



Guidance Document:
15th Round of Call for
Proposals for
Assessments by the
Council of Canadian
Academies (CCA)

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1. Introduction

The Council of Canadian Academies (CCA) is an independent, not-for-profit corporation that generates in-depth, evidence-based assessments, authored by panels of independent experts. The CCA's Board of Directors (the Board) includes nominees from the CCA's three founding member academies – the Royal Society of Canada; the Canadian Academy of Engineering; and the Canadian Academy of Health Sciences. The Board and staff are advised by a Scientific Advisory Committee (CCA-SAC) of eminent authorities in key disciplines of knowledge.

The CCA is independent of government, but benefits from a multi-year Contribution Agreement managed by ISED. This agreement provides the Government of Canada with a standing capacity to identify, analyze, and assess the evidence base surrounding key public policy issues with the objective of informing decision-making.

While the rest of this guide focuses on assessments funded by ISED's contribution agreement, departments and agencies also have the option of directly funding assessments that would be conducted on a cost recovery basis. Departments and agencies should contact the CCA directly to discuss this option.

2. What is a CCA Assessment and what can it do for my department or agency?

What is a CCA Assessment?

A CCA assessment is a multidisciplinary account of the state of existing evidence underlying an issue of public policy importance and can be undertaken in any subject area for which there is sufficient evidence to assess.

The focal point for each assessment is a question, or set of questions, asked by a Sponsor (e.g. federal department or agency). These questions are answered by an expert panel through a deliberative process that culminates in a final report. This report features an analytical review of evidence, a diagnostic presentation of findings, and, where possible, an expert judgement. CCA assessments can take many forms, and may include:

- an assessment of the state of knowledge;
- an identification of knowledge gaps;
- an evaluation of risk;
- an analysis of socio-economic impacts;
- a compilation of international best practices and trends; and
- a presentation of expert judgments,

The nature and scope of the CCA assessment process will vary with the complexity and breadth of the question(s). **Narrow questions** on subjects for which there is less complexity and less knowledge may be completed by a small panel with a few meetings and whose deliberations may be assisted by a workshop. Typically, these are completed in under a year. **Broad questions** on subjects with a high degree of complexity and for which there is considerable breadth of knowledge generally require a

larger panel with several in-person meetings and a longer time to complete. Examples of past topic questions are provided in Section 3.

What is the CCA's role?

The CCA is comprised of a professional staff, a Board of Directors, and a Scientific Advisory Committee (CCA-SAC). Once topics are referred to the CCA by the Minister of Science, the Board approves assessment topics, panel compositions, and the release of the final reports. The CCA-SAC provides advice on the question formulation, panel candidates, and oversees the integrity of the assessment process.

The role of CCA staff is to: provide advice on proposals; establish expert panels with advice from CCA-SAC and the Academies¹; support expert panels with research and writing; produce, release and disseminate assessment reports; contribute to mobilizing knowledge of assessment reports; and support the CCA-SAC and the Board.

Who undertakes CCA Assessments?

Assessment reports are authored by independent expert panels comprised of distinguished individuals from Canada and abroad. Panel members have backgrounds in academia, industry, and other relevant sectors. They are selected for their expertise and experience – they are not expected to represent specific community views. All panel members serve on a voluntary basis, without remuneration.

What is my role as Sponsor of an assessment?

The Sponsor's role is to develop an assessment proposal in accordance with the CCA proposal templates with the aid of an Idea Generation Table. This proposal is to be modified based on feedback received during the proposal selection process. To protect assessment objectivity, Sponsors do not participate in the appointment of panellists nor in the conduct of an assessment. However, Sponsors are given an opportunity to interact with the panel at the beginning and end of the process. Early in the process, the lead Sponsor is expected to meet with the expert panel at their first in-person meeting to help provide critical context, respond to questions, and help ensure a clear understanding of the assessment question.

Once the assessment is published, the lead Sponsor shares responsibility with the CCA to identify opportunities for assessment dissemination. Sponsors will present their dissemination plan in the Proposal Longform Template, which is filled in following acceptance of the shortform proposal.

What is the value of a CCA Assessment?

To effectively address important issues, Canadians need access to credible, independent assessments of the available evidence. CCA assessments are unique in the value they provide in terms of:

- **Independence:** Assessments are authored by a panel of independent experts drawn from the academic, private, and public sectors.
- **Expert credibility, balance, and thoroughness:** Assessments are conducted by multidisciplinary panels of recognized experts from Canada and abroad, who are selected to ensure a comprehensive and balanced response to the question. As a quality measure, assessments are subject to a

¹ The Academies of the CCA are the Royal Society of Canada, the Canadian Academy of Engineering, and the Canadian Academy of Health Sciences.

thorough peer review process while the report is in development. Assessment activity is overseen by a Board of Directors that is advised by a Scientific Advisory Committee.

- **Actionable findings:** CCA assessments provide expert interpretation of the evidence in the form of findings as opposed to recommendations, giving Sponsors the flexibility to decide how best to use the reports.
- **Public availability:** Final reports are widely available to the public in both English and French on the CCA [website](#) to allow both decision-makers and the people of Canada to benefit from this source of expert knowledge. To date, the CCA has completed over 45 assessments, the majority of which were funded through the ISED contribution agreement.

3. Examples of Questions and their Scope

The questions asked of a panel determine the size of the panel, the number of meetings, methods followed and the time to completion. The table below provides past examples of different types of assessment questions and the process followed:

Main Question	Nature of Question	Process & Methods	Length
What is the available evidence on, and how does it inform our understanding of, medical assistance in dying (MAID) in the case of mature minors, advance requests, and where mental illness is the sole underlying medical condition, given the clinical, legal, cultural, ethical, and historical context in Canada?	Complex and broad; Multiple domains of knowledge; 10 sub-questions	43 person panel 6 in-person meetings; 3 working groups; Call for input	24 months to complete; 4 reports; 760 pages
What is the current state of science and technology and industrial research and development in Canada?	Complex and broad; Multiple domains of knowledge; 5 sub-questions	13 person panel; 5 in-person meetings; Bibliometric analysis; International survey; Interim data report	20 months to complete; 2 reports; 240 pages
What is the social and economic value of commercial marine shipping to Canada and its regions? How will global trends related to shipping affect future shipping activity in Canada?	Complex and specialized; 1 sub-question	10 person panel; 4 in person meetings; Economic modelling	18 months to complete; 1 report; 140 pages
What are Canada’s strengths in regenerative medicine (and why are they strengths)?	Narrow and specialized; 1 sub-question	4 person panel; 2 in-person meetings; Bibliometric analysis; 18 additional experts engaged via workshop	6 months to complete; 1 report; 60 pages

Selection Process for Assessment Topics

The selection process for CCA assessment topics starts with a call for proposals issued by the ISED Secretariat. On the government side, proposals are reviewed at the ADM Committee on S&T (AMDCST), at the DM Science Committee (DMSC), and by the Chief Science Advisor (CSA). Final approval rests with the Minister of Science.

On the CCA side, review is undertaken by the CCA's Scientific Advisory Committee. Assessment topic selection is an iterative process during which Sponsors have a chance to revise their proposals based on feedback received from Government and CCA reviewers. Once topics have been referred by the Minister of Science, the CCA's Board of Directors votes to commence the assessment. Steps of the selection process are outlined in the table below:

Key Dates	
Launch of Round 15 Call for Proposals	April 8, 2019
Deadline for Draft Shortform Proposals	April 24, 2019
Sponsors receive comments from ISED Secretariat	May 1, 2019
Check-in at DMSC of topics	May 9, 2019
Deadline for Final Shortform Proposals	May 17, 2019
Eligible Sponsors receive comments from CSA on topic scientific merit and from the CCA on feasibility	End May 2019
Sponsors work with the CCA to refine topics into assessment questions.	Ongoing
Deadline for Draft Longform Proposals.	Mid June 2019
Planning Meeting	End June 2019
Deadline for Final Longform Proposal	Summer 2019
AMDCST Topic Approval	Summer 2019
DMSC Topic Approval/ Topic Prioritization	Early Fall 2019
Ministerial Approval	Fall 2019
CCA Board of Directors votes to commence assessment	March 2020
CCA convenes expert panel	April 2020
Assessment report published	Varies with scope and approach
Dissemination of report	Follows report publication

1. Call Launched

2. Proposal Outlines

Departments and agencies can submit a complete draft shortform proposal for each proposed assessment topic by using the shortform template. Though the proposal summary is quite brief, proposed topics should receive internal approval from departmental senior management.

3. Topics assessed for eligibility (ISED-Secretariat), feasibility (CCA-SAC), and scientific merit (CSA)

ISED will assess the eligibility of topics according to criteria outlined and provide comments. Eligible topics will then be assessed by the Chief Science Advisor (CSA) for scientific merit and by CCA Scientific Advisory Committee (CCA-SAC). A description of assessment criteria is available in Section 5.

4. Check-in with DMSC

A list of assessed topics will be presented or circulated electronically to DMSC on May 9, 2019, as a check-in for members and to explore opportunities for horizontal collaboration.

5. Topic Refinement and Full Proposal

The ISED Secretariat and CCA-SAC will provide eligible Sponsors with ongoing feedback to further develop their topics into full assessment questions. Sponsors will be then invited to develop full proposals (maximum 10 pages) using the longform template. Draft longform proposals are due **mid June, 2019**.

6. Planning Meetings

The ISED Secretariat and the CCA will then convene a planning meeting for eligible topics in **Summer 2019**. Planning meeting attendees will include the topics Sponsors, members of the ISED Secretariat, the CCA-SAC and or subject matter experts, the CSA, and Departmental Science Advisors (DSAs).

Each sponsor will present a brief introduction of their topic, respond to the SAC comments, receive feedback from attendees, and answer questions from meeting participants, including CCA. The meeting provides Sponsors the opportunity to formulate complete assessment questions and sub-questions.

Using this feedback, Sponsors will have until early **July 2019** to submit their final proposals. The document must include ADM-level confirmation of support.

7. Approvals

All eligible proposals will be distributed to all members of ADMCST for recommendation to DMSC. Sponsoring ADMs will be responsible for briefing their DMs and Ministers. Referred proposals will then proceed to the DMSC meeting for prioritization and ranking of topics in **Fall 2019**.

The Minister of Science determines whether a topic will be referred to the CCA and will be responsible for confirming continued support from sponsoring ministers. Where applicable, the Minister will submit a tasking letter to CCA's Board of Directors, on behalf of the Government of Canada, to formally request that the assessment be conducted.

8. Implementation and Launch of CCA Assessment

The CCA Board of Directors must approve the tasked assessment question before convening a multi-disciplinary panel of expert volunteers. The CCA will then hold an initial scoping meeting with Sponsors to determine expectations and to shape the development of the assessment.

Project duration as well as actual start and end dates are to be negotiated with the sponsor before assessment work begins.

To protect the independence of the assessment process, Sponsors do not participate in the assessment process nor review drafts of the report and propose any changes.

9. Assessment publication and dissemination

Both the CCA and the sponsoring department will be responsible for dissemination of the assessment report. Departments and agencies should track assessment impacts both within their organization and more broadly within the public service and academia.

4. Proposal Requirements and Criteria

ISED eligibility criteria

- The assessment topic is timely and relevant to the Government of Canada's priorities
- The assessment topic has the potential to inform decision-making and policy development
- The proposed timeframe of the assessment is achievable

CCA feasibility criteria

- There is sufficient publically available evidence to assess;
- The existing state of knowledge merits the assessment (jointly with CSA)
- The appropriate expertise can be assembled
- The question can be answered by way of CCA's expert panel process

CSA scientific merit criteria

Intellectual Merit: Encompasses the potential to advance knowledge

Broader Impacts: Outlines the potential to benefit society and contribute to the achievement of specific, desired societal outcomes

- The assessment topic has the potential to:
 - advance knowledge or inform policy-making and understanding within its own field or across different fields (Intellectual Merit); and
 - benefit society or advance desired societal outcomes (Broader Impacts)
- The assessment topic suggests and explores creative, original, or potentially transformative concepts
- The existing state of knowledge merits the assessment (jointly with CCA)

Asset criteria (optional)

- The assessment report is likely to be broadly disseminated (e.g. other levels of government and outside of the public service)
- The assessment topic is an international issue for which a Canadian perspective is important at this time
- Preference will be given to multi-sponsor assessment topics.

5. Contact Information

For further information on the selection process, please contact:

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