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General Overview

Canada’s Digital Technology Supercluster (“the Supercluster”) will position Canada as a global leader in digital innovation by unlocking the potential of data to transform our economies and securing economic success and social wellbeing for Canadians. We invest in ambitious projects that propose solutions that have the potential to transform industries and propel the economic growth of Canada.

Our investments are aimed at creating digital solutions that can be extended across multiple industries including natural resources, healthcare and industrial sectors. This will create products, processes, platforms and companies that will drive new commercial opportunities and provide access to untapped markets. We support industry-driven research and the development of digital innovations that will support the transformation of our industries and drive us to global leadership. The Supercluster delivers the Technology Leadership Programs to enable the projects that will lead to the adoption and creation of such innovations.

Our investment in technology development will also integrate the development of a diverse and skilled workforce to support the scaling of small and medium enterprises and a robust innovation ecosystem. We support projects and opportunities that will support our mandate to build capacity in the digital technology ecosystem, increase the breadth and diversity of talent in the sector and expand Canada’s capacity to be a global leader in digital technology development, adoption and deployment. The Supercluster delivers the Capacity Building Program to enable projects that will support this mandate.

1.1 Technology Leadership Programs

We are looking for projects that are aligned with the following programs:

**PRECISION HEALTH**
Establish Canada as a leader in data driven health innovations that support disease prevention, early diagnosis, and personalized treatment.

**DIGITAL TWINS**
Use digital technologies to create virtual production environments for real-time operations management, simulation, modelling and training.

**DATA COMMONS**
Provide new digital solutions by aggregating data resources into shared platforms for exploration, machine learning, and innovative application development.

Information about areas of focus specific to the current competitive call for projects is available in the Project Cycle Areas of Focus document on the Member Resource Portal.
1.2 Capacity Building Program

The Capacity Building Program complements our Technology Leadership Programs and is designed to invest in areas where there is a demonstrated need or opportunity. The Capacity Building Program is focused on the following objectives:

We are looking for projects that address the following Supercluster mandates:

**TALENT DEVELOPMENT**
Develop a diverse pool of digital talent to ensure a workforce prepared for the jobs of tomorrow with a focus on improving the inclusion and participation of indigenous people, underrepresented groups and women.

**SCALING SMES**
Scale Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) by providing the resources for growth and increasing supply chain links to enhance access to global markets for Canadian companies with technology capabilities.

Information about areas of focus specific to the current competitive call for projects is available in the Project Cycle Areas of Focus document on the Member Resource Portal.
2 Eligible Projects

Please note that the eligibility criteria for Technology Leadership Program projects is different to the criteria for Capacity Building Program projects.

2.1 Technology Leadership Project Eligibility

Who is eligible to apply?

- Projects must be industry-led. At the Expression of Interest (EOI) stage, the lead applicant of the project can be either a Member or an Associate of the Supercluster from the private sector. At the Full Project Proposal (FPP) Stage, the lead applicant must be a full Member;
- There must be a minimum of three partners in a project consortium (not including the Supercluster).
- At least one of the consortium partners must be a small or medium sized enterprise;
- At least one must be a post-secondary institution;
- At least one must be a Member of the Supercluster;
- Each consortium member must be contributing to the project in a meaningful way.

What is an eligible project?

- Projects must be incremental to the regular business undertakings of the participating organizations;
- Projects must be relevant to the project cycle areas of focus for the current competitive call for projects as well as Supercluster priorities;
- Projects must be submitted according to the instructions set out by the Supercluster.

What are eligible costs?

- Refer to the Co-investment Guidelines found on the Member Resource Portal for information on eligible costs and the Supercluster approach to co-investment;
- Budget guidelines and templates are also available on the Member Resource Portal.

2.1 Capacity Building Project Eligibility

Who is eligible to apply?

- At both EOI and FPP stages, the lead applicant of the consortium can be either a Member or an Associate of the Supercluster;
- All applicants in the consortium must be a Member or an Associate of the Supercluster by the FPP submission deadline;
- There must be a minimum of three partners in a project consortium (not including the Supercluster)
• At least one consortium partner must be from the private sector;
• Each consortium partner must be contributing to the project in a meaningful way.

What is an eligible project?
- Projects must be incremental to the regular business undertakings of the participating organizations;
- Projects must be relevant to the project cycle areas of focus for the current call for projects as well as Supercluster priorities;
- Projects must be submitted according to the instructions set out by the Supercluster.

What are eligible costs?
- Refer to the Co-investment Guidelines found on the Member Resource Portal for information on eligible costs and the Supercluster approach to co-investment;
- Budget guidelines and templates are also available on the Member Resource Portal.
Application

Instructions on how to submit project proposals are available on the Member Resource Portal. All applicants in the consortium agree that, by submitting a proposal, each partner will:

- Adhere to Canada’s Digital Supercluster’s Intellectual Property (IP) Strategy and Data Strategy, which can be found on the Member Resource Portal.
- Agree to allow the Supercluster to disclose the list of Participants, the Project investment amount, the Project Keywords and full or partial contents of the Executive Summary.
- Adhere to the Supercluster Charter of Values, including the Diversity & Inclusion principles outlined in the Membership and/or Participation Agreement.

3.1 Application Process

Once you have read the Program Guide and Project Call Areas of Focus for the current call for projects, you enter a two-step application process.

1. **Expression of Interest**: Project teams will submit an Expression of Interest (EOI). At this step, Technology Leadership project teams may be invited to present to a review panel. Following review, successful teams will be invited to the next stage to submit a Full Project Proposal.

2. **Full Project Proposal**: Project teams will submit a Full Project Proposal (FPP) and accompanying budget. At this stage, both Technology Leadership and Capacity Building project teams may be invited to present to a review panel. Following review, successful teams will be notified of the investment decision and will proceed to contracting to formalize a Master Project Agreement (MPA).

The Supercluster may approve a Feasibility Assessment with funding up to $250,000 in advance of being invited to submit an EOI or FPP (refer to Appendix D).

3.2 Application Materials

*All application and reference materials for both Technology Leadership and Capacity Building can be found on the Member Resource Portal. All Members and Associates of the Supercluster have access to the Member Resource Portal. Contact info@digitalsupercluster.ca for further information.*

1. **Expression of Interest and Full Project Proposal Templates**. These templates contain detailed explanations of the content required to support the project submission. Note that the templates differ between the Technology Leadership and Capacity Building Programs.

2. **Project Cycle Areas of Focus**. These documents outline the areas of focus and parameters (scope and scale) for the current call for project for all programs. Note the areas of focus differ between the Technology Leadership and Capacity Building Programs.

3. **Budget Template**. This template is for all programs. Completed budget templates are only required at the FPP stage for each Program.
3.3 Reference Documents

1. **Co-Investment Guidelines.** This guide is for all programs. Refer to this guide for eligible and ineligible costs and co-investment models for each of the programs.

2. **Evaluation Criteria.** Evaluation Criteria for all programs can found in Appendix A (Technology Leadership) and Appendix B (Capacity Building).

3. **Presentation Guidelines.** These guidelines contain recommendations for the presentations offered at EOI and FPP stages (Technology Leadership) and the FPP stage (Capacity Building).

4. **Master Project Agreement Template.** This template provides the standard terms for a project agreement among the parties and uses the content of the FPPs in the Schedules to the Agreement.

5. **Intellectual Property Strategy.** In the case where projects have the potential to generate Intellectual Property (IP), including materials that may require copyrights, trademarks, or patents, a detailed IP rationale will be required in the FPP.

6. **Data Strategy.** This document describes the Supercluster’s strategy and approach to data governance, security and management.

7. **Supercluster Strategic Plan.** This document outlines the Digital Technology Supercluster Strategic Plan for 2018-2023.

8. **Non-Disclosure Agreement Template.** This template is available for project teams who wish to sign a non-disclosure agreement during the application phase.
4 Evaluation

4.1 Review Process

The Supercluster’s evaluation and selection of projects is a competitive process. For all programs, Expressions of Interest (EOI) will be reviewed by the Supercluster and external experts as needed.

The EOI stage is intended to assess project fit and eligibility, the potential for success, and the project’s readiness to develop a Full Project Proposal (FPP). The EOI evaluation stage will utilize a subset of the full Evaluation Criteria that is appropriate for reviewing projects at this stage. The full evaluation against all Evaluation Criteria will occur at the FPP stage.

FPPs will be reviewed and evaluated by a panel of independent, external reviewers and select members of the Supercluster team. Final investment decisions will be made by the Supercluster and ratified by the Board of Directors.

Technology Leadership Programs proposals will be assessed against the Evaluation Criteria outlined in Appendix A: Technology Leadership Programs. Capacity Building Program proposals will be assessed against the Evaluation Criteria outlined in Appendix B: Capacity Building Program.

The Supercluster reserves the right to modify the review process with advice from the Program Investment Committee and Program Advisory Council(s) as needed.

4.2 Notification of Decision

EOI Stage
All applicants will receive a notification letter following EOI review. If successful, project teams will be invited to proceed to the next stage to prepare an FPP. Feedback will be provided to all project teams.

FPP Stage
All applicants will receive a notification letter following FPP review. If successful, project teams will then be invited to proceed to the next stage to formalize a Master Project Agreement. Feedback will be provided to all project teams.
Appendix A: Evaluation Criteria: Technology Leadership

The following four evaluation criteria categories will be used to assess Technology Leadership projects throughout the project evaluation and selection process. The relative weighting of each evaluation criteria category is listed in the headers below.

Team and Project Management Plan (25%)

Quality of the consortium
- Does the composition of the consortium (SME, academia, customer, multi-national enterprise, etc.) represent a holistic approach to collaboration?
- Does the consortium include a customer/consumer of the project’s output?
- Does each consortium participant have an appropriate level of engagement (role, investment, etc.) in the project?
- As a consortium, do the participants possess the necessary and complementary IP and capabilities to meet the project objectives and results?
- Individually, do consortium participants have the necessary expertise and existing (background) IP to carry out their tasks?
- Do all of the consortium participants have clearly articulated commercial and/or scientific/engineering/artistic interest in achieving the results?

Added value through cooperation
- Does the project benefit from being done cooperatively, or better yet, is cooperation required?
- Is there material involvement from post-secondary institutions that will strengthen industry-driven research and/or talent generation?
- Does the project demonstrate clear sharing of risks, costs, know-how, and benefits?
- Will the collaboration result in outputs greater than what could be achieved by any individual participant?
- Do all consortium participants stand to gain commercially, scientifically or academically from the project results?
- Does one participant stand to benefit disproportionately from the project results?

Realistic and clearly defined project management and planning
- Does the project plan include a realistic timeline in relation to the tasks and objectives?
- Are key issues, project objectives and outputs fully identified and formulated?
- Are the goals clearly identified and logically set out through well-described work packages?
- Are the milestones and deliverables clearly identified? Do they allow for monitoring of progress, implementation, including go/no-go decisions?
• Are the roles and responsibilities of each consortium participant within each work package clearly described and differentiated in the work plan? Is the planned use of subcontractors clearly identified?
• Is the project management structure well described? Is there an appropriate and capable structure for implementing the project (e.g. decision making, tracking, dispute resolution, ensuring progress, reporting, etc.)?
• Does the project define how it will deal with technical uncertainty?

Reasonable cost structure
• Is the cost breakdown well-structured and does it correspond to the tasks and activities to be implemented by each participant?
• Are the costs reasonably distributed between consortium members and do they reflect the role of each of the participants?
• Are the project costs clearly justified?
• Are subcontracting costs appropriately justified?

Digital Technology Innovation (30%)

Degree of innovation
• Are the project deliverables technologically new or a significant improvement on existing solutions?
• Will the project deliver objectively new products, processes or services to the intended customer(s) or end-user(s) with clear added value?
• Is the product an advance on commercial state-of-the-art?
• Are the technologies to be used completely novel or considered state-of-the-art?
• Has the project team done the prior state-of-the-art and competitive technology research?

New applied knowledge
• Will the project result in the creation of new knowledge that does not currently exist in the defined sector?
• Will the project resolve an issue of technical uncertainty, resulting in new knowledge?
• Will the new knowledge bring the consortium participants to the forefront of their respective domains?
• Does the project describe what foreground IP will be created?
• Will the project capture new data or create new relationships between (previously unrelated) data?

Level of technical challenge
• Does the project involve a high degree of technical challenge?
• Does the project clearly state the area of technical uncertainty to be addressed?
• Does the project depend on technology which is still immature?
• Does achieving the project results require a significant level of specialized knowledge or domain expertise?
• Is the level of technical challenge such that the project results could not easily be replicated by others?

Technical achievability and risk
• Is the proposed approach technically sound?
• Is the consortium making use of appropriate technologies to achieve the stated objectives? Is the proposal making use of established standards?
• Are the proposed technical developments achievable within the defined budget and timeframe?
• Is the research method described appropriate for achieving the technical developments (e.g. it includes a program of design, test, analysis, decision and iteration if appropriate)?
• Are the associated technical risks clearly outlined and has an appropriate approach to risk mitigation been outlined?
• Does the project incorporate go/no-go decision points for appropriate outcomes and at regular intervals?

Commercial Impact (30%)

Market size
• Has the project clearly identified the stakeholder(s) for whom value is created?
• Is this value well defined and realistic? Is it clear who will be prepared to pay for the product or platform?
• Is there a profitable market for the product or platform?
• Has the project proposal quantified the market size, growth prospects and expected market share of the product or platform?
• Has the consortium demonstrated the strong foundation for sustainable competitiveness?
• Is there scalability opportunity beyond the targeted market?

Market access and risk
• Have any of the consortium members deployed background IP in the targeted market?
• Are the consortium participants qualified to compete in the targeted market?
• Do any of the consortium members have commercial relationships with the targeted stakeholders/customers?
• Has the proposal identified realistic barriers to entry (e.g. regulations, standards and certification, competition, etc.)?
• Is the project delivering an end-to-end solution to the market or a component of a supply chain that has external dependencies?
• Has the proposal identified other mechanisms to reduce the time/costs of going to market (e.g. leverage reference customers, market adoption/roll-out strategies, etc.)?

Competitive advantage
• Is the product or platform clearly differentiated from the competition?
• Will the product have a significant price or quality advantage over competing products?
• Does the proposal introduce a new business model?
• Are there network effects possible with the proposed product or platform?
• Will the consortium participants be in a position to generate strong IP to protect the project deliverables?
• Will the project result in a time-to-market advantage over competition?
• Has the consortium carefully analysed relevant, existing IP and assessed how it might affect their approach to market rollout?

Clear and realistic commercialization plans
• Has the consortium clarified the commercial relationships between members?
• Has the consortium clearly outlined the business plans for commercializing the product or platform?
• Has the division or sharing of project outputs been defined with a view to commercialization? Is there a clear specification of what foreground IP will be created and which member will own which part?
• Do the commercialization plans include realistic and credible projections for revenue, investment required, and anticipated costs associated with launching a new product or platform?
• Do the participants have a proven track record of commercializing similar digital technologies?
• Does the adoption of the newly developed technology require new regulations, incentives or policies to be developed?

**Ecosystem Impact (15%)**

*SME growth through access to supply chains*
• Does the proposal set a credible expectation of SME growth for those directly involved in the project?
• Is there clear potential to benefit additional SMEs (outside of the project consortium) through future access to the project’s foreground IP?
• Could the project result in the creation of a platform or a network that SMEs (outside of the project consortium) could participate in, or build new products on top of?
• Does the project have the potential to create a network effect beyond the results within the project?
• Will the project results give opportunities for the creation of new start-ups?

*Application of foreground IP*
• Does the consortium’s approach to IP to be generated by the project (foreground IP) demonstrate a commitment to sharing or licensing amongst the consortium members and other organizations within the Supercluster community?
• Does the project proposal demonstrate a substantial potential for future, post-project incremental work, where the foreground IP could be, for instance, taken to new regions or applied to different industries?
• Do the consortium members describe a willingness to allow for the use of the foreground IP in such non-primary or non-competitive areas?
• Is the foreground IP exportable outside of Canada?

*Job creation, skills and diversity development*
• Does the project proposal describe how it will create a legacy in terms of a highly skilled talent pool?
• Does the project identify new skills and training development opportunities?
• Does the project address important capacity gaps?
• Will the project create jobs and digital opportunities for minorities, women and other underrepresented groups?
• Will the project lead to creating jobs and opportunities in indigenous and remote geographic regions?
• Does the project create the conditions for attracting talent from abroad?

*Development of industry-informed academic research, learning and training*
• Have the consortium members expressed if, and to what extent, they plan to present aspects of the project work to the broader academic community (through workshops, conferences, guest lectures, integration into curriculum, etc.)?
• Does the project direction stimulate potential future collaborative research and learning projects for post-secondary institutions?
• Will the project have a material effect on the stimulating new research or learning directions?
Benefits to the ecosystem

• Has the consortium articulated how the proposed digital technology will have positive impacts (social, environmental, commercial) on various stakeholder groups outside of the immediate consortium participants?
• Does the project have relation to another supercluster project (e.g. a continuation of a previous technology project or supporting a Capacity Building project)?
• Are the effects of the project outcome limited to British Columbia or could they also benefit other provinces or territories?
• Is it likely that the results of the project will attract additional venture capital investment?
Appendix B: Evaluation Criteria: Capacity Building

The following four evaluation criteria categories will be used to assess Capacity Building projects throughout the project evaluation and selection process. The relative weighting of each evaluation criteria category is equal.

1. **Project Proposal**
   - **Quality of the proposed project**
     - Does the project clearly articulate the rationale for addressing a current or future need for developing digital talent?
     - Has the proposal demonstrated that this project complements and augments current programs and activities for developing digital talent in the innovation ecosystem?
     - Is there a clear articulation of benefits to the ecosystem of this project?
     - Is the timeline realistic and achievable?

   - **Relevance of the proposed project to the program**
     - Does the proposal clearly articulate specific, clearly defined objectives, milestones and outcomes to be achieved by the end of the project?
     - Is the proposal aligned with the priorities of the Supercluster and this program?

2. **Ecosystem Impact**
   - **Skills and capacity development**
     - Does the project proposal describe how it will create a sustainable approach in terms of a highly skilled talent pool, such as identifying new skills and training development opportunities?

   - **Benefits to the ecosystem**
     - Has the proposal articulated how the proposed project will have positive impacts (social, environmental, commercial) on various stakeholder groups outside of the immediate consortium participants?
     - If applicable, has the proposal outlined and demonstrated a sustainability plan (e.g., expansion, new partners, financial)? For example, does the plan include resources and activities dedicated to ensuring the benefits from the project extend to groups outside of the consortium?

3. **Team and Experience**
   - Applicants must demonstrate that the project team and the consortium have the ability, experience and expertise to deliver on the project.
Quality of the consortium

• Does the composition of the consortium (SME, academia, customer, multi-national enterprise, etc.) represent a holistic approach to collaboration?
• Does each consortium participant have an appropriate level of engagement (role, investment, etc.) in the project?
• As a consortium, do the participants possess the necessary and complementary qualifications to meet the project objectives and results?
• Individually, do consortium participants have the necessary experience to carry out their tasks?

Added value through cooperation

• Does the project benefit from being done cooperatively, or better yet, is cooperation required?
• Is there material involvement from ecosystem partners that will strengthen and foster long term partnerships between innovation ecosystem participants (e.g., post-secondary institutions, not-for-profit organizations, government, industry)?
• Does the project demonstrate clear sharing of risks, costs, know-how and benefits?
• Will the collaboration result in outputs greater than what could be achieved by any individual participant?
• Do all participants stand to benefit proportionately from the project results?

Management and Finance

The applicants must demonstrate a sound management plan and that the budgeted costs comply with the Co-Investment Guidelines, using the provided template. Note that the lead organization of the consortium or others contributing resources will undergo a financial viability assessment based on the following:

Realistic and clearly defined project management and planning

• Does the project plan include a realistic timeline in relation to the tasks and objectives?
• Are key issues, project objectives and outputs fully identified and formulated?
• Are the goals clearly identified and logically set out through well-described work packages?
• Are the milestones and deliverables clearly identified? Do they allow for monitoring of progress and implementation, including go/no-go decisions?
• Are the roles and responsibilities of each consortium participant clearly described and differentiated in the work plan?
• Is the project management structure well described? Is there an appropriate and capable structure for implementing the project (e.g. decision making, tracking, dispute resolution, ensuring progress, reporting, etc.)?
• Does the project manager have relevant multi-partner project management experience?
• Do all participants have a well-defined and relevant role in the project?

Reasonable cost structure

• Is the cost breakdown well structured and does it correspond to the tasks and activities to be implemented by each participant?
• Are the costs reasonable for the proposed work as a whole and for each of the participants?
• Are the project costs clearly justified?
• Are subcontracting costs appropriately justified?
Appendix C: Follow-On Projects

Follow-on Projects are new projects that build on the work completed in previously approved Supercluster projects. The consortium is expected to continue to be a core group of the same participating organizations, with clear rationale for any changes to the consortium composition.

Follow-on Project proposals will be accepted at any time. Submission deadlines will be determined on a case-by-case basis, based on the time required to evaluate and formalize decisions as described below.

1. Application Process

1. Discussions with project teams: The first step is to engage in a conversation with the Supercluster about the proposed project. A primary contact will be assigned who will coordinate the involvement of other Supercluster resources as required.

An understanding of the proposed project will be jointly developed and documented by the Supercluster team. This document will outline the need and opportunity, changes to the consortium with supporting rationale, and a description of how the work from the previously approved project will be leveraged.

2. Invitation Letter: The project description, as well as progress and outcomes of previously approved project(s), will be reviewed by the Supercluster management team to assess fit, readiness and potential. Following review, successful teams will receive an Invitation Letter to submit a Full Project Proposal.

3. Full Project Proposal: Project teams will submit a Follow-On Full Project Proposal (FPP) and accompanying budget.

2. Application Materials

All application and reference materials for Follow-On Projects and submission instructions will be included in the Invitation Letter.

1. Follow-On Full Project Proposal Template. This template contains detailed explanations of the content required. Note that the Follow-On Full Project Proposal is different to that of other new projects: it also includes a self-assessment of performance on the previously approved project(s) and a description of how that work will be leveraged.

2. Budget Template. This template is the same for all programs. Completed budget templates are only required at the FPP stage for each Program.

3. Evaluation

The Supercluster’s evaluation and selection of projects is a competitive process.

The Follow-On FPP and budget submissions will be reviewed and evaluated by a panel of independent, external reviewers and select members of the Supercluster
receive the Supercluster’s assessment of performance on previous projects. In addition, the proposal team will be invited to present to the review panel.

Final investment decisions will be made by the Supercluster and ratified by the Board of Directors. Teams will be notified of the Supercluster’s investment decision and successful teams will proceed to contracting. Whenever possible, the contracting process will be simplified by amending the existing Master Project Agreement (MPA).
Appendix D: Feasibility Assessments

The purpose of a feasibility assessment is to test and/or evaluate if a technology or idea is appropriate for a large-scale project. Through a feasibility assessment the Supercluster staff, will support and guide industry partners in the evaluation of the Technology Readiness Level (TRL) of the technology solution contemplated by a project, including the scalability of the technology and its application to specific customer or user group(s), or other elements of a proposal such as the size and scope of a potential market to further understand and anticipate the commercial outcomes of project.

Feasibility assessments must be industry-led and may be carried out by a single organization or a consortium. Academic institutions and not-for-profit organizations may be part of the consortium.

Feasibility assessments will be considered on a continuous basis.

Evaluation and Selection

At any stage of the development or evaluation of a project concept or proposal, a gap in technology readiness, market scalability or other success factors may be identified. The Supercluster team or the Project Selection Committee may suggest that a feasibility assessment will help close the identified gap in making the proposed project more feasible or ambitious.

- The Supercluster CEO will be asked to closely examine the opportunity for a feasibility assessment against the following criteria:
  - alignment of the project’s outcome to the purpose of the relevant program;
  - strength and reliability of the project team;
  - strength of the project plan; and
  - relevance of a feasibility assessment to the overall success of the proposed project.

- The CEO, in consultation with at least one external advisor and other members of the Supercluster leadership team as may be appropriate, will approve, reject and/or set the terms of a feasibility study.

- A feasibility assessment may be pre-approved as a step toward a bigger project proposal.

- The maximum funding for a feasibility assessment is $250,000. Funding will be provided to the lead organization.

- The Chair of the Program Investment Committee will provide guidance to Supercluster management in respect of feasibility assessments.