



Grand Challenges Canada®
Grands Défis Canada

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ)

GRAND CHALLENGE FOR SUSTAINABLE DIAGNOSTIC CONTAINMENT LABORATORIES- REQUEST FOR EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST

Updated: April 11, 2023

This document addresses anticipated and commonly asked questions relating to the Grand Challenge for Sustainable Diagnostic Laboratories Request Expression of Interest (RFEI) launched February 23, 2023. Additional questions may be submitted to sdl@grandchallenges.ca.

This FAQ document will be updated periodically, up to one week prior to the **extended submission deadline of 2:00 pm EDT (6:00 pm UTC) April 26, 2023**.

1. What do you mean by the term ‘Containment’?

Containment laboratories are facilities to control and contain infectious material/pathogens to prevent exposure of personnel and release to the environment. This is achieved through engineering, administrative, and operational controls that are implemented as proportionate to the assessed risk. Higher consequence pathogens require more sophisticated, and multiple, layers of control/protection. The combination of the controls reduces the overall biological risk (as a combination of biosafety and biosecurity) to a level that is tolerable to the organisation and their stakeholders.”¹

2. What do you mean by the term ‘High Consequence Pathogen’?

High consequence pathogens are viruses and bacteria that are able to cause significant harm to human or animal health should they be accidentally or deliberately released. Often high consequence pathogens have no effective therapeutics or vaccine and therefore the impact of an outbreak can be observed at scale. ²

3. Will my proposal be funded?

¹ https://www.woah.org/fileadmin/Home/eng/Health_standards/tahm/1.01.04_BIOSAFETY_BIOSECURITY.pdf

² Examples: [The Australia Group - Biological Agents \(dfat.gov.au\)](https://www.dfat.gov.au)

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Submission of an Expression of Interest in response to the RFEI does not constitute an application for funding. Expressions of Interest are being solicited as Phase I of a dual-phased approach to the development of a full Grand Challenge for Sustainable Diagnostic Containment Laboratories program. Expressions of Interest will inform the feasibility and scope of a full Grand Challenge under Phase II, which may include funding for specific projects. In such a potential Phase II, Expressions of Interest that surface as top ranked innovations as a result of this RFEI review process may be considered for funding.

Respondents to the RFEI will be notified regarding a decision to launch Phase II, including any details regarding available funding.

4. Is there a limit to the amount of funding that can be requested in my proposal?

No. Because this RFEI does not constitute an application for funding, all innovative proposals will be considered. Please note, however, that value for money will be taken into consideration during the review process. Proposed budget associated with the project described in an Expression of Interest should be reasonable and commensurate with project goals and activities.

5. What is the difference between the registration deadline and the submission deadline?

To manage processing times on the application platform, Grand Challenges Canada will be implementing a two-stage process:

1. Registration deadline (extended) – **11:59 pm EDT April 19, 2023 (3:59 am UTC April 20, 2023). This is the deadline to register for an account** on Grand Challenges Canada's Fluxx Portal at <https://gcc.fluxx.io> . This is only to gain access to the application platform (if you do not already have an existing account) and **not a submission deadline**. Once you register, you can save and return to edit your application before the submission deadline. All applications **MUST** use Fluxx to submit their final applications. If you have any issues, please submit a ticket to report your registration issue (before the deadline) at <https://www.grandchallenges.ca/fluxxsupport/> .
2. Submission deadline (extended)– **2:00 pm EDT (6:00 pm UTC) April 26, 2023. This is the deadline to SUBMIT your application via Fluxx**. Please remember to press the "Submit" button and ensure that you receive an email confirmation of your submission before you close the page. If you have any issues with the submission, please submit a ticket to report the issue at <https://www.grandchallenges.ca/fluxxsupport/> **AND** email sdl@grandchallenges.ca with your application number and the issue (before the deadline). **No Expressions of Interest will be accepted over email.**

6. What topics are considered relevant to this call?

The aim of this call is to identify innovative ideas to tackle the issue of sustainability of diagnostic containment laboratories. Refer to RFEI Section 2.1 for additional details. Refer to Section 2.7 for topics that will not be considered. If you feel your idea qualifies, innovators are encouraged to apply.

7. What is considered innovative?

Given that we expect applicants to address issues that are multifaceted, interconnected, and complex, we do not expect all proposed ideas to be entirely unique. Rather we understand that many of the applications will consist of more standard innovations that are, for the first time, being approached from an explicitly intersectoral perspective. If the solution itself is not particularly novel or bold, the applicant will be expected to satisfactorily describe why implementing it in a new context would be or how the implementation approach itself is particularly original and promising.

If you are uncertain if your proposed idea would be considered bold or if it would represent more than an incremental improvement over current approaches, we suggest that you consult relevant literature online, as well as consider solutions previously funded by Grand Challenges Canada (find our searchable data base [here](#)) and others.

Please see RFEI Section 2.2 for an overview of Grand Challenges Canada's approach to integrated innovation along three dimensions of (1) scientific or technical (2) social and (3) business innovation.

8. How do I know which countries are considered eligible to submit Expressions of Interest?

Grand Challenges Canada considers geographic eligibility in terms of (1) project implementation (i.e. where the proposed project seeks to be implemented), and (2) applicants (i.e. location of responding innovators' affiliated institutions, and / or other indicators of an innovators' connection to local contexts in which proposed projects will be implemented).

1. This RFEI seeks proposals for innovations that are suitable for and intended to be implemented / tested in low- and / or middle-income countries (LMICs), with an initial emphasis on those countries within Africa. For the purposes of this RFEI, Grand Challenges Canada defines LMICs according to the World Bank's most recent assessment country classification. Grand Challenges Canada considers countries classified as low income, lower-middle income and upper-middle income in the World Bank's Country and Lending Groups to be eligible LMICs- please see <https://datahelpdesk.worldbank.org/knowledgebase/articles/906519-world-bank-country-and-lending-groups> for a full list of LMICs. The World Bank's classification is updated each year based on GNI per capita in USD.
2. Grand Challenges Canada particularly encourages applications from the following:
 - Innovators from locally-led organizations based in LMICs;
 - Innovators with lived experience of the context;
 - Innovators with meaningful partnerships with local partners; and
 - Innovators who are able to successfully demonstrate a plan to meaningfully engage local stakeholders in their target implementation country / countries.

9. My innovation is relevant for low-resource settings, but we do not yet have plans for implementation in an LMIC as listed in the RFEI. Can I still apply?

Yes. Grand Challenges Canada invites all innovators to apply and consider how they plan to engage partners and stakeholders on the ground in the country of implementation to enable success of their project.

10. What do you define as an eligible institution?

Entities eligible under this RFEI include social enterprises and other legally recognized organizations (such as non-governmental organizations, non-profit, for-profit, and limited liability companies, as well as research/academic institutions, or any other appropriately registered legal entity) that:³

- Is active (status) and in good standing with their respective registration body⁴;
- Is capable of entering into a funding agreement with Grand Challenges Canada;
- Can receive foreign funding and administer grant funding; and
- Can successfully perform activities in their technical area.

These are ineligible:

- Individuals;
- Sole proprietorships;
- Unincorporated trusts and partnerships;
- Government organizations;
- United Nations country offices; and
- Any entity that does not have legal capacity to enter into a contract.

11. What does “incorporated” mean in terms of eligibility?

The meaning of ‘legally incorporated’ will vary across different jurisdictions. It is the responsibility of every applicant to understand how this applies to their own jurisdiction.

Typically, ‘legally incorporated’ means that the entity is incorporated as its own legal person (having separate and distinct legal identity), can enter into binding contracts, can own property in its own name, can sue and be sued, etc. For example:

- Local registration of an international non-profit would not meet this eligibility requirement in most jurisdictions.
- Unincorporated Trusts or Partnerships, or any business structure that places liability on an individual or individuals, would not meet this eligibility requirement. However, an

³ The following must apply to the entity under its current name.

⁴ Where relevant, required filings (such as regular reports or tax filings) related to institutional incorporation or registration are up to date. The registration body in question should be, in jurisdictions where relevant, the governing authority for your entity type according to the country’s laws.

incorporated trust or incorporated partnership (sometimes a limited liability partnership in certain jurisdictions) would be eligible.

While this requirement will be screened during the Eligibility Screen for the RFEI, in the event of a potential Phase II Grand Challenge program, Grand Challenges Canada will also conduct a more in-depth due diligence of this criteria (and others) during negotiations process for any projects selected for funding.

12. Do I need any specific academic qualifications to apply?

No. The call is open to innovators of all sectors and backgrounds. The Project Lead and team must have the appropriate skills needed to carry out project activities as proposed in the Expression of Interest.

13. Is it a requirement that the applicant have specific expertise or experience in diagnostic containment laboratories?

No. Indeed, the RFEI is particularly interested in attracting ideas outside the laboratory sector. Proposed collaborations and partnerships across sectors are however encouraged to strengthen the skillset appropriate to the activities outlined for the project.

14. Can Grand Challenges Canada assist me in arranging a collaborator?

Applicants must seek collaborations independently. At this time, Grand Challenges Canada will not assist applicants in arranging potential collaborations.

As a suggestion, applicants can review prospective collaborators by joining the Global Health Innovation LinkedIn group at <https://www.linkedin.com/groups/3839474/>.

15. Can a group of people submit a proposal together with one or more co-applicants?

Yes, but the lead applicant entity must be considered eligible. The application must be submitted with the institutional and individual details pertaining to the eligible lead applicant.

The Project Lead can list co-applicants and other team members in the application as collaborators, if they wish.

16. Can multilateral organizations such as United Nations apply to this RFEI?

In our past experience, Grand Challenges Canada has found that multilateral organizations such as the United Nations (UN) are typically unable to agree to the terms and conditions of our Grant Agreements; as such, we are discouraging their responses to the RFEI. We highly recommend that these organizations instead submit an Expression of Interest through a local eligible partner organization, with staff from the UN office acting as collaborators on the project.

INTEGRATED INNOVATION®

17. Is this challenge only concerned with medical and scientific technologies, or is it also possible to submit a proposal on a topic regarding policies/social sciences?

This RFEI seeks projects demonstrating Integrated Innovation that could be easily implemented in LMICs, with an initial emphasis on Africa, to address the sustainability of diagnostic containment laboratories. The proposed innovations would need to:

- Have a strong likelihood of achieving substantial and measurable impact in hard-to reach and underserved populations.
- Maximize demand, delivery, uptake, acceptability, sustainability and impact by integrating scientific/technological, social and/or business innovation. We call this Integrated Innovation. (See the Integrated Innovation white paper available at [http://www.grandchallenges.ca/funding-opportunities/integrated-innovation/.](http://www.grandchallenges.ca/funding-opportunities/integrated-innovation/))
- Demonstrate, where possible, alignment with relevant domestic country laws, regulations, national plans and interest of relevant institutions and organizations to the development, delivery and uptake of the innovation (i.e., local health systems).

APPLICATION SUBMISSION

18. How do I submit an Expression of Interest?

If the Project Lead already has an existing account on Fluxx, they should utilize this account.

Otherwise, applicants should create an account using the following link: [Create an account](#). Once you have created an account, please allow for up to three (3) business days for Grand Challenges Canada to process your information.

Once your information has been processed, you will be emailed login credentials to access Fluxx (<https://gcc.fluxx.io>) where the application template is available. You will need to input and submit answers to the application questions through this template. **Please note** that you can save and come back to an application (to edit, complete) until such time as you submit the application.

Additional information on the application process can be found in the RFEI Section 3.2 and in the Fluxx Reference Guide, which can be found here: <https://www.grandchallenges.ca/fluxxsupport/>

Expressions of Interest cannot be accepted by email.

19. What happens if I experience technical issues with submitting my application via Fluxx?

If you encounter technical issues with submitting your application, please submit a [ticket before the submission deadline](https://www.grandchallenges.ca/fluxxsupport/) to the Grand Challenges Canada support team at <https://www.grandchallenges.ca/fluxxsupport/> outlining the nature of the problem. **Please include your application number.**

Please ensure to give yourself plenty of time to register (if needed) and to submit your application ahead of the deadlines. **ALL applicants who need to REGISTER for a Fluxx account MUST do so by the extended deadline of 11:59 pm EDT April 19, 2023 (3:59 am UTC April 20, 2023).**

If you have contacted the support team prior to April 16, 2023 and the identified registration issue has not been resolved by 11:59 pm EDT April 19, 2023 (3:59 am UTC April 20, 2023) please follow-up by submitting a ticket to the Grand Challenges Canada support team at <https://www.grandchallenges.ca/fluxxsupport/> AND email sdl@grandchallenges.ca.

ALL applications must be received via Fluxx on or before the extended deadline of 2:00 pm EDT (6:00 pm UTC) April 26, 2023.

Expressions of Interest received after this time will NOT be considered.

20. How do I access the application in French?

When creating a Fluxx account (or accessing an existing account), you will be asked to select your 'preferred language'. The application form will then display in the selected language (English or French).

You can also change your 'preferred language' at any time by editing your account settings (clicking on the gear icon in the bottom left). You can safely change the language at any time without losing answers already entered and saved in the application form.

21. Is there a template for the written proposal? I would like to learn about the word limit and other requirements.

An application template is available on the Grand Challenges Canada website (find the link under <https://www.grandchallenges.ca/funding-opportunities/>) for reference. You CANNOT submit your Expression of Interest using the template over email. Expressions of Interest will ONLY be accepted via Fluxx.

Applicants with a functional Fluxx account and access to Fluxx (<https://gcc.fluxx.io/>) can also view the application questions and character limits through the portal (Fluxx). **Please note that you can save and come back to an application (to edit, complete) until such time as you submit the application.**

After saving your application on Fluxx, you will see a "Printable" button at the top right of your screen, which you can click to print the application questions and any inputted responses.

22. Will I need to provide any additional information or documentation beyond the online application?

No additional information is required upon submission of an Expression of Interest; however, shortlisted applicants may be asked to provide additional documentation as needed in the context of discussions of a funded Phase II.

23. Can an applicant submit more than one Expression of Interest?

A Project Lead may only be listed on one application to this RFEI. An eligible institution may, however, be the applicant on multiple Expressions of Interest, if all Expressions of Interest have different Project Leads and articulate distinctly different proposals

24. Can I submit my Expression of Interest via email?

No. All responses to the RFEI must be submitted through the Fluxx (<https://gcc.fluxx.io/>). **Any application materials sent via email will NOT be considered.**

25. In the application guidelines for the RFEI, there is a note that applicants are required to seek and obtain sign-off from their affiliated organization / institution(s) before submitting their Expression of Interest. In what format should this permission should be granted?

Applicants are required to obtain internal approval from their institution before submitting an Expression of Interest; however there is no form or signature that needs to be completed upon submission of an Expression of Interest.

26. What are the different roles mentioned in the application form?

In the application form, you will find the following 'role' types:

- **Project Lead (required):** Project Leads are proposed project team members who, in the event that this RFEI yields a Phase II Grand Challenge program under which applicants to the RFEI would be invited to submit proposals for funding, are proposed to be responsible for the implementation of the funded project and must comply with Grand Challenges Canada requirements for this same purpose. Project Leads must be formally affiliated with the applicant institution. The Fluxx account and profile used to create and submit the application must be that of the Project Lead. This is an important consideration, given the Project Lead and team makeup will be assessed as part of the review process.
- **Additional contact (optional):** We have added this field for teams where someone is submitting the application *on behalf of* the Project Lead (in other words, where the primary point of contact for the application and review phase is not the Project Lead). Their name, role title and email address should be provided. While Grand Challenges

Canada will endeavor to include this person in communications, it will still be the responsibility of the Project Lead (whose contact details are part of the automated system) to pass along any relevant information.

REVIEW PROCESS

27. What is the review process that will be used to evaluate Expressions of Interest?

Grand Challenges Canada will subject all eligible Expressions of Interest to a robust review process, which will first comprise of an Eligibility Screen and Innovation Screen. Following these steps, selected Expressions of Interest will undergo an external peer review process conducted by technical experts, innovation experts and local context experts. Please refer to RFEI Section 3 for details on the review process.

28. Will applicants receive feedback on their Expressions of Interest as a result of the screening and review process?

Yes. Innovators will receive brief comments and feedback on their Expressions of Interest as a result of Grand Challenges Canada's screening and review process. In the event that this RFEI yields a Phase II Grand Challenge program under which applicants to the RFEI would be invited to submit proposals for funding, this feedback can be considered to further strengthen their proposals, if applicable.

GENERAL PROGRAM QUESTIONS

29. Is the intent of the RFEI to surface specific technology development that is already underway (e.g., development of a new technology platform) or to support the more left-field ideas that have not yet been tested?

Both. However, please note that in the event that this RFEI yields a Phase II Grand Challenge program under which applicants to the RFEI would be invited to submit proposals for funding, Grand Challenges Canada will not consider funding drug or vaccine development, discovery science, strictly capacity-building or advocacy initiatives, ongoing programmatic funding or ideas that are not applicable to LMICs.

30. How does Grand Challenges Canada define meaningful engagement with local stakeholders in proposed implementation country / countries?

- Innovators with lived experience in LMICs;
- Organizations with leadership and governance members based in LMIC contexts;
- Organizations with existing partnerships with stakeholders from LMIC contexts, in which LMIC partners have material input on the proposed innovation / project, and decision-

making power re: innovation development / design (especially in the case of product innovations), implementation, and funding allocations; and

- Organizations with demonstrated plans on how they plan to engage local stakeholders in their proposed implementation contexts in the above ways.

31. Is the intent of the RFEI to surface solutions that are applicable to / can be implemented in the context of existing diagnostic containment laboratories, or solutions that would be implemented in new laboratories?

Both. Innovators are welcome to propose ideas for innovations that can be retrofitted for existing laboratories, and / or solutions that would be implemented in the context of a new laboratory build.

32. Should proposed solutions focus on enabling safe and secure handling of high-consequence pathogens themselves, or handling of biological / clinical samples?

Either / both. Innovators are welcome to propose ideas for innovations designed to enhance the sustainability of safe and secure handling of high-consequence pathogenic materials, as described in Section 2.1 of the RFEI. It is possible that the diagnostic containment laboratories this RFEI targets could be equipped to handle both individual pathogens and biological samples, particularly if proposed innovations for sustainability enable laboratories to bridge the need for high intensity operation in crisis times with business-as-usual operations in standard local operating conditions.

33. What biosafety levels (BSL) should proposed innovations be designed to meet or maintain when implemented in a given diagnostic containment laboratory?

This RFEI seeks innovation to enhance all diagnostic containment laboratories' abilities to sustain core functions with available local financial and technical resources for operation, while meeting local epidemiological needs. For that reason, Expressions of Interest should demonstrate proposed innovations' appropriateness for implementation in low-resource settings using risk-based assessment as opposed to BSL designations.

34. Testing and failure are inherent to the innovation process. Do innovators have to be assured that their innovative ideas will not fail or will be implemented in practice exactly as planned in order to submit an Expression of Interest?

Grand Challenges Canada has over a decade of experience funding innovation for impact, supporting innovators to achieve proof of concept and then pivot and learn from any failures as they transition to scale. We welcome Expressions of Interest describing early-stage innovations, and expect that innovators will continue to learn and iterate as their bold ideas are put into practice.

At this stage of the proposed Grand Challenge, we want to know more about innovators' bold ideas, why they think those ideas could generate impact and how they would test that. Innovators should use the Expression of Interest to demonstrate the existing evidence base supporting their proposed innovation (to whatever extent possible), and to outline a project plan designed to test their innovation.

35. What support does Grand Challenges Canada typically provide to innovators beyond funding?

Grand Challenges Canada provides innovators funded through its existing Grand Challenge programs with a variety of non-financial technical supports. These include access to accelerators, venture advisory services and location- and sector-specific communities of practice, as well as ad hoc assistance to connect innovators with relevant networks and partners.

The availability and nature of technical support for innovators funded under a potential Phase II of a Grand Challenge for Sustainable Diagnostic Containment Laboratories program remains to be determined.

36. The RFEI indicates that “government organizations” are ineligible to apply. Does this mean that government-funded universities and / or research institutions are ineligible to submit Expressions of Interest?

Government entities (e.g. ministries, departments, etc.) are ineligible to submit Expressions of Interest under this RFEI. However, government-funded organizations like universities and research institutions remain eligible.

ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS

Any additional questions should be sent to sdl@grandchallenges.ca.

For information on all Grand Challenges Canada programs, please find us at grandchallenges.ca and on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), [YouTube](#) and [LinkedIn](#) .