

CANADA FOUNDATION FOR INNOVATION (CFI)

2027 Innovation Fund (IF)

Presented by RASI, October 2025



UNIVERSITY OF SASKATCHEWAN

Office of the
Vice-President Research

[USASK.CA/VPRESEARCH](https://usask.ca/vpresearch)

Slides will be shared following the presentation

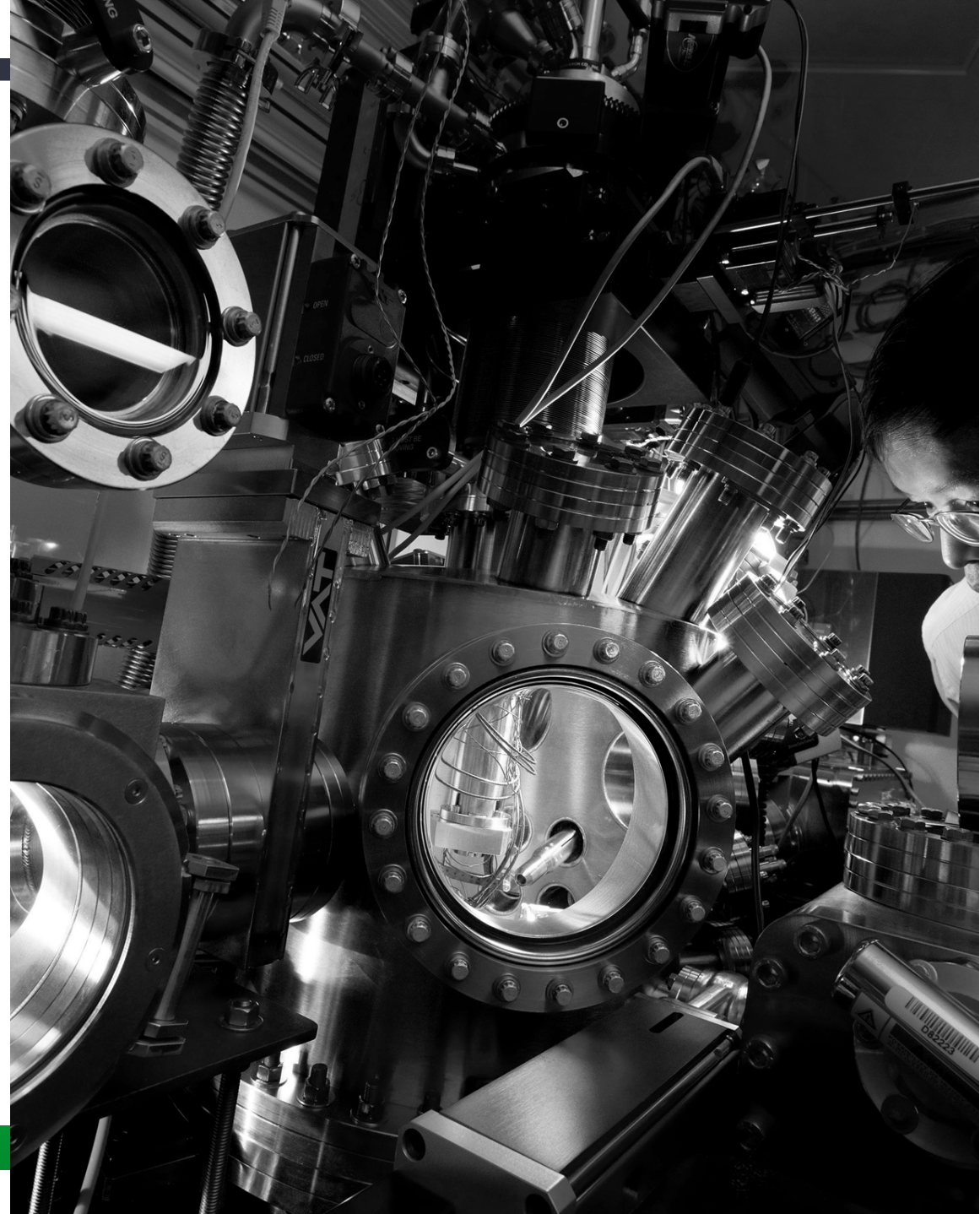
LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

As we gather here today, we acknowledge we are on Treaty 6 Territory and the Homeland of the Métis. We pay our respect to the First Nations and Métis ancestors of this place and reaffirm our relationship with one another.



OUTLINE

- Competition at-a-glance
- Assessment criteria
- Competition timeline
- Next steps & available help
- Q&A





CFI-IF AT A GLANCE

Supports innovative research programs by investing in infrastructure

Objectives:

- Enable global leadership by **supporting world-class research** or technology development.
- Enhance and optimize the capacity of institutions and research communities to conduct the proposed research or technology development program(s).
- Lead to social, health, environmental and/or economic benefits for Canadians.



CFI-IF OPPORTUNITY

Advance World-Class Research Through Infrastructure

Possibilities:

- Acquire state-of-the-art equipment (e.g. robot samplers, MRIs, animal housing units, advanced microscopes, 3D printers, artifact scanners, recording studios, etc.)
- Renovate and modernize a current space to be what you need it to be (or multiple spaces on or across campuses)
- Build a completely new building for your research needs
- Infrastructure can also be simple and generic but must support world class program

Innovation Fund (IF)

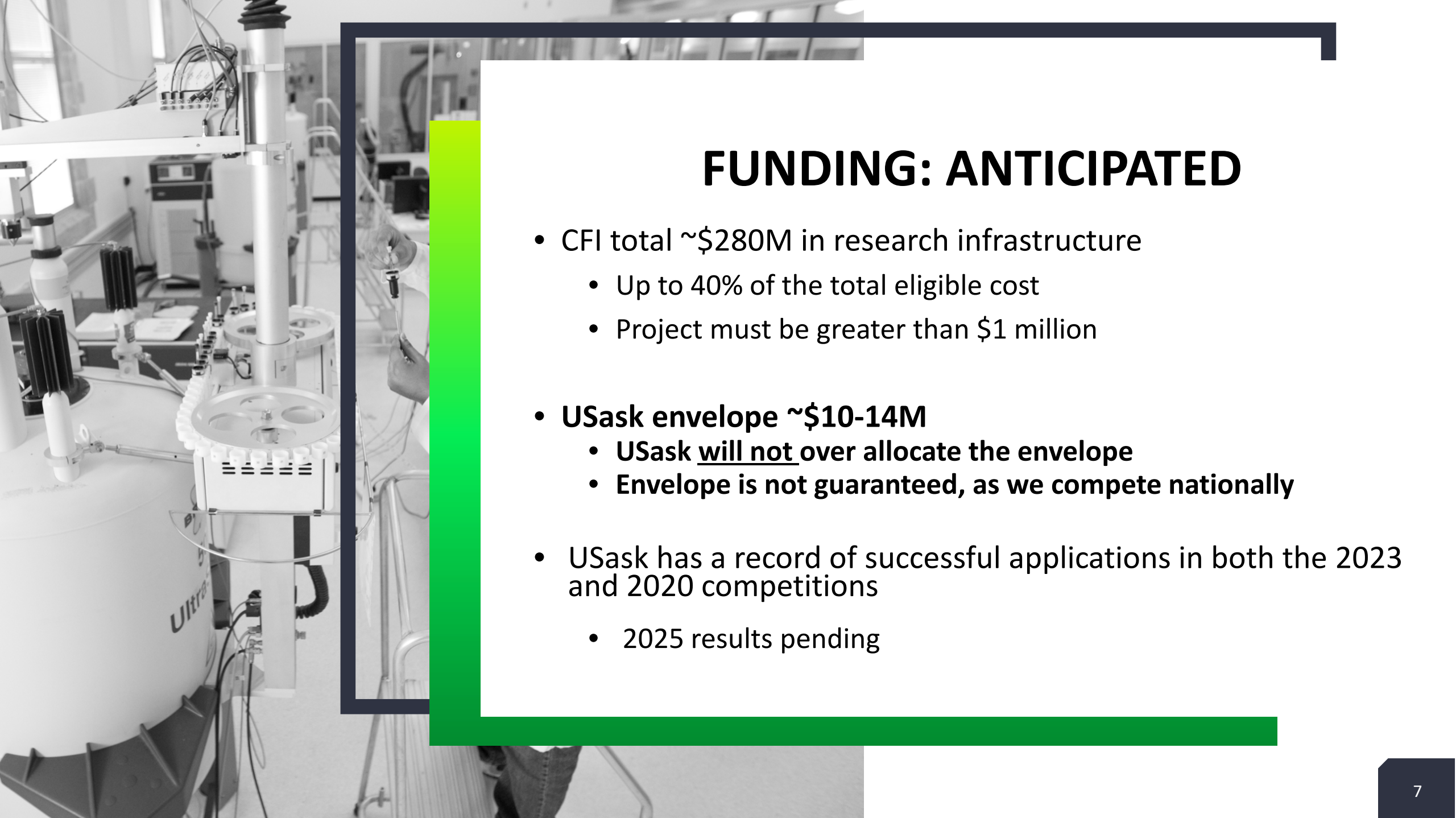
- Competing Nationally
- Minimum Project Total: \$1,000,000
- Minimum CFI Funding (40%): \$400,000
- Maximum Project Total: Unlimited
- Average Project Size in 2023: \$3,900,000
- Competition is now Every Two Years
- Competition Envelope that is not Guaranteed and Capped
- Proposal is Resource-Intensive
- 35% National Success Rate

CFI PROGRAM COMPARISON



JELF

- Institutional Envelope that is USask-Managed (Over 3 Years)
 - Not competing nationally
 - Need to meet award threshold
- Maximum Project Total: \$2,000,000
- Maximum CFI Funding (40%): \$800,000
- Social Sciences Can Request Less Than \$75,000 CFI Ask
- Regular Competitions (i.e. Feb. / Oct.)
- Proposal is More Easily Managed
- 96% USask Success Rate Since 2019



FUNDING: ANTICIPATED

- CFI total ~\$280M in research infrastructure
 - Up to 40% of the total eligible cost
 - Project must be greater than \$1 million
- **USask envelope ~\$10-14M**
 - **USask will not over allocate the envelope**
 - **Envelope is not guaranteed, as we compete nationally**
- USask has a record of successful applications in both the 2023 and 2020 competitions
 - 2025 results pending



INNOVATION FUND: BY THE NUMBERS

- Out of the proposals submitted to the expert committees, there was a 34% success rate in the 2023 IF competition
 - 100 out of 297 Awarded
- 2023 Academic Categories:
 - Natural Sciences & Engineering = 73%
 - Health = 27%
 - Social Sciences and Humanities = 0.4%
- 2025 Competition offered an SSHA Stream, which was outside of the institutional envelope
 - Waiting for the 2027 call to see if they offer this again

ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

- Research or technology development
 - Innovative, feasible, and internationally competitive
 - It is an infrastructure grant, but a strong research program is necessary
- Team
 - Up to 10 members, options for co-leads
 - Diverse with breadth of expertise
- Research capacity
 - Past investments from Institutions and partners

ASSESSMENT CRITERIA

- Infrastructure
 - Necessity and appropriateness
- Sustainability
 - Optimally used, operated, and sustained
 - Tangible commitments
- Benefits
 - How will you transfer research results to end users?
 - What are the social, health, environmental, and/or economic benefits for Canadians?

EDI ASSESSMENT CRITERIA – EQUITY, DIVERSITY, INCLUSION

- A key decision point in previous competitions (Pass/Fail)
- Must prioritize EDI in the team composition, recruitment practices, research design, and accessibility (e.g. the balance of genders, career stage, college/departments, areas of expertise, racialized minorities, disabilities, etc.)
- **Required to identify the systemic barriers in your scientific discipline and develop strategies to mitigate those barriers**
- It is **NOT ENOUGH** to say that USask's policies will be followed
 - Applicants must clearly show a strong commitment to and understanding of EDI and its importance in Research

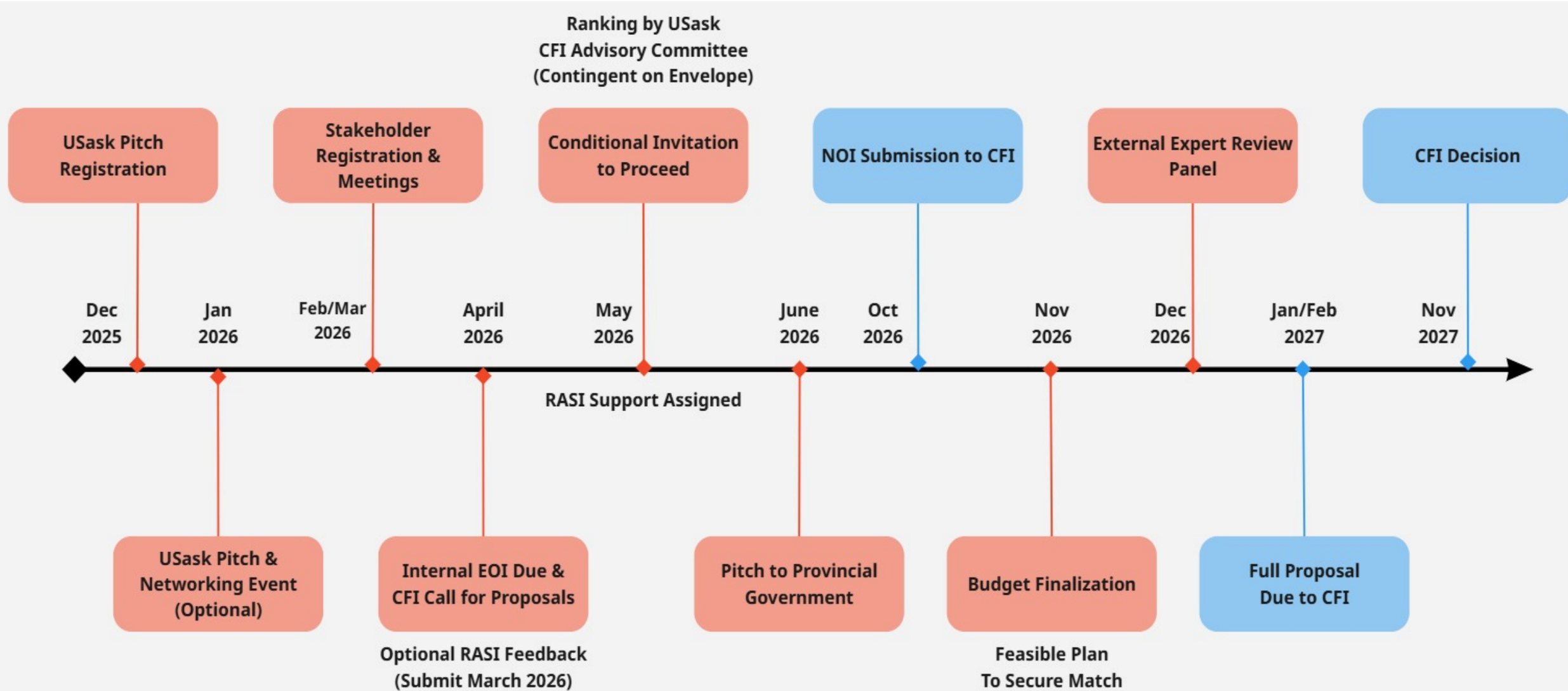
OTHER KEY CONSIDERATIONS

- Core facilities
 - Will it provide access to state-of-the-art services, instruments, expertise, and training?
 - CFI offered a stream in the 2025 competition
- Matching funds
 - Think creatively and broadly about partners
 - Benefits to Canada & Benefits to SK (Provincial Pitch)
 - A plan for matching funding is **required**
- Enhanced research security
 - Identify potential security risks and implement measures to mitigate any identified
 - Security attestations may be required depending on the research field
- These grants require a tremendous amount of time, so consider your research/teaching timeline, and does this competition fit

ANOTHER KEY CONSIDERATION

- Institutional Envelopes:
 - You can request access to other institutions' envelopes, if you can bring on external researchers as team members
 - This will make your EOI stronger with the CFI Advisory Committee
 - Shows national priority, not just to USask
 - Shows an increased chance of project success
 - Reduces the impact on the USask envelope and allows the project to access necessary funding if required
 - Greater chance for partner funding
 - This process needs to start happening now, as institutions will start allocating their envelopes right away
 - Each institution has its own process/timeline

TIMELINE (USASK & CFI)



NEXT STEPS

- Register by Jan. 9, 2026, to be included in the Pitch & Networking event on Jan. 26, 2026
 - Complete the registration form linked [here](#)
 - The link can also be found on the USask-CFI Website
- Information Required:
 - Project title
 - Individual giving the pitch, team members and associated colleges
 - Brief description of research program (**Research Program**, Infrastructure Needed, Approx. Budget, Potential partnerships)
- Registration information will be shared with the invited audience in advance

JANUARY PITCH & NETWORKING SESSION

- Present project outline to Senior Leadership
 - ~10 minutes presentation
 - Presentation to senior leaders on campus
 - Audience to include:
 - CFI Advisory Committee members
 - Dr. Baljit Singh (Vice-President Research)
 - Dr. Terry Fonstad (Associate Vice-President Research - Ethics and Infrastructure)
 - College Deans and ADRs
 - Interested Researchers from Campus
- What do I include in my presentation?
 - **What is the research?** What is the infrastructure? **How is it unique? What are the benefits?** Who is the team?
 - We will provide tips and more info closer to the event
- This is optional but highly recommended

STAKEHOLDER MEETINGS WITH RASI/COLLEGE LEADERSHIP

- February/March 2026
- Upon registration for this meeting, you will receive the EOI documents
- This will help ensure institutional support for space, equipment, and time requirements; the meeting will also be an opportunity to discuss strategies for securing matching funding with your College
- Attendees:
 - Project Leaders
 - Deans and/or ADRs from Necessary Colleges
 - RASI Team Members

EXPRESSION OF INTEREST (EOI)

- Due April 2026 (Due March 2026 for optional RASI feedback)
- Consists of six sections:
 - Project Information (Title, Project Leader, Home College, etc.)
 - Project Summary ~ 1,500 characters
 - Collaborating Institutions
 - Team – identify 10 team members, including up to 2 team leaders
 - Anticipated costs and potential matching funding
 - Project Description ~ 4 pages
- These sections will help you auto-populate the information into CAMS

EXPRESSION OF INTEREST (EOI)

- The CFI Advisory Committee will review internal EOIs and rank them
- Based on envelope and ranking, the selected projects will receive a conditional invitation to proceed
 - May 2026
 - Receive assigned RASI support – to help ensure a robust and competitive application
- Projects moving forward will have an opportunity to pitch to the Province for support
 - June 2026

An aerial photograph of a city, likely Toronto, showing a mix of urban buildings, green spaces, and a river. Overlaid on the left side is a graphic consisting of a thick green L-shaped bar and a thinner black L-shaped bar. A small white plus sign is centered in the top green bar.

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RASI IS HERE TO ASSIST

- We are here to help and are happy to discuss your project ideas
- Questions can be directed to rasi.support@usask.ca

Resources

Complete the Pitch & Networking event registration [form](#) by Jan. 9, 2026.

Please notify RASI if you are potentially participating in an IF project led by another institution

[CFI-IF](#) webpage

Detailed instructions at [2025 call for proposals](#)

Review [2023 Innovation Fund: By the Numbers](#)

Review the [2021 EDI](#) in the research infrastructure report



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THANK YOU

Please contact RASI for more information,
or if you have any questions

rasi.support@usask.ca