



Guidelines and Evaluation Criteria

Competition for Science and Technology Platform Operations Support



GenomeCanada

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Genome Canada is a not-for-profit corporation dedicated to developing and implementing a national strategy in genomics and proteomics research for the benefit of all Canadians. By means of **investments of \$840 million** to date from the Government of Canada, Genome Canada has become the primary funding and information resource relating to genomics and proteomics in Canada and has established six Genome Centres across the country (Atlantic, Québec, Ontario, Prairie, Alberta, and British Columbia).

1 OBJECTIVES OF GENOME CANADA

Genome Canada's mandate is to develop and implement a national strategy in genomics and proteomics research for the benefit of all Canadians. It is committed to increasing Canada's position among the world leaders in genomics research in key areas such as health, agriculture, environment, forestry, fisheries and technology development. It is also committed to a leadership role on the ethical, environmental, economic, legal and social issues and potential implications associated with genomics research (GE³LS), and to communicating with Canadians on these and other issues.

Genome Canada will fulfill its mandate through its five national objectives:

1. The development and establishment of a coordinated national strategy for genomics research to enable Canada to become a world leader in areas such as health, agriculture, environment, forestry and fisheries;
2. The provision of leading-edge technology to researchers in all genomics-related areas through regional Genome Centres across Canada, of which there are currently six, one each in British Columbia, Alberta, the Prairies, Ontario, Quebec, and the Atlantic;
3. The support of large-scale genomics and proteomics research projects of strategic importance to Canada, by bringing together industry, governments, universities, research hospitals and the public;
4. The assumption of leadership in the area of ethical, environmental, economic, legal, social and other issues related to genomics research (GE³LS), and the communication of the relative risks, rewards and successes of genomics research to the Canadian public; and
5. The encouragement of investment by other persons in the field of Genomics research.

2 BACKGROUND

Genome Canada funds large-scale genomics research proposals in the areas of health, agriculture, environment, forestry, fisheries, new technology, and GE³LS. Genome Canada also supports leading-edge science & technology (S&T) Platforms. These S&T Platforms provide access to equipment, intensive technology services, such as DNA sequencing and proteomics analysis, expertise in information technology and bioinformatics services, as well as advice to projects that help them perform better science. To ensure that research projects and Platforms of the highest caliber are funded, they are selected by international experts through a rigorous review of their scientific, management and financial plans.

With its partners, Genome Canada has funded **131 large-scale research projects and S&T Platforms** with total investment commitments to date of over **\$1.6 billion**. A list of approved large-scale projects and S&T Platforms is available on Genome Canada's web site at www.genomecanada.ca.

Genome Canada's strategy to ensure the effective management and monitoring of its funded research projects and S&T Platforms has been to establish six Genome Centres across Canada, in British Columbia, Alberta, the Prairies, Ontario, Québec, and the Atlantic region. These Centres facilitate access to leading-edge S&T Platforms for researchers, support project development, management and fundraising, and provide opportunities for public outreach programs at the regional level. **Contact information for each Centre is presented in Appendix A.**

3 REQUEST FOR APPLICATIONS (RFA)

3.1 Purpose

The purpose of this RFA is to solicit applications for science and technology (S&T) Platform operations support for ongoing Genome Canada Competition III projects and pending projects from the Applied Genomics Research in Bioproducts or Crops (ABC) Competition. There are at present six Genome Canada-funded S&T Platforms. This competition is open to all currently funded Genome Canada Platforms, as well as, any potential new Platforms that can meet the rigorous requirements of this competition. The primary criterion, apart from excellence, for any Platform to receive funding from Genome Canada is that the Platform receives substantial demand from Genome Canada-funded large scale projects, which are independent of the Platform and its Director, i.e., service provided by a Platform to a project led by the Platform Director is not considered an independent relationship. Genome Canada-funded Platforms are also expected to provide access to non-Genome Canada-funded researchers.

4 COMPETITION

Genome Canada will support Platforms for up to three (3) years in duration. Existing Platforms that will not receive demand from any currently funded Genome Canada large scale projects beyond the term of the Competition III projects should not request funding beyond the mandate of the Competition III projects. For new and existing Platforms expecting demand from the ABC competition, an evaluation of the Platform's ability to deliver high quality service to the ABC approved projects and an assessment of the Platform's operation support needs will be made at the International Peer review meeting. A recommendation of funding support will be submitted to Genome Canada's Board of Directors at its September, 2009 meeting for final decisions. Platforms, both new and existing, should expect to be ready to receive funds by January 1, 2010.

5 APPLICATION AND EVALUATION PROCEDURES

5.1 General Instructions

Eligible applicants are restricted to those from academic institutions and research institutes in Canada, must submit their application through one of the six Genome Centres (see Appendix A). Applicants from Industry and Government laboratories are not eligible for this

competition. Each Centre will ensure that applications satisfy Genome Canada's evaluation criteria as defined in Appendix B.

5.2 Platform Access Policy

Genome Canada has a Platform Access Policy (www.genomecanada.ca) that must be accepted and complied with by all applicants to this competition.

5.3 Platform Funding Model

Genome Canada revised its funding model for Platforms in 2005. A description of the funding model can be found at www.genomecanada.ca.

5.4 Competition Time Lines

Requests for support for Platforms must be submitted to Genome Canada through a Genome Centre. The competition timelines are outlined below. Please contact your regional Genome Centre immediately for further information on their process.

August 15, 2008	Launch of competition and release of guidelines
January 23, 2009	Deadline for Letter of Interest (LOIs) to Genome Centre
February 6, 2009	Deadline for LOIs to Genome Canada
End of March, 2009	Invitation to apply to competition
June 30, 2009	Deadline for full applications and budget to Genome Centre
July 15, 2009	Deadline for full applications and budget to Genome Canada
August/early Sept 2009	International Peer Review Committee meets to review applications
September 2009	Genome Canada Board of Directors renders funding decisions
January 1, 2010	Platforms must meet all conditions to allow the release of funds

5.5 Letter of Interest

A letter of interest (LOI) stage will be used to evaluate the potential Platforms for eligibility and responsiveness to this RFA. Each LOI must be submitted on the form available at www.genomecanada.ca. Applicants must submit an LOI by **January 23, 2009** to the Genome Centre. The Genome Centre will work with the applicants to help them develop their final LOI, which will be submitted through the Centre to Genome Canada by **February 6, 2009**. LOIs submitted in the absence of the support of one of the Genome Centres, (i.e., signature of the President & CEO) will NOT be accepted. . The authors of LOIs that do not fulfill the demand for services criteria (see section 3.1) will NOT be invited to submit an application.

The LOI process will also provide guidance to Genome Canada in the selection of reviewers for the peer review process. Applicants will be invited to submit the names of potential reviewers not currently residing or working in Canada and with whom the applicants have no conflict.

5.6 Application for Funding of a Science & Technology Platform

An application for funding must be submitted to the Genome Centre by **June 30, 2009** for review prior to its submission through their Genome Centre to Genome Canada on or before **July 15, 2009**. The application must address the evaluation criteria described in Appendix B and be presented on the *S&T Platform Operations Support* application and budget forms which will be available at www.genomecanada.ca.

5.7 Review Process

To ensure that the objectives of Genome Canada are met, each S&T Platform proposal will be assessed against the technical, financial, management, and demand for services criteria as outlined in Appendix B. For any application to be considered for funding a threshold of excellence for each category must be exceeded.

A multidisciplinary committee of international members with scientific, management and financial expertise will review the applications submitted for S&T Platforms operations support. The committee will evaluate the technical, management, financial, and demand for services aspects of each application taking into consideration the evaluation criteria presented in Appendix B. The international review committee will meet with and interview representatives from each Platform through a reverse site visit mechanism.

The review committee will offer recommendations and advice, including budget recommendations, to the Board of Directors of Genome Canada. The Board of Directors will make the final decision on which applications to fund. Following the decision, applicants will be provided with a written evaluation of the strengths and weaknesses of their application and the decision of the Board. Decisions of the Board are final.

Genome Canada may adjust the evaluation process where warranted by the complexity of the proposals or other relevant factors. Any adjustments will be rapidly communicated through Genome Canada's website and through the Genome Centres.

6 PROJECT MANAGEMENT AND OVERSIGHT

6.1 Science Advisory Boards

All Genome Canada funded Platforms must have a Science Advisory Board (SAB) to provide advice and guidance to the Platform team to help ensure that the Platform serves the Genome Canada-funded projects, as well as, the larger scientific community with a high degree of excellence. The membership of the SAB must be completely independent from the Platform with no real or perceived conflicts and be composed of experts who will work with the Platform to maximize the success of the Platform's operations. Genome Canada is currently developing guidelines related to the membership, mandate and terms of reference for Science Advisory Boards of Genome Canada funded projects and Platforms. These will be made available on the Genome Canada website. Genome Canada will appoint one member of the SAB as an *ex officio* member to each funded Platform. Genome Centres may appoint one member to the SAB as an *ex officio* member to Platforms in their region.

6.2 Interim Review

Genome Canada will undertake an interim review of each approved Platform, within approximately eighteen (18) months from the Notice of Award. As one of the methods used

in the oversight and accountability of Genome Canada funded Platforms, the interim review will evaluate the Platform's technical capabilities, performance in delivering service to their collaborators and customers, as well as, a full due diligence financial review. The results of interim review will be used to determine whether funding should be continued, reduced or cancelled.

7 FUNDING

Genome Canada will fund 100% of approved eligible costs for new or incremental Platform operation activities related to providing service to Genome Canada-funded projects. Genome Canada will also provide funds that will ensure that the Platform has a minimum of 20% excess capacity that is to be used to serve the broader scientific community.

7.1 Eligible Costs

Eligible costs are defined as reasonable and incremental costs for items that directly support the technology delivered by the Platform. Budgets must **NOT** include items for which funding has already been approved from other sources. Genome Canada funded expenses must be incurred after the Notice of Award (NOA) to be considered as eligible costs.

Eligible costs may include the following:

i. Salaries:

salaries and benefits for technology team leaders, project/client management personnel, technology development personnel, IT systems administration, and administrative support (note that salaries of researchers or senior management who are currently funded by their respective organizations are **not** considered eligible costs). Genome Canada will accept actual benefit rates as charged by the host institution;

ii. rent for laboratory space

iii. cost of new equipment and equipment maintenance, NOTE: All Genome Canada-funded Platforms are obligated to finance equipment purchases from all available sources.

iv. costs for the communications and public outreach activities related to the Platform

v. reasonable travel costs

vi. inflation rate costs:

- inflation for salaries, not to exceed 2.2% percent of total salary and benefits, for salary expenditures in years 2 to 3 of the Platform;
- note that inflation cannot be applied to consumables, equipment, or general & administrative expenses.

Payments to foreign persons, for example investigators' salaries, are not considered eligible costs for Genome Canada.

7.2 Cost-recoverable expenses

The following are not eligible costs for this competition and are all considered cost-recoverable expenses to be charged to the user of the technology services. The list is not

exclusive as there may be expenses deemed not eligible at the review meeting and those expenses will need to be charged to users.

- i. Salaries for technicians that operate equipment used to deliver technology services
- ii. Salaries for technicians who perform quality control and quality assurance
- iii. Salaries for technicians who provide data analysis assistance
- iv. Consumables required to deliver technology services

8 ADMINISTRATION

8.1 Platform Readiness

Platforms must demonstrate that they will be in a position to receive Genome Canada funding by January 1, 2010 (see Conditions for Release of Genome Canada Funds, Section 8.2). Genome Canada reserves the right to withdraw its funding for any approved Platform that has not met the conditions for release of funds within three months from notification of award.

8.2 Conditions for Release of Genome Canada Funds

The following are the minimum requirements to allow for the initial disbursement of Genome Canada's contributions:

- i. Signed agreement between Genome Canada and the Genome Centre.
- ii. Signed agreements (or MOUs) between the Genome Centre, the lead organization, and the applicants that establishes the resolution of major areas, such as, contributions, IP ownership and management, project management, the role of the SAB, funding term, termination policy, financial policies, quarterly reporting of expenses etc. The agreements or MOUs must be in compliance with the agreement between Genome Canada and the Genome Centre. Although Genome Canada funds will flow to the lead organization once an agreement has been signed and other conditions are met, in order for Genome Canada to release funds for other organizations, where Platform work may be conducted, agreements with those organizations must be in place.
- iii. A letter signed by the CEO and legal counsel of the Genome Centre confirming to Genome Canada that: all agreements have been signed and are in compliance with the agreement between Genome Canada and the Genome Centre; all other conditions for release of funds have been met; and funds will flow to the Platform upon receipt of funds from Genome Canada.
- iv. The budget as approved by the Board of Directors of Genome Canada.
- v. Appropriate certification for Platforms involving human subjects, human stem cells, animals, biohazards, radioactive materials or materials which may have effects on the environment. Certification must be obtained specifically for the research approved for funding by Genome Canada. In order to release funds to an organization Genome Canada will accept a letter from the appropriate officials at the organization confirming that: i) the organization will ensure that any research carried out with funds from Genome Canada will respect all of the certification requirements for the research; ii) the institution will not flow

funds to an investigator until all certifications for the research to be undertaken are satisfied; and iii) the institution will provide Genome Canada with copies of all certifications obtained during the term of the project.

vi. SAB membership and implementation plan that complies with Genome Canada's guidelines.

vii. Genome Canada-funded Platforms must acknowledge funding through all public means, including through the Platform website, marketing material, and publications, etc. The acknowledgment of Genome Canada funding should include the Genome Canada logo and/or a statement approved by Genome Canada.

viii. Meet other conditions that may be set by the Board of Directors of Genome Canada.

8.3 Management of Funding

The agreement between Genome Canada and the Genome Centre will reference financial commitments from other persons, and specify cash flow statements. As the needs and circumstances of each Centre, the researchers and partner organizations may differ, the contracts between these partners will be negotiated individually and need not be identical, but should apply the same general underlying principles as defined in the agreement between Genome Canada and the Genome Centres. Genome Canada's funding for approved Platforms will flow from Genome Canada to the Centres. In accordance with established procedures the Genome Centres will manage (e.g., disburse, monitor and report on) the funds for the Platform.

Genome Canada will provide funding up to the approved quarterly contribution, a quarter "in advance", subject to receipt of quarterly reports of expenditures. Subsequent quarterly advances may be adjusted to account for any unused funding.

8.4 Accountability and Reporting

Funded Platforms will agree to submit to the Genome Centre on a regular basis, information and data as prescribed by the Centre in terms of timing, format and content, which will allow for the on-going assessment and monitoring of the performance of Platforms. It is the responsibility of the investigator leading the Platform to participate in this process.

8.5 Yearly Reports

Each Platform will be required to submit to its Genome Centre a yearly report that includes a description of services delivered by the Platform to all customers. The report will include such details as the current price of each service offered, the breakdown of the types of customers (Genome Canada-funded, non-Genome Canada-funded, Canadian academic, Canadian industry, foreign academic, foreign industry), the quantity and dollar value of each service provided to each type of customer, etc. The complete reporting metrics will be transmitted from Genome Canada to the Platforms through the Genome Centres.

8.6 Cost savings and pricing of services

Genome Canada-funded Platforms must translate cost savings into lower pricing of services to customers. Reporting of lower prices must be made to your Genome Centre on a regular basis but no later than once a year.

Should any additional requirements or restrictions be placed on new funds received for this competition, Genome Canada will be obliged to ensure that the contracts between Genome Canada and the Genome Centres reflect these conditions and that the guidelines for this competition are modified, where necessary, to allow compliance with them.

Should Genome Canada's policies be revised either during the application process or thereafter, it is the obligation of the Platform team to ensure that they are in compliance with the revised policies.

APPENDIX A - CONTACTS

Genome Canada

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APPENDIX B - EVALUATION CRITERIA

Proposals, which are submitted to Genome Canada, are evaluated through a rigorous independent peer review process to assess their scientific and technical merit and to ensure that sound financial and management practices are implemented. Excellence in delivering technology services at the very highest of international standards must be demonstrated for funding to be awarded.

Evaluation of applications will be a two step process: Letters of Interest will be assessed for eligibility as a Platform, which requires they demonstrate substantial demand for services from Genome Canada-funded large scale projects. LOIs that do not fulfill the “demand for services” criterion will NOT be invited to submit a full application. Full applications must not only satisfy the demand for services criterion but also the scientific and technical, management and financial criteria. *N.B:* The descriptors which follow the criteria below are not all-inclusive.

A Demand for Services Criteria

Platforms submitted to this competition must:

have substantial demand from Genome Canada-funded large scale projects, which are independent of the Platform and its Director, i.e., service provided by a Platform to a project led by the Platform Director is not considered an independent relationship. Requests where demand from Genome Canada-funded projects is insufficient to justify receiving operations support will be denied.

B Scientific and Technical Criteria

1. Quality of the Platform

- i. The technical ability to provide each of the technologies offered by the Platform
- ii. The likelihood that services will be delivered on time
- iii. The ability of the Platform to advance technologies
- iv. Efforts by the Platform to reduce costs over time

2. Quality of the Platform Team

- i. The appropriateness of the applicants' expertise to operate a Science and Technology Platform
- ii. The quality of the applicants' recent productivity, track records and their contributions to the field of genomics or proteomics
- iii. Is the Platform team forward looking?

3. Delivering Service to the Broader Scientific Community

- i. Does the Platform effectively utilize and deliver services using excess capacity to non-Genome Canada-funded researchers?

4. Training of Highly Qualified Personnel (HQP)

- i. The quality and appropriateness of the proposed training program and training milieu
- ii. The demonstration that plans are in place to ensure that an adequate number of HQP are available to meet the needs of the Platform

C Management Criteria

1. The quality of the management plan, and the administrative/ organizational structure:

- i. The composition of the proposed management team, recruitment plan, role of key personnel and committees, frequency of meetings, etc.
- ii. The appropriateness of management team member accountabilities
- iii. The mechanism of communicating within the Platform, with the Genome Centre(s) and collaborators/users and the ability to coordinate activities
- iv. The method for making research results accessible to customers
- v. The ability to manage a multi-disciplinary team

2. The mechanism for making critical decisions regarding the Platform operations:

- i. The manner in which go/no-go decisions will be made
- ii. The mechanism for evaluating Platform operations progress
- iii. The process for making strategic decisions when a consensus cannot be reached
- iv. The discussion of key challenges and plans to address them

3. The use of the SAB:

- i. The appropriateness of the SAB membership
- ii. The effective use of the SAB

4. The effectiveness of the proposed communications and outreach plan to market the Platform:

- i. The effectiveness of the plan to market the Platform
- ii. Promotional activities (e.g., advertising, website creation)

D Financial Criteria

1. Budget/Control Processes

- i. The eligibility of budgeted costs as defined in section 7.1
- ii. The reasonableness of the budgeted costs and justifications
- iii. The appropriateness of principal financial assumptions
- iv. The appropriateness of planned financial and budgetary control processes including mechanisms for authorizing purchases, making payments and adjusting the budget
- v. The realism of estimates for space rental requirements, renovation plans (where applicable) and time period associated with the Platform ramp-up (e.g., recruiting, purchasing, installing new equipment, etc.)
- vi. Evidence that potential risks related to ensuring the success of the Platform over the term of funding have been considered in appropriate depth and contingency plans have been established