

Competitive Science Research Fund

Application Guide for 2022-23

Application Guide

SECTION 1: Program information

1.1 Effective Date and Review

This Application Guide takes effect on November 22, 2021, and replaces previous guides.

This guide outlines the process to be applied in the second year of the new funding program. Updated Application Guides will be developed for future years, and will be made available before the call for proposals.

1.2 Purpose

This guide is meant to assist applicants in completing and submitting an application in response to the Ecosystem and Oceans Science (EOS) Competitive Science Research Fund (CSRF) call for proposals for fiscal year 2022-23.

Please take your time and carefully read the following sections in this guide before completing your application:

Section 1 outlines the program parameters, including eligibility criteria for applicants and projects.

Section 2 contains a list of considerations and information you will need to include in your application, including information on evaluation criteria.

Section 3 outlines the process of submission.

1.3 Application period

Each Fall, the Ecosystem and Oceans Science Sector will hold a call for competitive science research proposals.

The call for proposals for fiscal year 2022-23 will take place the week of November 22, 2021. Please note that future calls will take place earlier in the fiscal year, aiming for a September 2022 call for proposals (for fiscal year 2023-24).

1.4 CSRF objectives

Overview:

The CSRF provides funding for projects which address research priorities that have been identified in collaboration with Regional and National DFO clients of our science programs. This document will be kept evergreen, and will be reviewed on an annual basis.

Areas of Focus:

This year, a subset of priorities has been selected to ensure that additional research in some key areas receives funding. This subset of priorities will be the focus of the call for 2022-23.

A subset of priorities will be selected annually, however, the overall set of priorities will be kept evergreen.

Expand our Support to Researchers

Given the challenges that presented themselves during 2021-22, particularly as they relate to Covid-19, researchers who received CSRF funding for projects starting in 2021-22 will be given the opportunity to submit proposal amendments to the Science Funding Secretariat (SFS).

Amendments are intended to be limited to specific issues encountered due to ship-time cancellations, delayed delivery of equipment/supplies, and other unforeseen issues.

Amendment forms and further instruction will be sent to all successful PIs of multi-year projects when interim report templates are circulated for completion.

Inclusivity and Access

In support of the Sector's commitment to advance professional development within the organization, researchers will be able to avail themselves of resources such as coaching to further support their success in this process.

1.5 CSRF Research Priorities

CSRF research priorities fall under seven (7) thematic areas, they are:

- Aquaculture Science
- Aquatic Animal Health
- Aquatic Ecosystems – Aquatic Invasive Species and Species at Risk
- Aquatic Ecosystems – Ecosystems, Habitats, and Impacts

- Biotechnology and Genomics
- Climate Change and Oceans
- Fisheries Science

Technical Advisory (TA) Sub-committees have been established to review proposals based on which Thematic Area the priority falls under. Note that Aquatic Animal Health and Biotechnology & Genomics proposals will be reviewed by the same TA sub-committee.

In addition to Thematic Areas, research priorities fall under broader Research Areas. Each Research Area has one or more sub-areas of Research Focus within it, and there may be several Research Priorities within a Research Focus.

Each Research Priority is associated with a unique Priority Identification Number (PIN) which applicants must identify on their proposal submissions.

The full table of CSRF priorities will become an evergreen document, to be reviewed each year. Broad categories such as Research Areas or Research Focus items are unlikely to change from year to year, but it is more likely that specific examples of research will be updated as client needs change, and the subset of priorities published to the web page for the CSRF call for proposals is expected to be updated each year.

1.6 Subset of Research Priorities for 2022-23

The subset of research priorities for the 2022-23 call can be downloaded from the “**Research Priorities**” tab of the CSRF web page, and it is set up in the following manner:

- Column A – Thematic Area
- Column B – Research Area
- Column C – Research Focus
- Column D – Research Priority
- Column E – Priority Identification Number (PIN)
- Column F – offers specific examples of research that would address the priority (Note, where the research priority was already highly specific, Column F may be blank).

1.7 Eligibility

Proposals for 2022-23 must address a specific research priority (or priorities) from the CSRF subset of Research Priorities for 2022-23.

CSRF proposals will undergo a two-step application process before being submitted to the Science Funding Secretariat for technical evaluation:

Step 1: LOI development, including regional review/triage

Step 2: Full proposal development including regional review/triage

Proposals must be supported by the applicant's Regional Director of Science (RDS) at each stage of regional review.

Please note: ALL sections and fields on the proposal application form MUST be filled out (unless otherwise indicated in the instructions). The Science Funding Secretariat will not contact applicants for further information where it is missing.

Successful applicants may be funded for up to three years. Project funding amounts will be reviewed annually, and may be subject to change based on program funds available and the progression of the project. Additionally, project funding may be subject to revocation if there are serious and ongoing issues with completion of work, generation of deliverables, or meeting of reporting requirements.

1.8 Funding available

Funding for research activities changes from year to year (and sometimes within year due to operational challenges).

1.9 Eligible project period

The CSRF will commit to funding for projects ranging in length from one (1) to three (3) fiscal years. There is a section on the application forms for applicants to indicate if the project is expected to take longer than three (3) years to complete. Applicants are asked to clearly indicate the anticipated time to full completion of the project if more than three years is required. Funding will be guaranteed for the first three years only, and applicants will need to reapply for funding for future years.

Projects must be completed by March 31 of the last fiscal year of funding. There must be a clear end point for deliverables – the project cannot be ongoing indefinitely.

1.10 Expected results

There is an expectation for research results to be made available to program clients, and for the researcher to maintain contact with the client throughout the course of the project, providing any relevant updates.

Upon completion of a project, a **plain language report** of results must be made available to the

client, and is a **mandatory deliverable for all CSRF projects**.

Projects funded by the CSRF will also be subject to interim and final project reporting requirements.

Interim reports will be due in the Fall of each year of a project. They will be used to assess project progression, and will be considered when reviewing funding amounts for subsequent years of the project.

Final project reports will be due upon completion of the project. They will be used to assess the overall success of the project, and confirm that all deliverables and the plain language report have been made available to the client. Completion of all deliverables and final reports will be considered when awarding any future funding under this program.

Templates for interim and final reports will be made available on the CSRF internal web page.

1.11 Eligible expenditures

The following categories of eligible expenditures are acceptable:

Salary

- Term and/or casual salary, including Post-Doc salary

Operations and Maintenance (O&M)

- Student salary (paid in O&M)
- Equipment purchase or rental (note capital funds are not available, so capital purchases are not considered)
- Materials and supplies
- IT requirements (HPC, data storage and data management costs)
- Ship time and other vehicle rental
- Communications and printing, production and distribution costs, including open access fees
- Contracts for management and professional/laboratory or other required services
- Travel and field costs
- Translation

1.12 Project selection and funding decisions

For fiscal year 2022-23, successful submission of an LOI as well as a Full Proposal within the applicant's region will be required before a project proposal is submitted to the CSRF for technical review.

LOI and Regional review

Applicants, with the support of their Section Head/Division Manager, will forward their Letter of Intent to their RDS for regional review.

The regional review of LOIs is not a technical review, but will ensure:

- Client engagement has taken place
- There is a strong link between the research proposed, and client priority/need
- Opportunities for national/zonal/regional projects are identified

At this stage, suggestions may be given on proposal development, including but not limited to: revisions to methodology, timeline, or budget proposed, merging of proposals into more collaborative, or zonal projects, etc.

Triage of LOI submissions will ensure only proposals that meet CSRF requirements will advance to full proposal development. If an RDS determines an LOI does not meet requirements, or otherwise chooses not to advance the LOI to full proposal development, a rationale will be provided to the applicant by the RDS explaining the decision.

All LOIs (supported or not) will be forwarded to the Science Funding Secretariat for the purposes of tracking all submissions.

Full Proposal and Regional review

Where requested by their RDS/Section Head/Divisional Manager, applicants will develop a Full Proposal submission, and forward it to the office of their RDS for regional review. Applicants should ensure to follow the file naming convention as outlined in Section 3.1.

The regional review of Full Proposals is not a technical review, but will ensure:

- Suggestions for improvement at LOI phase have been incorporated
- Proposals are complete and well-written

The RDS will group endorsed proposals by thematic area, and forward them to the Secretariat to undergo technical review.

Triage of Full Proposal submissions will ensure only proposals that are complete, well written, and that meet CSRF requirements will advance to technical evaluation. If an RDS determines a proposal does not meet requirements, or otherwise chooses to not submit the proposal to the

Science Funding Secretariat, a rationale will be provided to the applicant by the RDS explaining the decision.

Full proposals that are not endorsed will also be forwarded to the Science Funding Secretariat for the purposes of tracking all submissions.

All CSRF proposals must be submitted to the Science Funding Secretariat through the office of your RDS. Individual submissions emailed to the Secretariat from applicants will not be considered.

Secretariat review

The Science Funding Secretariat will assess/review all applications received by the deadline to ensure all forms are complete, and will direct them to the appropriate Technical Advisory Sub-Committee(s) for technical evaluation.

Technical Review and Evaluation

The Secretariat has established Technical Advisory Sub-Committees (by thematic area) to provide a technical evaluation of all full proposals. The purpose of this evaluation is to ensure any proposals selected for funding will be technically sound. The CSRF National Steering Committee will consider the Technical Advisory Sub-Committee evaluations, and based on funding available, the SFS will prepare a suite of recommended proposals to be submitted to the Science Executive Committee (SEC) for review and approval.

Final Review/Approval

While the National Steering Committee and Technical Advisory Sub-Committees will review and evaluate full proposals, SEC is responsible for funding decisions. It should be noted that various considerations (beyond technical score), form the basis of funding decisions, including but not limited to ensuring that funding is distributed across thematic areas, regions, and researchers within the EOS research community.

The Secretariat will notify all applicants of the final decisions made by SEC. Decisions are final; there is no appeal process.

SECTION 2: Application Outline

*LOI and Full Proposal forms can be found on the **Apply to the CSRF** tab of the CSRF internal web page.*

Guidance on how to complete an application template is provided on the form. Please note: ALL sections and fields on the application template MUST be completed in order for an application to be deemed eligible, unless otherwise indicated. The Secretariat will not contact an applicant to ask for further information.

2.1 Application forms

LOI

Applicants must respect all word count limits identified in the Letter of Intent template.

Researchers will be expected to identify/provide information on :

- Research Area;
- Research Focus;
- Research priority being addressed and associated PIN;
- Project title;
- Amount of funding being requested;
- Duration of the requested funding;
- Name and Region of Principal Investigator and Co-Principal Investigator (if applicable);
- Research Team - identify DFO, other government department (OGD), and external collaborators;
- Client Engagement – identify the client colleague consulted, and outline the nature of discussions had (100 words max);
- Project Summary – describe how the project addresses the priority, list the primary objectives, and outline methodology (300 words max);
- Deliverables/Project outputs – describe the expected deliverables and explain their relevance/usefulness to clients (250 words max);
- Data Management Plan – identify the SDM-SC data manager for your region and the expected Data Steward for the project;
- Budget requirements – outline funding (salary and O&M) requested from the CSRF by year. Note, a budget spreadsheet to assist in calculation of expenses is available to download from the CSRF web page.

Full Proposal

Applicants must respect all word limits identified in the Full Proposal template. In addition to some elements identified in the LOI, researchers will be asked to provide more detailed information on:

- Partnerships and collaborations – detail any additional information on partnerships and collaborations relevant to the project (150 words max)
- Project Overview – detail how the project specifically addresses the priority (300 words max)
- Addressing knowledge gaps – explain how the project advances knowledge, or addresses as knowledge gap (300 words max.)
- Objectives – describe project objectives (200 words max.)
- Methodology – Clearly detail the methods you will use to achieve the objectives of the project (300 words max.)
- Work Plan – Using bullets, outline the main project activities by fiscal year
- Data Acquisition – identify timeframes, geographic locations for acquiring data, and identify resource requirements. Ensure to identify any partnerships required such as data sharing agreements, etc. (200 words max.)
- Data processing/analysing – What are the hardware software needs? What formats will data be made available in? (100 words max.)
- Data preservation and Protection – Provide information on data storage. If data is not stored on DFO infrastructure, how will it be brought back inside the department? What is the data maintenance cycle? (200 words max.)
- Data publication – Detail the plan for making the data available. Where will it be openly published? How will proprietary/sensitive data be handled? (200 words max.)
- Deliverables – identify the main project deliverables expected for each year of the work plan. Be sure to explain what the deliverable will contain rather than just providing a title.
- Risk management – identify and assess risks to project completion and describe mitigation measures (200 words max)
- Budget requirements – outline funding (salary and O&M) requested from the CSRF by year, and provide detail for line item expenses (ex/ provide number of hires, level, and length of employment if you identified salary as an expense). Note, a budget spreadsheet to assist in calculation of expenses will be available to download from the CSRF web page and may be used to copy and paste costs.
- References cited
- High Performance Computing (HPC) information page should also be completed where the project has identified HPC requirements.

2.2 Evaluation Criteria

Applications will undergo a technical evaluation. The assessment areas on the evaluation rubric are as follows:

- Client priorities
- Objectives
- Knowledge gaps
- Methodology and timeframes
- Data management plan
- Outputs
- Project risk management
- Budget

An evaluation tool will be utilized by the Technical Advisory Sub-committees to apply a scoring method to the application. It will be available to download from the **Apply to the CSRF** tab of our web page.

SECTION 3: Application Process

3.1 Steps to Application

Step 1: Carefully read the Application Guide – This guide provides details on program eligibility and other key information.

Step 2: Download and review the CSRF subset of research priorities, detailed on the Research Priorities tab. The table can be filtered by thematic area, research area, research focus, or PIN. Select a priority (or priorities) to be addressed in your research, noting the relevant Priority Identification Number (PIN).

Applicants are strongly encouraged to review all research priorities before preparing an application.

Step 3: Review the tools and templates. Consult with client sector colleagues as necessary to discuss the proposal, clarify the research question, agree on deliverables and timelines, etc.

Step 4: Download and complete the Letter of Intent (LOI). Ensure you are completing the form fully and accurately, respecting any-word count limitations and to verify that nothing is missing.

Step 5: Submit your LOI(s) to the office of your RDS for regional review, and participate in discussions to refine/merge/improve upon the project submission.

Step 6: Where requested by your RDS/Section Head/Divisional Manager, download and complete the Full Proposal application form, being sure to completely fill ALL sections and fields as necessary.

Step 7: Submit your full proposal to your Regional Director of Science by the date requested.

Both the file and subject line of your email must use the following naming convention: **CSRF Application-[Fiscal Year]-[PIN]-Region-[Last Name], [First Name]** (Ex/ CSRF application-2022-23-FS-02-Maritimes-Doe, Jane).

Full proposals will undergo regional review before being selected for submission to the Secretariat.

3.2 Key dates

Week of November 22, 2021: CSRF Competitive process open and call for LOIs.

November 23, 2021 – 04 February 2022 : Regionally managed process for LOI and full proposal development and review.

The regional review process will be managed by the Regional Director of Science and their Regional Assessment Team(s). It is expected that the process for LOI development and review should take approximately 5 weeks. The process for full proposal development and review should take approximately 6 weeks.

February 04, 2022: Regionally supported Full proposal submissions due to the Science Funding Secretariat for technical evaluation.

February 14, 2022 – March 14 2022: Technical Review of Full proposals submitted.

Spring: Funding decisions will begin to be communicated.

3.3 Frequently Asked Questions

A list of FAQs will be added to the CSRF internal webpage on the **FAQ tab**. If you still have questions, please contact the Secretariat for more information at: DFO.SFS-SFS.MPO@dfompo.gc.ca