

**DALHOUSIE UNIVERSITY,
NOVA SCOTIA HEALTH AND
IWK HEALTH CENTRE**

**Operations & Maintenance (O&M) Plan
including use of Infrastructure Operating Fund (IOF)
for Canada Foundation for Innovation (CFI)-funded research projects**

Revised March 2023

Introduction

The following is the Operations and Maintenance (O&M) Plan for Canada Foundation for Innovation (CFI)-funded research projects at Dalhousie University (“Dalhousie”), Nova Scotia Health (“NSH”) and the IWK Health Centre (“IWK”). This Plan applies to all CFI projects at Dalhousie, including CFI projects undertaken at and administered by NSH and the IWK.

O&M Operating Period

When Dalhousie applies for and is awarded funds from CFI to support a project, it is generally understood by CFI that the research project will be undertaken for a minimum of five years, or over the useful life of the equipment. The useful life of the equipment is defined as “The period of time over which infrastructure is expected to provide benefits and be useful for its intended purpose, factoring in normal repairs and maintenance.” ([*CFI Policy and Program Guide*, section 4.4, 2019](#))

Similarly, there is an institutional obligation to ensure that the CFI-funded research infrastructure is operated and maintained during the research project period. CFI expects that “appropriate resources are provided for the operation and maintenance of existing and future research infrastructure over its useful life.” (*CFI Institutional Agreement, October 2021*)

O&M Sources of Funding

The O&M Plan recognizes three possible sources of funding for operations and maintenance costs associated with CFI projects.

1. Infrastructure Operating Fund (IOF), CFI

The Infrastructure Operating Fund (IOF) helps cover a portion of the operating and maintenance costs of CFI-funded research infrastructure to ensure its optimal use.

The CFI allocates an amount of funding that each institution can access from the IOF. This amount is calculated as a percentage of the CFI contribution to research infrastructure projects.

The institution is usually allocated 30% of the maximum CFI amount approved at award finalization. Projects funded through the following programs are not allocated support from the IOF: Major Science Initiatives Fund, Canada Research Chairs Infrastructure Fund, Career

Awards, International funds, and Exceptional Opportunities Fund – COVID-19.

Each institution is responsible for deciding how their funds are divided among projects eligible to receive support through the Infrastructure Operating Fund. Institutions can distribute their IOF allocation based on actual operating and maintenance needs, as opposed to allocating the exact amount to the project that generated it. This allows flexibility to support projects with different needs and scope.

More information on the IOF can be found in the CFI Policy and Program Guide:
<https://www.innovation.ca/apply-manage-awards/resources-apply-manage-award>

The IOF generated by CFI projects at Dalhousie is shared as follows:

- 2/3 portion is accessible to ensure adequate operation and maintenance of the equipment. This portion is administered by the Faculties (see below).
- 1/3 is managed centrally to support the following:
 - Operations and Maintenance Response Fund, to cover unexpected costs of O&M for CFI-funded infrastructure. This is administered by the Office of the Vice President Research and Innovation and is transferred to Faculties based on an application process (described further in Section 3 below)
 - VPRI Matching Funds Program, to support institutional commitments to large-scale CFI projects
 - Other strategic supports for CFI programming at Dalhousie as determined by the VPRI

Faculties will administer the IOF portion for users, with the option of pooling IOF generated by several projects and will coordinate O&M support for eligible CFI-funded projects. Advantages of a Faculty approach include:

- Optimized resources, for example, pooling of funds for several projects to allow hiring of technical support staff with adequate skills who can serve several CFI-funded projects for longer periods of time;
- Facilitate access to funding for the Project Leader and lighten the administrative responsibilities of the Project Leader, in particular, related to tracking of expenses, record keeping, and reporting requirements;
- Allow Faculties to plan for the expected useful life of the infrastructure located in their faculties, while still having flexibility to account for areas of priority or unexpected O&M expenses.

2. Researcher's External Research Funding

Accepting that CFI provides funding for research infrastructure and not for the research itself, and that Dalhousie provides access to IOF support to CFI-funded research infrastructure, there is an expectation by Dalhousie that the researcher apply for and secure other external funds to support research operating costs of the CFI project as well as additional operating and maintenance costs associated with the CFI research infrastructure.

3. O&M Response Fund

Dalhousie recognizes that exceptional O&M challenges may arise from time to time. Dalhousie has established, therefore, an O&M Response Fund to respond to these O&M difficulties. The O&M Response Fund will:

- be available to support all CFI-funded infrastructure;
- give priority to “emergency” O&M issues, e.g., equipment breakage. Other external funds should be sought to address ongoing O&M costs;
- support expenses that are IOF eligible;
- give priority to research infrastructure that has been purchased less than five years ago;
- give priority to equipment that is located within Core facilities.

IOF Administration

A. Infrastructure Operating Fund (IOF) Management

The IOF is available and may be claimed once the Award Agreement between Dalhousie and CFI is fully executed. The timeline for spending the IOF should be adjusted to the infrastructure installation schedule. The Office of Research Services is responsible for coordinating the program administration while Financial Services is responsible for the transfer of funds, and preparing reports to CFI on claims and expenses.

On an annual basis, ORS provides a calculation of the IOF status to each Faculty including newly awarded CFI projects and the amount of IOF generated by these projects that will be allocated to the Faculty. The Faculty is responsible for ensuring that the infrastructure is used to its full capacity and that O&M expenses are covered as planned.

B. Multi-institutional Projects

For projects involving partners, IOF funds will be allocated to each participating institution in proportion to the CFI contribution awarded to each participating institution. This IOF allocation will be stated as part of the Inter-Institutional Agreement with the participating institution, as required by CFI.

For Dalhousie-led multi-institutional projects, IOF funds not used by partners will be offered for use to the Faculty of the Dalhousie Project Lead. If the Faculty does not require the full amount of the unclaimed IOF, Dalhousie will reallocate.

C. O&M Response Fund

All Faculties that house CFI-funded infrastructure will be eligible to apply to the O&M Response Fund. A call for applications to the O&M Response Fund may be released in the Spring of each year. Applications may be submitted by the Dean of the Faculty to support the needs of CFI-funded infrastructure within that Faculty. Applications will be submitted to the Office of the

Vice President Research and Innovation. The Office of the Vice President Research and Innovation will form a small committee to review and approve applications.

Dalhousie reserves the right to allocate IOF according to the highest strategic priority/merit. Priority will be given to Faculties that have exhausted their IOF allocation.

Sustainability and O&M Planning

For all CFI projects, and in particular for large-scale projects (for example, projects funded under CFI's Innovation Fund program), the Faculty will discuss long-term O&M costs and resources with the Project Leader at the application stage so that an appropriate O&M strategy is initiated at the beginning of the research project to ensure the long-term viability of the CFI-funded research infrastructure.

When necessary, the Vice President Research and Innovation will provide the final decision on all IOF matters at Dalhousie.