department or agency.

Institutional researcher (CE)

An institutional researcher is a researcher who works in a Quebec research institution and whose salary is paid out of the regular budget of this institution, holds a doctorate and has a university affiliation allowing him/her to supervise or co-supervise master's and Ph.D. students for the duration of the grant being applied for. He or she is afforded the same conditions regarding the protection of academic freedom as Quebec university or college researchers. The researcher's home institution must make a formal commitment to this effect. The institution is also subject to the same requirements concerning research ethics, integrity and intellectual property as Quebec university or college researchers. The researcher's home institution must make commitment to this effect.

Industrial researcher (CHI)

Industrial researchers are researchers from industry.

Researcher from outside Québec (CHH)

Researchers from outside Québec are researchers in a research environment located outside Québec

Guest researcher (VIS)

Guest researchers are researchers from an institution other than the one with which the applicant is affiliated and who take part in the research activities of a group, team, or centre for a set period.

Collaborating researcher (COL)

A collaborating researcher is a university researcher or a researcher in a practice setting who contributes to research activities on a temporary or occasional basis. This person may join a cluster or a team as a collaborator but not as a regular member. His or her scientific production is not evaluated.