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# Early Intervention Strategy for Spruce Budworm – Canadian Forest Service

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## **Contribution Agreement Program Application Guide – Small Scale Research**

*2023-2026*



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Natural Resources Canada  
Canadian Forest Service  
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# 1. EARLY INTERVENTION STRATEGY PROGRAM BACKGROUND

Spruce budworm (SBW) is the most destructive forest pest in eastern Canada. SBW epidemics are cyclical, occurring every 30-40 years. During a major outbreak, tens of millions of hectares of trees can be severely defoliated by the insect. An outbreak may last several years, and cumulative defoliation over several years can cause significant levels of growth loss and mortality in mature softwood forests, reduced carbon sequestration by forests, increased fire risk, loss of wildlife habitat, and reduced wood supply and quality for the forest sector.

Supported by the Canadian Forest Service (CFS) of Natural Resources Canada (NRCan), the Spruce Budworm Early Intervention Strategy (EIS) is designed to reduce the risk of a SBW outbreak in Atlantic Canada by treating “hot-spots” (small areas with low and growing populations) early in the outbreak cycle before damage has occurred to forests. The EIS approach works in tandem with natural factors as SBW populations are kept below thresholds under which they can be controlled by their natural enemies.

In 2014, the Atlantic Canada Opportunity Agency (ACOA) delivered the first phase of the “Early Intervention Strategies to Suppress a Spruce Budworm Outbreak” (Phase 1). Natural Resources Canada (NRCan) provided scientific support during Phase I.

Through Budget 2018 and the 2020 Fall Economic Update, the Government of Canada delivered “Protecting jobs in Eastern Canada’s forestry sector to support the implementation of the Spruce Budworm Early Intervention Strategy – Phase II”.

EIS Phases I and II confirmed that the EIS can reduce SBW populations below a damaging level and prevent the development of an extensive outbreak. These programs also yielded valuable scientific information on managing SBW outbreaks and reducing negative impacts.

In 2022, the program was renewed for EIS Phase 3 to allow government, academia, industry, and other stakeholders to continue protecting jobs in the forest sector, to support the economy and to preserve key ecological functions of forests at risk in Atlantic Canada.

## 2. EIS SMALL SCALE RESEARCH PROGRAM

This 2023 Call for Proposals seeks proposals for the EIS Small Scale Research (SSR) program which supports scientific research addressing key science needs underpinning the development, deployment, efficacy, and impact of SBW management activities.

### 2.1 Program Objective

The objective of the SSR program is to improve knowledge and tools to address current and future SBW outbreak development and spread.

### 2.2 Expected Results

Research funded under this stream will have the following expected results:

- Increased availability and access to scientific knowledge and advice pertaining to SBW and related risks through:
  - presentations on EIS scientific projects made to stakeholders involving the sharing of the projects' results, knowledge, and information
  - publications pertaining to spruce budworm and related risks
- Decision makers will integrate the resulting scientific knowledge and information in risk management decisions pertaining to the spruce budworm early intervention strategy.
  - The project is relevant to stakeholders and targets an important research need or gap in SBW knowledge.

### 2.3 Project Duration

Proposals will be accepted for projects extending one to three years, within the duration of the program (April 2023 – March 2026). Funding under this Call for Proposals is available for Eligible Expenditures starting April 1, 2023 to March 31, 2026, pending the terms of a successfully negotiated contribution agreement. Projects can extend one to three years and must be completed by March 31, 2026.

NRCan will review all project applications for completeness, eligibility, and relevance, and may pursue external consultations with forest sector specialists and the Healthy Forest Partnership to more fully assess the merits of proposals. See Section 5, for more information on the evaluation criteria that will be used to assess proposals and guide the overall allocation of funds.

## 2.4 Eligible Recipients

The Eligible Recipients under the small-scale research streams are Canadian research institutions and organizations, such as universities, colleges, and not-for-profit organizations that specialize in forest research, and insecticide operations applicators.

**\*With your application, please provide a copy of the articles of incorporation or registration to confirm that the organization is validly incorporated or registered. This is not required for universities and colleges.**

It is anticipated that Proposals could include a description of tasks where the Eligible Recipients may require scientific and/or technical assistance, such as the provision of NRCan expertise or the use of NRCan's facilities. Applicants should indicate where NRCan collaboration would be of benefit to their organization's research project.

## 2.5 Eligible Projects

To be considered for funding under this Call for Proposals, Projects must satisfy all of the following:

1. Meet the mandatory criteria listed throughout this Guide; and
2. Include research that will address any of the following strategic themes:
  - SBW biology and ecology;
  - SBW dispersal and migration;
  - Detection of SBW and SBW damage;
  - SBW management under EIS; and
  - Ecological impacts of SBW.

Examples of research activities will include, but are not limited to:

- Conducting targeted science, research and/or development activities, including collaborative research activities that contribute directly to the eligible projects;
- Research papers related to new/enhanced technology or advancement in sciences directly related to the eligible projects;
- Dissemination of publications and research findings where the primary focus of the project is research contributing directly to the eligible projects.

## 2.6 Eligible and Ineligible Expenditures

Eligible and Ineligible Expenditures are subject to the final Terms and Conditions for the Contribution Agreement. Eligible Expenditures for an approved project under EIS SSR must be directly related to, and necessary for, the implementation and conduct of the project.

Eligible expenditures are defined in the following categories:

- Travel expenses, including transportation, accommodation, meals and allowances, based on National Joint Council rates;
- Salaries and benefits;
- Honoraria to Indigenous peoples;
- Telecommunication charges;
- Publication, printing, and other media services;
- Professional and technical services; such as, but not limited to research, consulting, engineering, trades, and laboratory services;
- University research services;
- Field equipment and supplies;
- Laboratory and scientific equipment and supplies;
- Routine laboratory and field equipment maintenance;
- Technology rights;
- Lease/Rent of Facility;
- Office supplies; and
- Overhead expenditures provided they are directly related to the conduct of the project and can be attributed to it. Overhead expenditures for all Recipients may be included in the total project costs to a maximum of 15% of eligible expenditures or by applying an equivalent, overhead factor (multiplier) approved by NRCan to direct eligible expenditures. Overhead expenditures include:
  - i. Administrative support provided directly to the project by the Recipients employee(s), valued on the same basis as professional staff time;
  - ii. Heat, hydro and office operating costs (e.g., faxes, telephone).
- GST, PST or HST, net of any tax rebate to which the Recipient is entitled<sup>1</sup>.

Ineligible Expenditures\* for reimbursement under EIS SSR include, but are not limited to:

- developing a proposal;
- legal costs;
- the purchase of land;
- expenditures on real property;
- property taxes;

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<sup>1</sup> In accordance with the departmental GST/PST/HST certification form, the reimbursable Goods and Services Tax, Provincial Sales Tax, and Harmonized Sales Tax costs must be net of any tax rebate to which the Recipient is entitled.



- in-kind goods and services;
- insurances, dues and other membership fees;
- interest costs, bond discount, and other financing costs;
- promotion and selling expenses; and,
- non-incremental expenditures such as, professional fees, salaries, and other costs incurred in the normal course of operations.

\* Ineligible and in-kind contributions from the proponent and its partners may count towards the total project costs. If the applicant chooses to include in-kind support as part of the total project costs, those costs must be verifiable and directly in support of the project.

## **2.7 Maximum Contribution Amount**

This funding will be delivered through non-repayable contributions for eligible projects via contribution agreements with successful applicants.

The EIS program can provide up to 100% of funding required for small scale research activities.

Financial support for projects is based on the total amount of funds available for the SSR program. The maximum amount payable by NRCan per year is up to 100% of the project costs, up to \$1,000,000 per Recipient per year.

Proposals must be clear as to whether their proposed project will have an end-date within government's 2023-24 fiscal year (ending no later than March 31, 2024), or span two fiscal years, with an end date of 2024-25 (ending no later than March 31, 2025), or span three government fiscal years, with an end-date in the 2025-2026 fiscal year (ending no later than March 31, 2026).

NOTE: Retroactive payments of eligible expenditures for SSR projects incurred prior to the signature of contribution agreements but not before April 1 of the fiscal year may be accepted.

## **2.8 Stacking of Assistance**

Prior to signing contribution agreements and continuously until the projects are completed, proponents will be required to disclose all potential or confirmed project funding sources, including contributions from other federal, provincial/territorial, and municipal governments and industry sources, whether that funding is confirmed or still in negotiations. Expenditures related to approved activities may be subject to a Recipient audit to ensure that stacking provisions are respected.

Total Canadian government assistance (federal, provincial, territorial, and municipal) towards projects will not exceed 100% of total eligible expenditures.

If the proposed total Canadian government assistance exceeds the limits set out above, Canada reserves the right to reduce its contribution to the project until the stacking assistance limit is met. If total Canadian government assistance exceeds the limits set out above on the project completion date, Canada reserves the right to recover the excess contribution from the proponent.

### **3. FUNDING TIMEFRAME (ELIGIBLE EXPENDITURE PERIOD)**

To meet the strict operational and research requirements associated with suppressing the SBW populations and driven by the time-sensitive biology of this insect species, retroactive payments of eligible expenditures small scale research recipients incurred prior to the signature of contribution agreements but not before April 1 of the fiscal year may be accepted.

Eligible Expenditures will be eligible for reimbursement until the project completion date stated in the contribution agreement.

Following the project selection, successful applicants will be notified through a Letter of Conditional Approval and be invited to negotiate a contribution agreement.

Until both parties sign a contribution agreement, there is no commitment or obligation on the part of NRCan to make a financial contribution to any project, including any expenditure incurred or paid prior to the signing of such a contribution agreement. Proponents are not permitted to publicly disclose project funding information until the agreement is signed by both parties.

## **4. APPLICATION**

### **4.1 Project Timelines**

The schedule under this Call for Proposals is as follows:

- *Initiation of the call for proposals:* January 16, 2023
- *Submission deadline:* February 10, 2023 (23:59 Eastern Daylight Time)
- *Assessment of proposals:* February/March 2023
- *Funding decisions, letters of conditional approval and letters of regret:* Spring 2023
- *Negotiation and signature of contribution agreements:* Spring 2023
- *Project completion:* No later than March 31, 2026

The above schedule is subject to change. Any changes will be communicated to applicants via the [NRCan website](#).

## 4.2 The Application Package

A complete application package (proposal), submitted by email or by mail, consists of:

- Application Form (pdf), signed by duly authorized officer, including
  - Applicant attestation (pdf) dated and signed by a duly authorized officer
  - Attestation (pdf) for affiliations with any country or individual against which Canada has imposed economic sanctions under the *United Nations Act*, *Special Economic Measures Act* or the *Justice for Victims of Foreign Corrupt Officials (Sergei Magnitsky Law)*
- Budget Overview (excel spreadsheet)
- Proof of Incorporation or Registration, if applicable
- Proof of secured funding of the proponent's share of total project costs

Applicants are required to submit a single copy of the application package by 23:59 Eastern Daylight Time, February 10, 2023.

The application must include two attestations that a duly authorized officer of the applicant organization has signed and dated. If the attestation pages are not included, the application will be considered incomplete and will receive no further consideration. The attestation pages are included in the Application Form.

NOTE: You should not consider your application as successfully retained until you receive the acknowledgement notice from NRCan.

Any questions or inquiries regarding the EIS SSR must be sent by email to: [budworm-tordeuse@nrcan-rncan.gc.ca](mailto:budworm-tordeuse@nrcan-rncan.gc.ca).

## 4.3 How to Submit the Application

Applicants are encouraged to submit their applications by email to: [budworm-tordeuse@nrcan-rncan.gc.ca](mailto:budworm-tordeuse@nrcan-rncan.gc.ca).

Please note that the maximum size of email attachments to NRCan is 10 MB. If the application exceeds that maximum, the applicant may forward its submission in a series of emails with the same subject line.

NRCan is not responsible for the security of the application during email transmission.

Applicants may instead choose to submit their documentation by courier or registered mail, postmarked by 23:59 Eastern Daylight Time, February 10, 2023 to:

Early Intervention Strategy Program  
Natural Resources Canada  
Canadian Forest Service - Atlantic Forestry Centre  
1350 Regent Street  
Fredericton, NB E3B 5P7

When submitting a project proposal by courier or registered mail, a memory stick is requested that includes electronic versions of all relevant files, clearly marked with the name of the organization and the project title.

**Please inform NRCan by email if an application is being delivered by courier.**

It is the applicant's responsibility to retain proof of the time that the application package and supporting documentation was sent to NRCan. This may be required in the event that NRCan does not receive the proposal by the deadline for reasons beyond the sender's control.

When an application has been submitted, a notification will be sent by NRCan acknowledging its receipt. This may take up to five business days.

## 5. PROJECT SELECTION CRITERIA

### 5.1 Assessment and Due Diligence

Each project will be reviewed for completeness and assessed against mandatory criteria (see Section 5.2). Projects that do not meet all the mandatory criteria will not be given further consideration. Projects that meet the mandatory criteria will then be assessed, rated, and ranked against merit criteria (see Section 5.3) by the EIS review committee, which includes NRCan and the Healthy Forest Partnership. NRCan will then issue funding decisions. Unsuccessful project proposals will receive letters of regret and successful project proposals will receive Letters of Conditional Approval.

Applications will also undergo a due diligence assessment, which could include a confirmation of the specifics provided in the project proposal. NRCan may request that the applicant provide clarification to support the due diligence assessment. The final selection decision for funding remains at the sole discretion of NRCan.

In general, projects that are the highest rated against the merit criteria will be selected for funding. However, NRCan may not select the highest rated projects to ensure that underrepresented and underserved research strategic themes and/or regions are sufficiently funded under EIS SSR. If NRCan decides to select projects on this basis, NRCan will not provide applicants any further notice concerning the selection process.

Natural Resources Canada is seeking attestation from funding applicants to the EIS SSR that their organization is in compliance with the *United Nations Act*, *Special Economic Measures Act* or the *Justice for Victims of Foreign Corrupt Officials (Sergei Magnitsky Law)* and your organization has no dealings with countries or persons for which Canada has imposed economic sanctions. Please see the Application Form for the specifics statements for which you are required to attest.

**The applicant must include all supporting documentation requested in this Guide and in the Application Form.**

## 5.2 Mandatory Criteria

Only project proposals that meet the mandatory criteria will be assessed against merit criteria, as outlined below. When preparing a proposal, applicants are encouraged to provide a detailed and clear description for each criterion.

### Projects must:

- Meet the Eligibility Requirements as outlined in Sections 2.4 Eligible Recipients, 2.5 Eligible Projects, and 2.8 Stacking Assistance of this Guide
- Be completed no later than March 31, 2026. The applicant must provide a project timeline with phases (milestones).

## 5.3 Merit Criteria

Factors to be considered when assessing proposals will include:

- **The degree to which the proposed activities align with the overall scientific direction of the SBW EIS Phase III**
  - The project supports the EIS SSR's objective of improving knowledge and tools to address current and future SBW outbreak development and spread.
  - The project will improve knowledge on one or more of the following: SBW biology and ecology, EIS management, SBW outbreak development and spread, detection of SBW and SBW damage, and the impact of SBW outbreaks on forest ecosystems.
  - The project targets an important need or gap in SBW knowledge.
  - The project is new and innovative, and/or builds on, but does not exactly duplicate, existing or previous activities .
  - The project builds on work accomplished during EIS Phase 2.
  - Preference may be given to projects with the closest alignment with the objective and that are deemed to have the highest potential to advance SBW knowledge and the EIS.
  - Preference may be given to projects that address underrepresented and underserved research strategic themes and/or regions.
- **Demonstration of a direct and significant contribution to Expected Results described Section 2.2**
  - **Knowledge transfer:** *The project increases availability and access to scientific knowledge and advice pertaining to forest pests, in particular SBW, and related risks.*
    - Knowledge transfer activities will take place during the project (e.g., presentations to stakeholders, conference presentations, scientific publications).

- Project activities will help increase the awareness of the EIS and SBW among Canadians and academia.
- **Stakeholder relevance:** *decision makers integrate scientific knowledge and information in risk management decisions pertaining to the spruce budworm early intervention strategy.*
  - The project demonstrates relevance to stakeholders.
  - The applicant clearly identified organizations and collaborators that will be involved with the project, including how they will contribute to the project's objectives.
  - The partners or collaborators provide benefits such as expertise and/or external resources to support the project (i.e., financial or in-kind support)..

Preference may be given to applicants with demonstrated partnerships, including the inclusion of letters of support with the application.

- **The scientific or technological value of the proposals**
  - The project is well-designed, and the applicant has provided a thorough work plan.
  - The project's objective, key deliverable(s), and measures of success are clearly articulated.
  - Project activities are specific, measurable, realistic, and relevant to the project objectives.
  - The proposed activities can be realistically achieved based on the proposed schedule (completed no later than March 31, 2026) and budget.
  - The project's deliverables and possible impacts are clearly defined.
  - The proposal has identified appropriate measures of success/performance.
- **Demonstration of management capability to successfully undertake the project**
  - The applicant has the scientific capability, experience, and qualifications to successfully undertake the project.
  - The roles of project team members are clearly described in the proposal.
  - Past experience delivering projects with funding support from NRCan may be taken into consideration as part of the assessment.
- **Risks and Risk Mitigation**
  - The applicant describes the project risks (i.e., all key risks are defined and explained).
  - The proposed risk mitigation strategies are relevant and appropriate to addressing the identified risks.

- **Degree to which the project encourages leadership and participation from Indigenous communities and organizations, and/or provides benefits to Indigenous Peoples**
  - There is participation from Indigenous Peoples on the project team.
  - Indigenous peoples are being engaged on the development and/or implementation of the project.
  - The applicant demonstrates an understanding of the benefits/impacts of the project on Indigenous peoples.

## **6. EQUITY, DIVERSITY, AND INCLUSION**

The Government of Canada is committed to increasing Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) in all sectors and areas of activity. Therefore, the EIS SSR program will encourage successful applicants to voluntarily make publicly available through project reporting aspects of the project that advance all forms of diversity, equity and inclusion (e.g., racial, gender, linguistic) within project teams, activities, and project outcomes.

## **7. BASIS OF PAYMENTS**

The contribution agreement will set out the required terms for payments, which will be made to reimburse proponents based on receipt and approval of claims for payment. No advance payments will be made through EIS SSR for SBW.

Final payment will not be made until a proponent completes all project activities and NRCan considers those activities acceptable. To ensure appropriate project oversight, a percentage of the contribution will be withheld until all conditions of the contribution agreement have been met.

Proponents under EIS for SBW may be audited one or several times either after the project completion date or at NRCan's discretion during the project.

## **8. M-30 LAW (FOR QUEBEC ORGANIZATIONS ONLY)**

The Act Respecting the Ministère du Conseil Exécutif (M-30) may apply to an applicant in the Province of Quebec. Applicants may be required to complete an additional information form and, if they are subject to the requirements of the Act, to obtain written authorization and approval from the Government of Quebec prior to execution of any contribution agreement. NRCan will follow up with the applicant during the application assessment, as required.



## 9. PRIVACY NOTICE

The use and distribution of data collected under this program will comply with both the *Privacy Act* and the *Access to Information Act*.

Pursuant to the *Privacy Act*, the program will keep confidential any personal information it may collect and will not disclose or transmit said information without the applicant's written consent.

Pursuant to the *Access to Information Act*, the program will protect from disclosure any information of a financial, commercial, scientific, or technical nature it collects from applicants so long as the applicants consistently treat said information as confidential in their own establishments. If the applicant chooses to send the proposal or other confidential information to Natural Resources Canada by email, Natural Resources Canada will respond to the proposal by e-mail. Similarly, if the applicant's correspondence is through regular mail, Natural Resources Canada's response will be in like manner. However, in all cases, Natural Resources Canada will use e-mail correspondence to the applicants for all non-confidential matters. NRCan may collect, use, and share an applicant's documentation prepared in the administration of EIS for SBW. NRCan will use and share this information for the purposes of assessing and reviewing the eligibility of the applicant and the proposed project with:

- other NRCan programs and/or branches
- other departments or agencies of the Government of Canada
- other levels of government in Canada
- the Healthy Forest Partnership

The information may be shared with the parties mentioned above, or disclosed to third parties, for the purpose of:

- administration, including audit and evaluation of EIS for SBW
- surveying the applicant's experience with NRCan
- audit, analysis, and risk assessment of the applicant and/or the project
- determining the possible availability of funding for the applicant's project under another program or initiative

NRCan publishes a list of successful projects on the Government of Canada website. The list will include information such as the name and organization type of the proponent, the project name and description, and the amount of the contribution. NRCan may also publicize this information, along with a description of the project, in:

- project funding announcements or other promotions
- other government documents, including public reports on the progress of government initiatives

## 10. GUIDE TO IN-KIND SUPPORT

If NRCan officials deem an in-kind contribution acceptable, a formal commitment from the applicant concerning that in-kind contribution must be provided to NRCan, before NRCan will make any commitment to fund the proposed project. In-kind support is not eligible for reimbursement but can be included in the calculation of total project costs.

### **Definitions:**

*In-kind support:* a cash equivalent contribution in the form of a good or service for which no cash is exchanged, but that is essential to the project and that the applicant would have to purchase on the open market or through negotiation with the provider if not otherwise provided.

*Fair market value:* the average dollar value the provider could get for a contributed good or service in an open and unrestricted market, between a willing buyer and a willing seller (the applicant) acting independently of each other. It should approximately represent the original cost minus depreciation.

*Most favoured customer:* customer given the deepest discount from the normal selling price for a good or service sold to it by the applicant.

## 11. REPORTING REQUIREMENTS

Funding recipients will be required to report on the project's financials and overall outcomes. Funding recipients will be asked to report progress against milestones and claims for payments by describing and demonstrating how contributions were spent, along with a declaration as to the total amount of contributions or payments received from other sources in respect to the project.

Funding recipients will also be required to provide a post-project report comprised of a final narrative to describe how project activities have contributed to the achievement of the objectives of the project, and a final assessment of the project outcomes. The final report should address how the project improved knowledge and tools to address current and future SBW outbreak development and spread.

Further reporting requirements may be imposed on recipients through specific contribution agreements. Regular communication between NRCan and the recipients will be implemented to monitor progress.

## 12. CONTACT INFORMATION

Any **questions or inquiries** regarding the EIS for SBW must be sent by email to:

[budworm-tordeuse@nrcan-rncan.gc.ca](mailto:budworm-tordeuse@nrcan-rncan.gc.ca)

A written response will be provided within 5 business days.

In order to ensure that all applicants have access to the same information, recurring questions or those that may be useful to other applicants will be posted on NRCan's website.

During the application period, NRCan employees are not at liberty to meet or discuss proposed projects with applicants unless providing scientific advice or expertise on the EIS or SBW.