



INNOVATION SUPERCLUSTERS

APPLICANT GUIDE

INNOVATION
FOR A **Better** CANADA

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1. Introduction

The Applicant Guide was developed to assist in putting together an application for funding for the Innovation Superclusters Initiative (ISI). This document includes instructions for preparing a Letter of Intent (LOI) and provides guidance on the information to be included.

Applicants to the ISI are expected to demonstrate in their applications how their Entity will build a supercluster advantage that will reinforce Canada's highly innovative industries (e.g., advanced manufacturing, agri-food, clean technology, digital economy, health/bio-sciences, clean resources, infrastructure and transportation), enable the growth of innovative firms, and support the development of a strong regional brand that attracts investors and mandates. Funding allocated by the ISI is expected to increase private sector investments in R&D and foster collaboration between private sector organizations, post-secondary institutions, and innovation intermediaries, to build on the clusters' strengths and address existing gaps to create world-leading innovation ecosystems. Applicants are required to explain how their efforts will enhance the competitiveness and productivity of Canadian firms and create positive commercial outcomes that will drive economic growth.

To be considered for ISI funding, applications must be complete and provide all the required information, as stated in this guide. The onus is on the Applicant to provide proof of financial commitment from private sector participants to satisfy the matching requirement for program funding.

Applicants are advised to read the **Program Guide** in conjunction with this Applicant Guide to obtain more information on the Innovation Superclusters Initiative, including program objectives, selection criteria and the application and assessment process. Applicants with additional questions are encouraged to visit Frequently Asked Questions and invited to contact Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada at info.isi@canada.ca.

2. Submission details and deadline

Application for funding under the Innovation Superclusters Initiative is based on a two-phase process that includes a Letter of Intent (LOI) and a Full Application (invitation only). This guide focuses on Phase I: Letter of Intent.

Phase I: Letter of Intent

Applicants for the ISI must submit a Letter of Intent (LOI), which consists of one electronic version of the [ISI Application Form](#) together with a written proposal and required appendices. See Appendix A for instructions on completing the ISI Application Form.

Written proposals should be filled out using the provided template and should not exceed 15 pages (8 ½ x 11 paper, single-spaced, with 12 point font), excluding budget pages and the appendices (participants list and Letters of Commitment/Letter(s) of Support).

To attach the written proposal, use the *Click to Add Attachments* button in *section 5 (Step 2). Application Document* in the ISI Application Form. This button is also available at the top of each page of the form.

All **LOIs** must be submitted online through the ISED website. E-mail or facsimile (fax) submissions will not be accepted. Applications must be received by **the deadline posted on the ISI website**. Applicants are encouraged to submit their LOI in advance of this date to ensure that applications are successfully transmitted and received prior to the deadline. Late submissions will not be retained for consideration.

Upon submitting the LOI, a confirmation PDF including the Application Reference number will be provided immediately, with an acknowledgement email including that same Application Reference Number received after approximately one hour. It is recommended that both the confirmation PDF, and the acknowledgement email, be saved for future reference. If the application is submitted between 11PM and 4 AM (Eastern Daylight Time), applicants will only receive an acknowledgement email after this period. This email should be kept until the end of the ISI application process, and must be entered on the Additional Attachments Form (if required), as well as on the Application Form during the Full Application Phase, if applicable.

Following assessment of the LOI, a short list of Applicants will receive an invitation to submit a Full Application for ISI funding.

It is strongly recommended that Applicants save a copy of their completed ISI Application Form from Phase I (Letter of Intent) for ease of reference, should they be invited to participate in Phase II (Full Application),

3. Applicants

An eligible Applicant is an industry-led consortium (e.g., large, small and medium-sized firms, post-secondary and research institutions, not-for profit organizations, non-federal Crown corporations, etc.). In each phase of the application process, the industry-led consortium must include a minimum number of large firms, small and medium-sized enterprises, and a post-secondary institution. Participants in the industry-led consortium must be incorporated in Canada and active in Canada (see *section 4.1.2 The Applicant* of the Program Guide for details on Applicants).

3.1 Lead Applicant

For the purposes of submitting an application to the ISI, the industry-led consortium must be represented by a **Lead Applicant**. The Lead Applicant must be identified in the mandatory field on the ISI Application Form. The Lead Applicant will be responsible for submitting the application and will be the main point of contact for Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada (ISED) during the administration of the application process. The Lead Applicant can be the not-for-profit Entity proposed to carry out the Supercluster Strategy, a

large, small or medium-sized firm, or another organization (e.g., not-for-profit), taking a leading role in the application process, excluding municipal, provincial or federal governments and individuals.

3.2 Partner Applicants

Partner Applicants are committed participants of the applicant consortium and proposed members of the Supercluster Entity. If private sector, they must provide industry matching funds or in-kind contribution. Partner Applicants must be identified in the mandatory fields on the ISI Application Form. Any organization incorporated in Canada and active in Canada is eligible to be a Partner Applicant (with the exception of individuals).

3.3 Minimum requirements for Applicants

For a proposal to be **eligible at the Letter of Intent phase**, Lead and Partner Applicants must include, at a minimum, four (4) private sector enterprises, including two (2) large firms, one (1) medium enterprise and one (1) small enterprise, as well as one (1) post-secondary institution.

The minimum required number and composition of Lead and Partner Applicants must be identified on the ISI Application Form. Lead and Partner Applicants representing the private sector must provide Letters of Commitment demonstrating their cash and/or in-kind contributions to confirm that they intend to reach (LOI) or have reached (Full Application) the matching threshold for eligibility purposes. Financial or in-kind contributions obtained from sources other than the private sector are encouraged but will not count toward the industry match requirement. Post-secondary institutions involved as Partner Applicants must also provide a Letter of Support explaining their role within the Entity, involvement in its activities, and, if applicable, any financial or in-kind contributions.

4. Application Process

4.1 Letter of Intent

Applicants are required to fill out all mandatory sections of the ISI Application Form to submit their LOI. The form provides buttons through which Applicants can attach their completed LOI proposal template and required supporting documents. Upon submitting the form, Applicants will receive a PDF confirmation of submission including the Application Reference Number as well as an email confirming receipt of the application. This email will also contain the Application Reference Number (see Appendix A for additional instructions on completing the ISI Application form).

5. Eligibility Requirements for the Letter of Intent

1. Letter of Intent is received no later than the specified due date.
2. The Lead Applicant and Partner Applicants are Canadian private sector enterprises, post-secondary institutions or not-for-profit organizations carrying on activities in Canada.
3. At least four (4) private sector enterprises, including a minimum of two (2) large firms (500 employees or more), one (1) medium enterprise (100-499 employees) and one (1) small enterprise (fewer than 100 employees), incorporated pursuant to the laws of Canada and carrying on business in Canada, are among the Lead Applicant or Partner Applicants.
4. At least one Post-secondary Institution (accredited Canadian universities, colleges, polytechnics or affiliated research institutes) is among the Partner Applicants.
5. Alignment of proposal with ISI program objectives
6. Evidence of intent to obtain private sector funds to achieve 1:1 match* for federal funding requested under the program.
7. A minimum of four (4) Letters of Commitment from private sector enterprises and one (1) Letter of Support from a post-secondary institution

**** Please note: Financial or in-kind contributions obtained from post-secondary institutions, other levels of government, or any other organization that is not from the private sector are encouraged but will not count toward the industry match requirement.***

6. Application Requirements for the Letter of Intent

6.1 Contents

To be considered complete, all Letters of Intent must include the following elements, completed in full:

1. ISI Application Form
2. Completed written proposal that contains the following sections:
 - a. Impact and strategic importance
 - i. Vision and mission for supercluster
 - ii. Economic and industrial benefits
 - b. Capabilities and Assets
 - i. Innovation ecosystem potential
 - c. Budget and Financial Commitment
3. Appendices
 - a. Participants list
 - b. Letters of Commitment and Letter(s) of Support from the Lead Applicant and Partner Applicants.

6.2 Templates

A Microsoft Word template is provided for the Letter of Intent written proposal, and the required template for the Participants list. When available, the template must be used. All templates are accessible in the Application Toolkit.

6.3 Formatting

- Document Type: All applications, including the ISI Application Form, must be typed.
- Font: Must be easy to read (12-point minimum). Smaller type may be used in figures and tables but must be clearly legible.
- Figures, Graphs, Images and Pictures: Must be of a size that is easily readable or viewable and may be landscape orientation.
- Line Spacing: Single
- Margins: One (1) inch top, bottom, left and right.
- Page Limit for written proposal: Fifteen (15) pages excluding the budget pages and the required Appendices
- Paper Size: Letter (8 ½ inches by 11 inches)
- Application Language: Official language (English or French) of choice. Applications will not be accepted in any other languages.

7. Written Proposal for the Letter of Intent

Written proposals for the Letter of Intent must be completed by providing information that corresponds to each of the sections listed below, beginning with “Applicant must”. The Letter of Intent proposal template containing the required information must be submitted as an attachment to the ISI Application Form.

Section A) IMPACT AND STRATEGIC IMPORTANCE

Applicants to the Innovation Superclusters Initiative must explain the importance of the ISI contribution for their cluster and make the case for how the funding can generate transformative results and lead to the growth of a world-leading supercluster. Applicants are required to set out a Supercluster Strategy, which builds upon and accelerates innovation in Canada, to expand a competitive advantage for their cluster and achieve strong commercial outcomes and real economic impact. The Strategy must set out the themes and related activities that will be undertaken to increase the competitiveness, productivity and performance of firms in the cluster and address the gaps and enhance strengths that exist in the regional innovation ecosystem.

Entities are not required to pursue activities across all five themes set out in the Program Guide (see section 2.2.1 *What activities are eligible?* of the Program Guide for details). Applicants are encouraged to propose the appropriate mix of activities, aligning to the five themes of activity eligible for co-investment, that they wish to pursue and that best reflect the needs and

objectives of the cluster. However, at a minimum, Entities must demonstrate how their strategy includes technology leadership activities (research, development, demonstration and commercialization) for the development of one or more platform technologies that will create beneficial outcomes for firms and for the cluster itself. Entities will be expected to demonstrate sustained activity and investment in technology leadership activities throughout the duration of the program.

A1. Vision and mission for supercluster

A1.1. Supercluster description and strategic need

Applicants must:

- Provide a brief description of the existing cluster (e.g., types of organizations, sectors, research infrastructure, geographical delimitation, size, economic impact, etc.) explaining what makes it unique, and describing areas of industrial activity.
- Outline key strengths that can be leveraged, as well as any gaps that exist within the regional innovation ecosystem. *Please note that a more in-depth description of cluster strengths and capabilities is to be provided under section B1. Capabilities and Assets.*
- Present the vision for the development of the cluster, defining the focus for the cluster (i.e., what creates alignment between organizations, such as common technology expertise, sectoral commonalities, shared outcomes, etc.)
- Explain how the cluster is projected to grow and become an innovation supercluster that demonstrates global leadership.
- Provide details of how the Entity's vision for the supercluster is aligned with the objectives of the ISI (see *section 1.1 Objectives, Expected Results and Outcomes* of the Program Guide for details on objectives).

(Maximum 1500 words, approximately 3 pages)

A1.2. Supercluster Strategy

Applicants must:

- Briefly describe the proposed Supercluster Strategy and explain the approach through which the Entity and its Members will leverage the investment provided by the ISI to enhance the cluster's strengths and address existing gaps. The Strategy should list and explain the themes and related activities that it will focus on and explain why these are of significant importance for the development of the cluster (see *section 2.2.2 What activities are eligible?* of the Program Guide for details).
- Briefly explain how the Strategy and proposed activities stimulate collaboration between participating organizations and leverage their capabilities to deliver stronger outcomes for the cluster.
- Outline how the Strategy and related activities represent a bold and ambitious strategy to supercharge the regional innovation ecosystem, and how they address the needs of the cluster as well as challenges within sectors of economic strength for the region.
- Provide an overview of key short, medium- and long-term objectives for the cluster (i.e., for the next 2, 5 and 10 years).

(Maximum 1500 words, approximately 3 pages)

A2. Economic growth and industrial benefits

The ISI seeks to create world-leading innovation superclusters by supporting clusters that have a strong potential to accelerate economic growth and enhance the competitiveness of highly innovative industries, such as advanced manufacturing, agri-food, clean technology, digital technology, health/bio-sciences, clean resources, as well as infrastructure and transportation. By fostering collaboration between private sector enterprises, post-secondary institutions, and innovation intermediaries to create a stronger innovation ecosystem and develop platform technologies to solve industrial challenges, the ISI seeks to improve the competitiveness and productivity of firms, while fostering domestic and international business opportunities that help companies grow.

A2.1. Ability to enhance competitiveness and productivity

Applicants must:

- Briefly explain how proposed activities from their Supercluster Strategy, including technology leadership projects, will create a competitive advantage for the cluster and key sectors of importance.
- Explain how supported activities, including the development of technologies, can increase the competitiveness and productivity of firms within the sectors of interest, enhancing their ability to compete globally.
- Provide key examples of the advantage that can be created for participating firms located in the cluster region as well as elsewhere in Canada.

(Maximum 1000 words, approximately 2 pages)

A2.2. Business opportunities for participants

Applicants must:

- Discuss the anticipated domestic and international business opportunities that will be created for Canadian SMEs and large firms, notably those active in key sectors of strength, including new streams of revenues and increased export potential.
- Explain which new products, processes or services are being developed and how new commercial applications responding to market needs will be developed, resulting in tangible opportunities for Canadian firms to participate in value chains.

(Maximum 1000 words, approximately 2 pages)

A2.3. Benefits for the Canadian economy

Applicants must:

- Describe how the proposed Supercluster Strategy will result in the creation of wealth for Canada and for Canadians, having a positive impact on the region's economy.

(Maximum 1000 words, approximately 2 pages)

Section B) CAPABILITIES AND ASSETS

B1. Innovation ecosystem potential

Applicants must:

- Provide a brief description highlighting the capabilities of the cluster, technology expertise, sector strengths, as well as the assets and attributes that distinguish the cluster from others around the world.
- Provide examples of the research capabilities, commercial achievements, notable innovations and the intellectual property developed by relevant start-ups, SMEs, large firms, post-secondary institutions located in the cluster, including proposed Entity members.
- Explain the relevance between highlighted capabilities and the cluster focus.

(Maximum 1500 words, approximately 3 pages)

B2. Collaboration and Engagement

Funded Entities are expected to foster joint efforts between organizations active in key sectors of economic strength and located within the cluster region, as well as develop a strong innovation network linking organizations located in other parts of Canada. Applicants are expected to rally a critical mass of innovative firms, post-secondary institutions and innovation intermediaries with the necessary capabilities to work together on achieving results that create a stronger cluster and accelerate the development of key sectors of the economy.

Applicants must:

- Demonstrate active involvement (through cash and/or in-kind contributions) and provide a one page (maximum) Letter of Commitment for a **minimum of four (4) private sector enterprises from the cluster**, including:
 - At least two (2) large firms (500 employees or more)
 - At least one (1) medium enterprise (100-499 employees)
 - At least one (1) small firm (1-99 employees)
- Demonstrate involvement and provide a one page (maximum) Letter of Support for a **minimum of one (1) post-secondary institution**.

To be considered **eligible**, the **Applicant's Letter of Intent must contain a minimum of four (4) Letters of Commitment and one (1) Letter of Support**, including those from the organizations listed above (see section 8.2 Letters of Commitment and Letters of Support for more details).

All private sector stakeholder organizations providing cash or in-kind contributions to the Entity that assists in achieving the industry match requirement of the ISI, are encouraged to provide a Letter of Commitment on official letterhead stating anticipated contribution. Other stakeholder organizations (non-private sector) that expect to take on a prominent role within the Entity or in its activities, and/or or that will be providing cash and/or in-kind contributions, are invited to submit a Letter of Support. Assessment will take into account the anticipated

contributions to be made by participants in the industry-led consortium (see *section 2.4 Matching Fund Requirements* of the Program Guide for details).

Applicants should be aware that should their Letter of Intent be selected in the short list, they will need to demonstrate greater critical mass at the Full Application phase, through involvement from a larger number of private-sector organizations (minimum of ten (10) private sector enterprises).

B2.1. List of participants

Applicants must: Provide a list of all participating organizations confirmed to date, including Partner Applicants who will be contributing cash and/or in-kind contributions, as well as other participants who are expected to play a role within the Entity or in its activities. Participating organizations include, but are not limited to, startups and SMEs, large firms, post-secondary institutions, innovation intermediaries, and relevant non-profit organizations, located in the cluster region or elsewhere in Canada (see *section 2.1 Who this Initiative is Intended for* of the Program Guide for details on who can participate). Please fill out the participants table template and provide details on the following:

- Name of organization
- Organization type
- Ownership structure in Canada
- Sector of activity
- Line of business and/or focus of activities
- Business Number
- Employee count in Canada
- Participating location
- Contact information for organization
- Value of cash commitment (if applicable)
- In-kind contribution and value (if applicable)
- Role within the Entity (if applicable)
- Anticipated benefits and reasons for participating

Please note: Information provided by Applicants may be used and verified by ISED as part of the assessment of applications.

Section C) BUDGET AND FINANCIAL COMMITMENT

C1. Budget and financial commitment (table)

Applicants must:

- Complete the summary budget table in the LOI Proposal Template that includes an overview of the funding requested through the ISI and the anticipated financial commitments and in-kind contributions from participants, as well as all other sources that will contribute funding.

- Provide a breakdown of the estimated funding by themes under which projects will be executed.

C2. Budget and financial commitment (description)

Applicants must:

- If private sector funds have not yet been secured for the entirety of the 1:1 matching requirement, explain the approach to secure remaining funds and list the anticipated sources, in the corresponding section of the LOI Proposal Template.
- Highlight any support that is expected from other levels of government, and explain the conditions or program under which these funds will be made available.
- Provide an overview of how funding will be used based on the themes under which projects will be executed.

(Maximum 500 words, 1 page)

Please note: Applicants are required to disclose any support received through other programs that will be used in supporting the Entity and its activities.

8. Appendices for the Letter of Intent

Required appendices, including instructions for preparing the appendices and associated templates, are provided on the following pages.

Appendices must be attached, along with the written proposal template, to the ISI Application Form so that they are submitted simultaneously. If the appendices exceed the size limit in the ISI Application Form (100MB), Applicants can use the Additional Attachments Form available on the ISI website.

8.1 Full List of Participating Organizations

List of organizations interested in participating as members and/or non-members in the Entity. **Anticipated or confirmed cash and in-kind contributions must be provided, at a minimum, for Lead Applicant and Partner Applicants** from the private sector. The Template is available on the ISI website.

8.2 Letters of Commitment and Letters of Support

A minimum of four (4) Letters of Commitment from stakeholder organizations must be submitted together with the LOI application, and must include:

- A minimum of four (4) private sector enterprises, including:
 - Two(2) large firms (500 employees or more)
 - One(1) medium enterprise (100-499 employees)
 - One (1) small enterprise (1-99 employees)

- A minimum of one (1) Letter of Support from a post-secondary institution must be submitted. Applicants are also encouraged, but not **required**, to supply Letters of Support from other non-private sector stakeholder organizations.

All private sector organizations contributing to the **industry match funding** are encouraged to submit a **Letter of Commitment**. Other organizations, including post-secondary institutions and not-for-profit organizations providing cash and/or in-kind contributions, or taking on a prominent role within the Entity or on its projects, are invited to submit Letters of Support.

Letters of Commitment from **private sector enterprises** must provide details on anticipated or committed cash and/or in-kind contributions for the full duration of the Innovation Superclusters Initiative, until March 31, 2022, and demonstrate the industry-led consortium's ability to match the ISI funding request with industry contributions. Letter(s) of Support from **post-secondary institution(s)** and other organizations not from the private sector must explain their role within the Entity, involvement in its activities, and, if applicable, any financial or in-kind contributions.

Each letter should also explain how the organization will participate and contribute to projects as well as how it intends to benefit from its involvement in the Entity's activities. Letters should be written in one of Canada's official languages (English or French). Letters from for-profit or not private sector enterprises should be signed by a senior executive with signing authority for the contribution (C-level executive), and provided on official letterhead. Letters from post-secondary institutions should be signed by a senior executive with signing authority for the contribution (Vice-President level or higher), and provided on the institution's letterhead.

Letters can be submitted as PDF or Microsoft Word documents only. Letters cannot be dated earlier than the launch of the Innovation Superclusters Initiative's application process. The letters must be attached to the online application form and each letter should not exceed one page.

8.3 Financial Information

Provide a multi-year **budget** overview using the template provided in Section C of the LOI Proposal template. The multi-year budget must include projected sources of funding to achieve the private-sector funding matching requirement (1:1). This template is available on the ISI website.

Appendix A – Instructions for Completing the Innovation Superclusters Initiative Application Form

Step 1 – Applicant and Contact Information

Q 10. Use the Add Organization button to add entries in this question. Form expands to accommodate new entries. If you wish to remove an entry, click the “–” in the margin on the left of the entry.

Step 2 – Proposal Information

Q 1. Enter the primary location (and secondary location, if applicable) of the activities to be undertaken as part of the proposal.

Q 2. Assign the proposal a title. If the proposal is approved and funded, this title will be used to refer to the agreement in all communications with the agreement holder and in public communications about the project.

Q3. To be eligible, each proposal must include a focus on technology leadership activities (see the [Program Guide](#) for more information on the activities). Provide a short description of the technology focus(es) here.

Q4. Please check off the sectors that will benefit directly from the activities in the proposal. If you do not see one or more sectors you wish to indicate, please check “Other manufacturing”, “Other primary and related industries”, or “Other services”, and insert the sectors in the space beside “Please indicate:”.

Attachments

Important note: When naming attachments for the ISI application form, refrain from using the following characters: “ # % & * : < > ? / \ |. Otherwise, the form will not submit to the ISI for review.

Q5. You are required to attach a Letter of Intent proposal document.

You must attach all of the required appendices through this application form by using the “Click to Add Attachments” buttons in the form. All required appendices must be submitted and completed in order for an application to be reviewed.

Q6. Insert the amount of funding requested from the Innovation Superclusters Initiative. Reminder: requests are normally expected to range from \$125 million - \$250 million over five years (average of \$25 million - \$50 million per year from the ISI).

On the next line, insert the amount of funding that will be invested by the private sector (industry). Reminder: to be eligible, applications must present at least the minimum amount of matching dollars from industry as required by the program.

On the next line, insert the funding to be received from all sources other than the ISI, and industry matching funding.

The form will populate the Total Project Costs line.

Q7. The ISI funding expires on March 31, 2022. The project end date should be no later than March 31, 2022.

Submitting your Application

The ISI seeks to bring players together from multiple sectors and technology areas to build diverse and robust superclusters, and to do so at significant scale. To support these objectives, the ISI seeks the Applicant's consent to share the: *Applicant Name, Contact Name for the Applicant, Contact information, technology focus(es) of the application, sector focus(es) of the application and proposal location* with other Applicants where this sharing of information may support the formation of larger-scale, more competitive applications and facilitate the connection of potential project partners. Your consent will not affect the eligibility of your application.

The Application Form will only submit successfully once the questions are completed and the attachments have been inserted.