

## RTI GRANTS PROGRAM CONSULTATION DOCUMENT

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To complement a series of meetings and discussions with stakeholders at campuses across Canada, NSERC is now formally consulting on the future support of the Research Tools and Instruments (RTI) Grants Program in light of reductions in available program funding.

**From June 29 to September 28, 2012**, the research community is invited to provide input on two alternate delivery mechanisms for the support of tools and instruments. In either scenario, the expected total amount of funding that would be available is \$6M to \$10M annually.

The outcome of this consultation will shape how future investments in support of tools and instruments are made, and would be in effect for the 2014 competition. The primary objective of using the funds towards the purchase or development of research equipment to foster and enhance discovery and the training capability of university researchers in the natural sciences and engineering, will remain.

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| <b>Option 1: Provide an institutional grant for the support of research tools and instruments</b> |
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- For this option, available funds would be awarded at an institutional level in support of expenses related to research tools and instruments. The yearly grant amount for each institution would fluctuate in accordance with the availability of funds.
- Under this model, Vice-Presidents of Research would submit three-year plans for their institutions. These plans would outline how funds would be used towards equipment.
  - Each institution would develop its own internal mechanism/review process through which to distribute the funding.
- Funds would be awarded annually in March with clear, annual reporting requirements to demonstrate how the funds were used towards the plan (i.e., what equipment was purchased, cost of equipment, etc.). Reports would be due the following fiscal year.
  - Institutions could respond to urgent cases (e.g., to repair or replace broken equipment) prior to March, in anticipation of the annual grant.
- There are different models for how available funding could be distributed among institutions. Some options include funding:
  - a) proportional to the overall funding received from NSERC over a defined number of years; or
  - b) proportional to the Discovery Grant funding or number of Discovery Grants received over a defined number of years; or
  - c) proportional to the RTI funding received over a defined number of years.
- Under this option, yearly grant levels are expected to fluctuate in the following ranges:
  - Large Institutions: \$105k to \$930k
  - Medium Institutions: \$27K to \$180k
  - Small Institutions: \$10.5k to \$35k

### Question to Consider

- For institutions that would otherwise receive a small amount of funding on an annual basis, could a larger allocation be provided every second or third year?

**Option 2: Retain a smaller-scale national competition in support of research tools and instruments**

- For this option, NSERC would continue to manage the peer review process and provide grants to individual researchers and teams of researchers. The scale of the national competition would be reduced, as follows:
  - It is estimated that a total of 100 to 150 grants could be awarded, compared to the 300 grants that have been previously awarded through the RTI Grants Program.
  - The number of applications received would be reduced from the current 1,500 to approximately 400.
- Institutions would be subject to quotas based on the following scenarios:
  - a) the number of applications that could be submitted; or
  - b) a maximum dollar amount that could be requested.
- For the two scenarios noted above, the values are expected to fall in the following ranges:

| Institution Size | Number of Applications<br>(Scenario a) | Total Dollar Amount<br>(Scenario b) |
|------------------|--|-------------------------------------|
| Large            | 7 to 37                                | \$500k to \$2.6M                    |
| Medium           | 2 to 8                                 | \$120K to \$500K                    |
| Small            | 1 to 2                                 | \$50k to \$100k                     |

- Option 2 would involve the triaging and prioritization of applications at the institutional level before submitting the final set of applications to NSERC.