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NOVA – FRQNT-NSERC PROGRAM for early-career researchers (PILOT)

Competition year: **2022-2023**

Deadline (Notice of intent- pre-application): **2021-08-18 4 p.m.**

Deadline (Application): **2021-09-22 4 p.m.**

Annual amount: **\$75,000** (NSERC \$45,000 and FRQNT \$30,000)

Duration of funding: **Maximum 3 years**

Announcement of results: **End of April 2022**

In your application, you will have the opportunity to describe how the COVID-19 pandemic has affected your research or training activities over the past months, so that this information can be taken into account in the evaluation of your application. Please consult the document “[Considering the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic in the evaluation of funding applications](#)” for more information.

Program rules

This program refers to the FRQ's [Common General Rules \(CGR\)](#), which govern all Fonds de recherche du Québec — Nature et technologies (FRQNT) programming. This document provides rules specifically applicable to the NOVA program, which take precedence over the [CGR](#) and NSERC policies.

The link to the [FRQnet Electronic Portfolio](#) and the forms associated with this competition are available under the [Portal Access](#) tab of the website. More information is available in the [About FRQnet](#) section. It is the applicant's responsibility to choose the correct application form. Should an error occur, the Fonds will not transfer the application from one program to another and the application will be deemed ineligible.

The Fonds requires the [Canadian Common CV](#) and its PDF file of detailed contributions to be included in the appropriate section of the E-portfolio. **Attention: You must ensure that the Canadian Common CVs of all principal investigators and co-investigators from Québec are in the format required by the FRQNT.** Please refer to the [Application Presentation Standards – FRQNT document](#), available in the program web page, for complete presentation instructions.

FILES SUBMITTED TO THE FONDS AFTER THE COMPETITION DEADLINE OF 4 P.M. ON AUGUST 18, 2021 (NOTICE OF INTENT-PRE-APPLICATION) OR 4 P.M. ON SEPTEMBER 22, 2021 (APPLICATION) WILL NOT BE ACCEPTED BY THE FONDS.

ATTENTION:

By submitting a proposal to this competition, you agree to allow the partner agencies (FRQNT and NSERC) to share the information contained in your proposal. Principal investigators must ensure that all co-investigators and collaborators are aware of the rules regarding the sharing of the information contained in the proposal. There will be no sharing of confidential personal data (gender-specific data).

1 Objectives

Offered in partnership with NSERC, the main objective of the NOVA program is to support research projects led by early-career Québec researchers in collaboration with researchers from other Canadian provinces and territories. Funded projects must be in the natural sciences, mathematics or engineering (NSE).

The specific objectives of the NOVA program are to:

- Increase and stimulate the capacity for research collaborations between early-career Québec researchers and researchers from other Canadian provinces and territories;
- Strengthen the international competitiveness of researchers from Québec and the other Canadian provinces and territories;
- Generate new knowledge or knowledge applications likely to produce social, environmental, technological or economic benefits or influence public policy in Québec and/or the rest of Canada on issues of importance to the community;
- Create a plan to mobilize the results of the research in Québec and the rest of Canada.

2 Eligibility requirements

The eligibility of the project and the research team must be maintained for the duration of the grant. It is the responsibility of the project's principal investigator to verify, sufficiently in advance, the eligibility of the application. All members of the research team and their postsecondary institutions involved in the project must meet the eligibility requirements in effect at the time of application, the program rules, the [CGR](#), and the [NSERC eligibility criteria](#) for the entire period covered by the grant. **Application eligibility is determined jointly by the FRQNT and NSERC**, based on the information and documents received by the competition deadline (see Sections 3 and 4).

Any project, research team or person that does not meet the eligibility requirements set out below is not eligible.

2.1 Identification of the principal investigator

The principal investigator of the application is:

- A researcher in a Québec university **AND**
- Corresponds to **Status 1 definition i)** as defined in the FRQ's [CGR](#) **AND**
- Assumed a first career position in a university on or after January 1, 2016*, **AND**
- Is employed by a [managing institution recognized by the FRQ](#) to manage funding.

*A career position involves supervising students and conducting research. Similar positions held outside Québec must be within this eligibility period (*i.e.*, assumed on or after January 1, 2016). A researcher having occupied such a position prior to January 1, 2016 is ineligible.

ATTENTION:

Salaried researchers who correspond to Status 1 definition ii) of the [CGR](#) cannot be principal investigator under this program but can join the team as co-investigators.

Retired researchers are not eligible to be principal investigator.

Contracted researchers with status 1 of the [CGR](#) who hold a non-tenure-track position at their university must provide a letter from their university (see Section 3 for more details).

A researcher may be principal investigator for ONLY ONE FUNDING APPLICATION under this program.

2.2 Team composition

2.2.1 The team

Québec:

- At least one co-investigator from a Québec university or college with status 1, 2 or 3* as defined in the [CGR](#) **AND**
- Who is from an [eligible institution recognized by the FRQNT](#)

Co-investigators can be early-career researchers (assumed 1st position on or after January 1, 2016), established researchers, contracted researchers, or retired researchers and must have university affiliation that allows them to supervise students on their own. See required documents in Section 3 for more details.

*Under this program, college researchers (Status 3) can have a master's or PhD or an equivalent qualification recognized by a Québec university. They must possess the professional autonomy required to direct research projects and supervise students.

Other Canadian provinces and territories:

- At least one co-investigator from a university or college in another Canadian province or territory **AND**
- Who is from an [eligible institution recognized by NSERC](#)

Co-investigators can be early-career researchers (assumed 1st position on or after January 1, 2016), established researchers, contracted researchers, or retired researchers and must have university affiliation that allows them to supervise students on their own. College-level co-investigators must hold or have a firm offer of an appointment at an eligible Canadian college, and must occupy this position for the duration of the grant. The appointment can be a permanent position or a term or contract position of no less than

three years. The position held must allow the co-investigator to engage in research-related activities without the supervision of another researcher.

Québec and other Canadian provinces and territories:

Individuals with statuses 1 to 4 can join the team as **collaborators** (“Definitions–Roles in the application” section of the [CGR](#)). International researchers are also eligible. The CVs of collaborators are not required, but the principal investigator must present the role of the collaborator(s) in the project description.

The team composition must bring together the best complementary expertise from across Québec and the other Canadian provinces and territories.

2.2.2 Intersectorality

The FRQNT and NSERC encourage applicants to include university and college co-investigators in fields other than NSE in the team. Research costs associated with work that is not in NSE-related fields must not exceed 30% of the NSERC funding portion. The eligibility requirements for non-NSE participants are the same as for co-investigators or collaborators as described above.

2.3 Participation limits

Under this program, a Québec researcher may have the role of principal investigator in **ONLY ONE FUNDING APPLICATION**. Co-investigators may be part of **up to TWO FUNDING APPLICATIONS**. They may, however, contribute to the work of other teams as collaborators. In such cases, they are identified in the “List of collaborators” section and their scientific production is not evaluated. Their CVs are not required.

Note that for Québec researchers (principal investigators, co-investigators), the participation limits of the FRQNT *Team Research Project* program do not apply to the NOVA program.

2.4 Research project

Note that only funding applications in research areas covered by the FRQNT and NSERC are eligible. Should there be any doubt as to the compliance of their research topic with the fields and sub-fields of the FRQNT and NSERC, researchers can contact the program officer to ensure that their project falls within the areas covered.

Research projects jointly funded by the FRQNT and NSERC cannot be concurrently funded by other granting agencies.

2.5 Equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI)

It is the responsibility of the research team to create a more diverse, inclusive and equitable research environment with a climate and culture in which all individuals feel supported and respected. The concrete practices and actions that will be put in place to integrate EDI considerations must be described in the training plan, using the NSERC guides ([EDI in the Training Plan](#), [Guide for Applicants](#)) as a reference. **Implementing EDI considerations in the training plan is an eliminary criterion for application eligibility.**

2.6 Assessment of application eligibility

Application eligibility will be assessed jointly by the FRQNT and NSERC using a checklist (see “Toolbox” on the program web page). The eligibility decisions will be communicated to principal investigators by email and announced in October.

3 Contents of the funding application and required documents

All accompanying documents and sections of the electronic form, including Detailed Contributions, must comply with the standards presented in the [Application Presentation Standards – FRQNT document](#) available in the program Toolbox (See the Program web page). Failure to adhere to these standards could render the application INELIGIBLE.

The principal investigator and all co-investigators (from Québec and other Canadian provinces and territories) must update their profile by completing the self-identification questionnaire in the FRQnet portal. For NSERC, only new users of the online system (who do not have an NSERC PIN) must [register for eServices](#) and complete the authentication questions.

The research project description, **including** the list of references, tables and figures, consists of one preformatted document (template) of no more than **12 pages** that explains in detail: the research team, relevance and outcomes for Québec and all of Canada, the quality of the proposal, and training (see Section 5.2). The research project description must be inserted in the proposal template.

Required documents:

- The electronic application form including the following tabs:
 - Equity, diversity and inclusion: description of the concrete actions and practices included in the training plan (maximum 1 page – EDI template to be completed)
 - Project description: description that addresses the 5 evaluation criteria (maximum 12 pages including the list of references, tables and figures)

- Release from teaching duties – Québec college researchers: identification of the team members concerned and justification of release from teaching duties (1 page)
 - Budget: Attach a PDF file containing a justification of proposed expenditures and equipment costs for the FRQNT (3 pages) and a justification of proposed expenditures for NSERC (2 pages)
 - Other documents:
 - A. A letter from the university or college for any retired researchers from Québec;
 - B. A letter from the university for a principal investigator or co-investigator from Québec who is under contract, if applicable;
 - C. FRQNT equipment grant: two quotes from suppliers if the cost of a single piece of equipment exceeds \$25,000 (including taxes);
 - D. The Canadian Common CV of all co-investigators from other Canadian provinces and territories and their detailed contributions for the last 5 years (starting January 1, 2016) and updated since June 2020, in the NSERC format ([Form 100A](#)).
- The Canadian Common CV of the principal investigator and his or her detailed contributions for the last 5 years (starting January 1, 2016), FRQNT version, updated since June 2020;
 - The Canadian Common CV of co-investigators from Québec and their detailed contributions for the last 5 years (starting January 1, 2016), FRQNT version, updated since June 2020;

Documents to be attached in the *Other documents* section of the form:

A. Retired Québec researcher

A letter from the university or college attesting that, for the duration of the grant, the retired researcher will have access to the facilities and the logistical support needed to carry out the proposed research activities, and will continue to train students and prepare them for a career in research. The university or college must also confirm that it will manage and administer the funds in the usual manner.

B. Contracted Québec researcher

Principal investigators and co-investigators with Status 1 of the CGR (Status and Roles section) who hold a non-tenure-track position must provide a letter from their university indicating that they will maintain this status for the duration of the grant. An insufficiently documented letter could render the contracted researcher ineligible.

C. FRQNT equipment grant application

Two quotes from suppliers for any equipment with a unit cost greater than \$25,000 (taxes included). Exceptionally, a single quote can be submitted provided that this is fully justified in writing.

4 Application process

The notice of intent (pre-application; mandatory) and funding application must be completed using the forms available in the principal investigator's [FRQnet E-portfolio](#). The notice of intent (pre-application) is a registration and no eligibility will be made at this stage. For the funding application, the completed form, all required documents and the Canadian Common CV and detailed contributions of Québec co-investigators must be submitted at the same time as the application form.

The notice of intent (pre-application) is mandatory but does not need to be approved by the managing institution in the [FRQnet system](#). **IMPORTANT:** Only applicants who have submitted a notice of intent (pre-application) will have access to the funding application form. The managing institution must approve the funding application via [FRQnet](#) before it is submitted to the FRQNT. It is therefore likely that the applicant's institution has set an internal deadline earlier than the actual competition deadline. It is important that this be taken into account by the co-investigators from Québec and other Canadian provinces and territories to ensure that all documents are submitted to the FRQNT within the required time frame.

Deadlines for submission to the FRQNT:

- **Notice of intent (pre-application; mandatory): August 18, 2021 at 4 p.m.**
- **Funding application (and all required documents): September 22, 2021 at 4 p.m.**

Applicants will not be notified of any information or documents missing from the application file. Any documents received after the deadline will not be considered and application files cannot be updated. Any excess pages will be removed from the file. These rules will be strictly enforced.

An application that does not contain the information necessary to establish eligibility or which cannot be evaluated will be declared ineligible by the FRQNT and NSERC.

An incomplete application will be declared ineligible by the FRQNT and NSERC. The principal investigator must therefore make sure that the application is complete and contains all elements listed in the checklist, including all supporting documents for the members of the team, before submitting it to the FRQNT.

5 Application evaluation

5.1 Evaluation process

Eligible applications are sorted by the FRQNT program officer and the Fonds scientific advisory board according to their research areas and topics.

The applications are then evaluated by multidisciplinary assessment committees (MAC) and external experts selected among national and international peers from the industrial and socio-economic sectors. MACs are chaired by the program officer and include an observer from NSERC.

Evaluation by multidisciplinary assessment committees (MAC)

The multidisciplinary assessment committees (MAC) evaluate the applications according to the rules and the evaluation criteria in effect for the program, taking into account the evaluations by external experts in the field. The MACs analyse the applications and rank them by merit, identifying those they recommend for funding. In addition, the MACs are also asked to decide on the amount to be awarded for an equipment grant, where applicable.

The Fonds program officer is responsible for ensuring that the committees and external experts consulted comply with evaluation criteria and procedures and with the ethics rules in effect.

5.2 Evaluation criteria

Criterion 1: Research team (25 points)

- Extent to which the collaboration brings together the best expertise from Québec and the rest of Canada to achieve the stated objectives;
- Complementary nature of the expertise required to carry out the research project;
- Appropriateness and quality of the team for achieving the intended outcomes;
- Contribution of collaborators, where applicable.

Criterion 2: Relevance and outcomes for Québec and all of Canada (20 points)

- Significance of the intended outcomes and of the social, environmental, cultural, technological, economic or other benefits;
- Potential for generating new scientific knowledge;
- Extent to which the strategy chosen to apply the research results is likely to achieve the intended outcomes.

Criterion 3: Quality of the proposal (30 points)

- Innovativeness in relation to the state of the art;
- Clarity of the objectives and deliverables; appropriateness of the scope of the planned activities for the intended outcomes; justification of planned expenditures;
- Appropriateness of the identified indicators and methods for monitoring progress during the project and for assessing outcomes at the end of the project.

Criterion 4: Training (20 points)

- Opportunities for enriched training experiences that let undergraduates, graduate students and postdoctoral fellows develop both their research skills and their interdisciplinary professional skills (such as leadership, communication, collaboration, entrepreneurship);
- Experience of project members in mentoring students;
- Capacity to integrate highly qualified personnel into the labour market.

Criterion 5: Equity, diversity and inclusion (5 points)

- Implementation of EDI considerations in the training plan (recruitment, mentoring, etc.);
- Implementation of concrete actions and practices to proactively integrate EDI considerations in the team composition;
- Implementation of EDI considerations in the project design and delivery, where appropriate.

IMPORTANT

The funding application must receive an **evaluation score of 80% or higher**.

6 Description and nature of funding

Funding of up to \$75,000 per year for a maximum of three years may be awarded and is not renewable. This amount is apportioned as follows:

- NSERC portion: up to \$45,000
- FRQNT portion: up to \$30,000

The grant is used to fund operating expenses directly related to carrying out the team research project. **Only** eligible expenses that are directly related to the proposed research activities of the project will be accepted. These must be rigorously justified in the application. Any unjustified expenses may be removed from the budget during the evaluation of the application.

Indirect research costs (IRC) of 27% are paid to the principal investigator's institution for the financial portion of the FRQNT and is added to the research grant (Section 8.2 of the [CGR](#)).

An additional amount of \$50,000 from the FRQNT is available for the principal investigator for the purchase of scientific equipment.

Except in the specific case of college researchers and in accordance with the conditions set out in 6.1, Fonds's granting must not be used to pay salaries or salary supplements to co-investigators or individuals whose salaries are paid out of the regular budget of a government-funded institution such as a university, a government department or its institutions, or any other government agency. Refer to the [CGR](#) for further details.

6.1 Eligible expenses

Under this program, the principal investigator will receive two grants, one from NSERC and the other from the FRQNT.

Eligible expenses under this program for the **FRONT funding portion** are those listed in Section 8 of the [CGR](#), with the exception of those described in Subsection 8.7. Eligible expenses under this program for the **NSERC funding portion** must comply with the [Tri-Agency Guide on Financial Administration](#).

Research costs associated with work that is in non-NSE-related fields must not exceed 30% of the NSERC funding portion and must be clearly indicated in the project's budget justification.

Salary support for eligible Status 3 college researchers with no teaching duties

Part of the grant awarded by the FRQNT may be used as **salary support** for college researchers on the team who have no teaching duties. **This amount must be entered in the Budget section and can be transferred by the principal investigator's institution** directly to the college, or to the college with which the CCTT is affiliated in the case of a CCTT researcher.

Supplement for eligible Status 3 college researchers with teaching duties

For **each college researcher on the team who has teaching duties**, a maximum additional amount \$16,000 will be paid directly to the college to cover the portion of the salary dedicated to the **release from teaching duties**. This amount is paid directly to the college.

6.2 Grant for equipment purchases- FRQNT

A grant may be added to the operating grant for the purchase of individual scientific equipment whose cost is between \$7,001 and \$50,000 (including taxes). This grant is awarded on the basis of the justification of the need for the equipment and according to the criteria mentioned below. Where applicable, the reuse of scientific equipment and the purchase of second-hand equipment are encouraged. Due to budget limitations, the equipment grant is not automatically offered in the event of an award.

Applications for equipment must be made in the first year of the period for which an operating grant is requested. The appropriations are issued in full the first year but may be spent any time in the three years covered by the grant.

For equipment whose total cost exceeds \$50,000, the Fonds's contribution comes into effect as soon as applicants submit supporting documents indicating they have obtained other sources of complementary funding for the purchase of the requested equipment. The supporting documents must be sent to the Fonds within one year following the grant announcement.

The following criteria are used to evaluate equipment applications:

- Relevance of the requested equipment for achievement of the research project;
- Availability of similar equipment at the project lead's university or the region's universities;
- Overall benefits (accessible to several users, contribution to researcher training, etc.);
- Amount of time the equipment will be used.

Student maternity leave

A student who receives an award funded by a grant under this program can get paid maternity leave from the FRQNT for a period of up to twelve months for the birth or adoption of a child. To be eligible, the student must have been paid from the FRQNT grant for at least 6 months. In addition, she may not hold an award from another granting agency and may not receive benefits from the Québec Parental Insurance Plan (QPIP).

To obtain paid maternity leave, the student must send a request by email to the program officer and provide a copy of the medical certificate attesting to the pregnancy and, when the time comes, the child's birth or adoption certificate and proof of interruption of university enrolment. In addition, a copy of the student's award contract must be provided. The maternity leave may begin up to eight months prior to the birth or adoption of the child. The FRQNT will transfer the maternity leave to the student upon receipt of the required documents.

Maternity leave is authorized by the Fonds provided that the institution allows maternity leave. The grant director undertakes to resume supervision of the student after her leave. The Fonds reserves the right to reject any request that is not adequately justified.

IMPORTANT: The maternity leave offered by the FRQNT cannot be combined with the maternity leave offered by NSERC, regardless of whether the Québec student's award is funded by the FRQNT portion or the NSERC portion of the grant. It is therefore up to the Québec student to decide which maternity leave she wishes to take.

Paid maternity/parental leave for students and postdoctoral fellows (NSERC)

NSERC will provide maternity/parental leave supplements within 12 months following a child's birth or adoption to an eligible student or postdoctoral fellow (Tri-Agency Guide, Part 5) who is the child's primary caregiver. The supplement amount will be based on the student's or postdoctoral fellow's current salary/stipend and is paid from the NSERC grant for up to 12 months to cover the leave period.

If both parents are supported by grant funds, each parent may take a portion of the leave for a combined maximum of 12 months. The supplement will be pro-rated if the student or postdoctoral fellow is being trained in research on a part-time basis.

7 Duration and management of the grant

7.1 Duration

Grants are awarded for a period of three years. Grants (FRQNT and NSERC) are disbursed annually for the period from **April 1 to March 31 of each year of funding**.

Any balance remaining at the end of the three years may be carried forward for one additional year. The principal investigator and his/her home institution must justify the carryover and verify its feasibility with the FRQNT program officer.

FRQNT portion. Any unspent funds remaining at the end of this additional year must be returned to the FRQNT. The rules governing residual balances, unexpended funds and overpayments are described in the CGR.

NSERC portion. NSERC will allow residual unspent funds to be retained by the managing institution under certain conditions determined by their Finance and Awards Administration Division. These funds will be transferred to a General Research Fund (GRF).

7.2 Management and follow-up

Award letter

- The award letter states the terms of the grant ([NSERC](#) and FRQ's [CGR](#)) and any additional conditions or requirements, where applicable.

Accepting the grant (FRQNT)

- To initiate payment of the first instalment, the principal investigator must accept the FRQNT grant within 30 days after receiving the competition results, in the “Manage my funding” section of the [FRQnet E-portfolio](#).

Annual update statement (FRQNT)

- To initiate the 2nd and 3rd grant instalments, the principal investigator must submit an online update statement in the [FRQnet E-portfolio](#). The statement must be completed whether or not there are any changes to declare. Further grant payments are contingent on this step.

Annual financial report

- FRQNT portion: the managing institution must submit, no later than June each year, an annual financial report via the [FRQnet E-portfolio](#);
- NSERC portion: the managing institution must submit, no later than June 30 each year, an [annual reconciliation report](#) to NSERC as well as a final statement of account expenditures.

Reports

- A follow-up report must be submitted to the FRQNT 24 months after the start of the project at nova@frq.gouv.qc.ca;
- The principal investigator is required to submit a final report no later than 15 months after the end date of the grant (not including the additional year, where applicable). This report must be completed and submitted in the [FRQnet E-portfolio](#). Any future funding is contingent on the submission of this final report within the prescribed time and to the satisfaction of the Fonds.

8 Announcement of results

Grant awards are announced at the **end of April 2022**. The decisions of the evaluation committees are approved by the Board of Directors and are sent to the managing institutions and applicants concerned. All decisions made by the Board of Directors of the FRQNT are final and cannot be appealed.

Awards are contingent on the allocation of funding by the Québec National Assembly and the decisions of the Board of Directors of the Fonds, and may be modified at any time without prior notice. It is therefore highly recommended that no funding be committed before it has been officially announced.

It is strictly forbidden to contact the members of the multidisciplinary assessment committees, members of the visiting committees, or scientific advisors for information on the competition results. All of the above have signed a confidentiality agreement in which they have agreed not to divulge any of the information gained during the course of their mandates. All discussions are also subject to confidentiality rules.

9 Effective date

These rules apply to the 2022-2023 fiscal year.

10 Contact person for this program

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