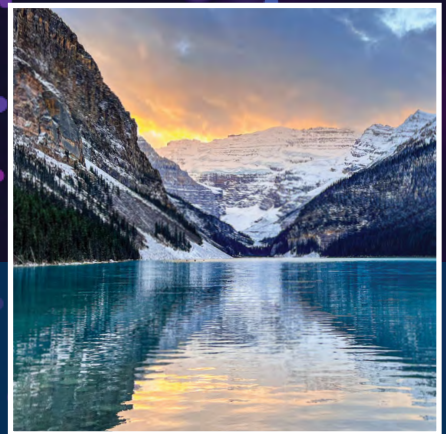
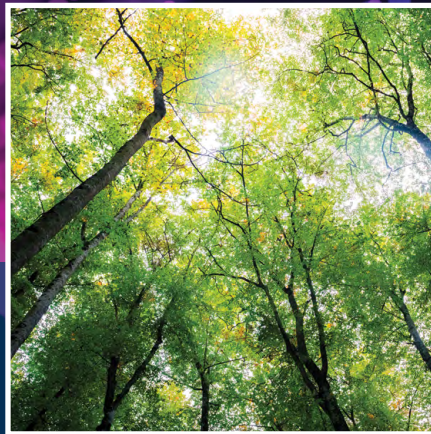




Explore Research Program

Call for Proposals

2 YEARS | UP TO \$150K | SUBMIT ON CSA PORTAL





Each research initiative comprises a collection of projects that directly contributes to advancing research on a specific topic and helps identify how we can better prepare for emerging challenges.

Program Description

Overview

In a world that demands rapid adaptation and forward-thinking solutions, the Canadian Standards Association (CSA Group) Explore Research Program aims to anticipate and address complex societal challenges by supporting emerging research and facilitating interdisciplinary collaboration.

Each research initiative comprises a collection of projects that directly contributes to advancing research on a specific topic and helps identify how we can better prepare for emerging challenges. The collection of projects within each initiative is complementary and advances the overall objective of the research initiative.

The funding provided to researchers helps support specific activities that address project objectives, as proposed in their applications. In parallel, researchers convene¹ several times over the initiative's lifespan to share knowledge and findings, discuss new ideas, and identify potential future implications for the research initiative topic.

CSA Group provides strategic oversight of the Explore Research Program and its research initiatives to help support project alignment, collaboration, funding, and knowledge mobilization. In the long term, Explore research initiatives will help guide standards readiness, identify emerging areas of focus in standardization, and support Canadian progress in the topic area.

Scope

Calls for Proposals are issued in key priority areas determined by CSA Group. A limited number of projects per initiative will be awarded in each competition.

CSA Group encourages a diversity of perspectives and welcomes proposals from any discipline, including social sciences, humanities, health, natural sciences, and engineering.

¹ Most meetings will be held virtually; however, applicants should budget for the PI or a representative to attend one in-person meeting over the course of the funding duration.

Definitions

- **Research initiative:** the research focus that frames a CSA Explore Research Program Call for Proposals
- **Research project:** the scope of activities described in a research proposal submitted by a research team
- **Research team:** the Principal Investigator(s) and collaborators conducting the research project

Collaborative Engagement and Knowledge Integration

Each research initiative supports multiple funded projects within the topic described in the Call for Proposals. To inform the broader scope of the research initiative and contribute to the advancement of knowledge in the area, CSA Group will facilitate knowledge sharing through cross-project engagement. With input from the research teams, CSA Group will periodically develop and publish Research Insight Reports that provide a high-level summary of the collective findings from the research initiatives.

To study the implications of individual research project findings on the broader research initiative, all research teams are expected to actively participate in knowledge-sharing activities, including, but not limited to:

- Progress meetings between the research team and CSA Group
- Collaboration/knowledge mobilization meetings among all research teams participating in the research initiative and CSA Group

Confidentiality, Publication, and Intellectual Property

CSA Group is committed to protecting the confidentiality of research activities and findings while supporting the research teams in publishing their work. Research proposals submitted to CSA Group will remain confidential and will not be shared externally, except for the purpose of external peer review using a double-blind approach. Project activities and findings shared during progress meetings and during collaboration/knowledge mobilization meetings will

also remain confidential among all members of the research teams unless otherwise agreed upon. Funded projects will be listed on the CSA Explore Research Program webpage along with the executive summary submitted as part of the application for funding.

As the CSA Explore Research Program funds projects that contribute to broader research initiatives, CSA Group will develop and publish Research Insight Reports for each research initiative, which may include findings from research projects shared during the development of and at the conclusion of the project. CSA Group will share Research Insight Reports with research teams prior to publication. These reports will be published with the review and permission of Principal Investigators.

Research teams are encouraged to independently publish their findings in peer-reviewed journals, conference proceedings, and other academic and non-academic media such that the findings may contribute to the advancement of the topic, to the sharing of knowledge with interested and affected parties and groups, and to the overall benefit of Canada. CSA Group may request that its financial contribution be acknowledged in project-related publications.

Value and Duration

Projects are supported for two years, with a maximum overall budget of \$150,000 (maximum of \$75,000 per year) for direct research costs, as set out in the Research Project Budget Template. CSA Group does not support indirect costs (i.e., overhead) under the Explore Research Program.

Project teams are permitted to use funding from other sources, in addition to CSA Group funding, where applicable. Project activities and timelines cannot be dependent on other external funding and are expected to proceed as planned while awaiting other funding decisions.

Teams that have been awarded funding under the Explore Research Program may be invited to apply for renewal funding for an additional two years.

Eligibility Requirements

Research Team

Projects funded by the CSA Explore Research Program must be led by a Principal Investigator (PI) and may include collaborators.

Principal Investigator (PI)

The PI is the lead researcher and primary point of contact for the project. The PI must:

- Be based at a not-for-profit or public Canadian institution (e.g., university or research institute)
- Be able to conduct independent research
- Direct the research, including overall project direction, administration, and financial oversight
- Submit the application and act as the primary point of contact for CSA Group throughout the funding and reporting period

One additional researcher may be designated a co-PI and receive a portion of project funds. They must meet the same eligibility criteria as the PI and enter into a funding agreement with CSA Group. If a co-PI is designated, the PI still serves as the main point of contact.

Collaborator(s) (if applicable)

Collaborators support the research led by the PI. A collaborator:

- Participates in research activities
- Does not receive project funds

An applicant may only submit one project as a PI or co-PI but may be a collaborator on any number of applications.

Subject Matter

Proposals should articulate clear, short- to medium-term objectives, which may build upon a broader research program funded by other sources. Although the funding period is two years, projects are expected to adopt a forward-looking perspective and consider impacts that extend beyond this timeframe. Examples may include innovations that are 5-10 years away from a commercializable technology;² analyses of emerging challenges, events, or needs that are not yet urgent in nature; or policies and practices outside the current mainstream. CSA Group welcomes proposals from all disciplines, including disciplines not traditionally associated with the topic. Applicants must clearly articulate how their proposed work contributes to advancing knowledge and solutions within the research initiative identified in the Call for Proposals.

² The purpose of the Explore research program is not to support the advancement or development of a specific tool or technology.



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Application Process

Applicants are required to complete an application form on the [CSA Group portal](#).

The application includes the following sections:

- Applicant information
- Project proposal:³
 - Project title
 - Keywords (up to 10)
 - Executive summary (250 words)
 - Background and project motivation (750 words)
 - Research question(s) , objective(s), and contributions (500 words)
 - Methodology and workplan (1500 words)
 - Risk mitigation (300 words)
 - Relevance and cross-disciplinary impact (500 words)
 - References
- Team information
 - Research team
 - Team expertise and contributions (500 words)
- Project budget
 - Summary of proposed expenses
 - Other relevant funding sources (if applicable)
- Project timeline
- Team CVs
- Reviewer suggestions
- Collaboration and information sharing

³ Only this section will be provided to external peer reviewers. Applicants should avoid including personally identifiable information to support the double-blind review process.

Review Process

Overview

All projects will be peer reviewed by CSA Group employees and external subject matter experts selected by CSA Group. External reviewers will evaluate proposals on the quality of the proposed research, while CSA Group will assess proposals using all evaluation criteria. Projects will be evaluated based on the following criteria:



Individualized feedback on unsuccessful applications will not be provided.





Selection Criteria

There are four core criteria in the CSA Explore Research Program: quality of proposed research, fit to topic, feasibility, and researcher excellence.

1 Quality of proposed research

Requirements of this criterion include:

- A compelling and evidence-based rationale that demonstrates originality, advances the field, and/or constructively challenges prevailing assumptions
- A clear and persuasive case for generating contributions to the research initiative
- Clearly defined objectives supported by a well-defined research design using a methodology and feasible workplan that address potential risks

If applicable, meaningful integration of interested and impacted parties should be incorporated throughout the research design. For further details, refer to the [Tri-Council guide](#).

2 Fit to topic

Requirements of this criterion include:

- A clear and direct contribution to the CSA Group research initiative, with a compelling case for how the project will generate positive and substantive impact on the topic area
- A well-articulated explanation of how the project outcomes will support the cross-disciplinary examination of the topic, connecting multiple fields, perspectives, or sectors over the next decade

3 Feasibility

Requirements of this criterion include:

- Feasibility of the proposed research project, including research approach and methodology
- A realistic assessment of risks and barriers alongside actionable mitigation strategies
- Demonstrated access to suitable and sufficient resources to carry out the work, with any additional needs clearly justified in the budget
- A reasonable and well-defined budget and timeline that directly support the workplan

4 Research team excellence

Requirements of this criterion include:

- Knowledge, expertise, and experience of the researchers
- Evidence of high-quality contributions and impact in the proposed area and other areas of research
- Importance of contributions and use by other researchers and end users

The research expertise of the PI and all collaborators will be assessed with respect to career stage to avoid disadvantaging early-career researchers. Evidence of joint research projects and contributions among the proposed team may strengthen applications.



Award Terms

To maintain funding, award recipients will:

- Abide by the terms and conditions of the award and the applicable funding agreement
- Continuously meet all the eligibility requirements as outlined in this document
- Demonstrate satisfactory progress toward proposed project milestones, as determined by CSA Group
- Immediately inform CSA Group in writing of any temporary or permanent change to project plan, scope, team composition, or research direction during the tenure of the award. Any such change must be approved in writing by CSA Group
- Ensure that all funded work is performed by the research team identified in the application (e.g., not subcontracted)
- Refrain from including in their projects any information subject to proprietary or confidentiality restrictions that would limit meaningful participation in meetings and workshops, dissemination of research findings in typical publication venues such as conferences or academic journals, or contributions to Insight Reports.

CSA Group will not own the Intellectual Property in research-related publications. CSA Group may require a license for use of the content of research-related publications in CSA Group Research Insight Reports.

CSA Group will share the Research Insight Reports with research teams prior to publication.

CSA Group reserves the right to cancel an award if any of these requirements are unmet during the term of the funding agreement or if the recipient does not otherwise maintain their eligibility.

Project Term, Milestones, and Research Support

Project funds are provided for two years. Disbursements will be made on an annual basis. A CSA Group research representative will be appointed to a research project to: (i) provide support to the project team regarding project inquiries; (ii) facilitate collaborations across projects within the research initiative; (iii) help integrate research initiative findings into Insight Reports. Project milestones will be agreed upon between the PI and the CSA Group research representative prior to the start of the funding period. CSA Group will provide limited, view-only access to relevant CSA standards, as needed, for the project.

Use of Artificial Intelligence

CSA Group recognizes the increasing role of artificial intelligence (AI), especially generative AI. CSA Group seeks to support proposals that demonstrate human-driven ideation, innovation, and discovery. CSA Group reserves the right to reject applications that have been created with excessive reliance on AI, as determined by CSA Group.

Reporting, Participation and Use of Funds

Award holders must report on the use of Explore Research Program funds, on funded activities undertaken during the grant period, and on project outcomes. Award holders must periodically submit brief project reports and participate in project meetings with the CSA Group research representative and other funded teams to maintain funding.

Eligible uses of research funds follow the [Tri-Agency Guide on Financial Administration](#), with the exception of large pieces of equipment, which are ineligible. Other ineligible expenses include salaries for PIs, course buyout, and alcoholic beverages. If unsure about the eligibility of a particular expense, please contact the Explore Research Program team.



For more information, contact:

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