

CALL FOR EXPRESSIONS OF INTEREST

Solution Networks in

AI Safety

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Background

The Canadian AI Safety Institute (CAISI) Research Program at CIFAR is pleased to launch a **call for Expressions of Interest for Solution Networks in AI Safety**.

Since the advent of foundation models, their commercial release and widespread use, the safety implications of AI have come under broad public scrutiny and discourse. Following the release of ChatGPT in November 2022, researchers and experts began raising concerns about the increasing capabilities of these frontier systems, such as the proliferation of AI-generated synthetic content, or 'deepfakes,' privacy and security concerns, labour market and human rights impacts, etc. As advanced general-purpose AI models have grown in use and capabilities in recent years, a growing international movement has coalesced around ensuring the safety of advanced AI systems.

To respond to these challenges, in November 2024 CIFAR was awarded \$27 million from the federal government to launch the Canadian AI Safety Institute (CAISI) Research Program at CIFAR. The CAISI Research Program at CIFAR is the applied and investigator-led research stream of the broader [Canadian AI Safety Institute](#), which is housed in Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada. **A central focus of the CAISI Research Program at CIFAR is to identify and mitigate the safety risks associated with advanced AI systems.**

The CAISI Research Program at CIFAR builds on the existing strengths of the Pan-Canadian AI Strategy, which, since its foundation in 2017, has cultivated a community of world-leading researchers who are creating transformative, responsible AI solutions for people and the planet. CIFAR's AI & Society program, in its mandate to advance work on the societal implications of AI, piloted the Solution Network model between 2020-2024.

The CAISI Research Program at CIFAR understands AI safety to be a broad, multidisciplinary field that encompasses both technical perspectives from computer science and sociotechnical perspectives from the social sciences and humanities.

Scope & Focus of Call

CIFAR Solution Networks are collaborative opportunities for multidisciplinary teams led by a core group of up to six individuals who together work to develop approaches and applications (solutions) to current sociotechnical challenges and opportunities in AI safety. The solutions should focus on mitigating the risks associated with advanced, leading-edge AI systems.

The solutions could apply to sectors across society, including academia, government, industry, and civil society, and should focus on the development of defined prototypes, practices, and tools — both technical and governance — in AI safety.

The purpose of this call for expressions of interest is to identify up to three multidisciplinary networks of experts, who will work together to develop solutions that could have a transformative impact on AI safety. The Solution Networks funded through this call should:

- Apply leading research and practice insights in the development of novel interventions, applications, or approaches to respond to current sociotechnical challenges related to AI safety;
- Test prototypes to ensure uptake, including a community or stakeholder consultation within the first 18 months of the project (if not already completed at the time the Network is funded);
- Inform policies or practices that enhance AI safety and mitigate potential social, ethical and economic harms of advanced AI; and
- Initiate efforts to develop the intervention, beyond prototype development and testing

Proposals that do not focus on mitigating the safety risks of advanced AI systems at scale will not be considered. Proposals whose primary goal is to drive new knowledge or understanding in order to advance a field of study or that focus solely on technical solutions (e.g. improving machine learning algorithms) will not be considered.

For this call, we have two streams, each with a distinct topic or geographical focus.

Stream A: Mitigating the Safety Risks of Synthetic Content

The growing popularity and accessibility of AI models has made the generation and spread of synthetic content easier than ever. Synthetic content has a range of important uses, with the potential to have positive impacts in a variety of fields. However, when deployed in particular contexts, synthetic content also has the potential to pose social and technical risks, including the facilitation of fraud or deception through deepfakes, undermining trust, misinformation and disinformation and technical risks to models (e.g., model collapse). Harms of synthetic content also intersect with other harms, such as bias and discrimination in AI models and their deployment. Understanding the contexts in which synthetic content is harmful, and mitigating the safety risks, is a core concern of CAISI Research Program at CIFAR

Solution Networks funded under this stream will develop, test, and present a path for deployment for sociotechnical solutions for detecting, mitigating, and governing the harms of synthetic content.

We welcome proposals that address the potential risks and safety-related concerns of either the inputs or outputs of advanced AI. More specifically, topics may include both the inputs and outputs of ML systems:

- **Synthetic content output by ML models:** societal impact of model outputs; misperception of model capabilities ; education/literacy ; watermarking, copyright; misinformation and trust ;
- **Synthetic data processed as ML inputs:** impact of synthetic training data on models, e.g., on bias; cybersecurity; pollution of training sets and model-induced distribution shifts; international regulation of data
- **Safety risks of agentic AI systems**

This list is non-exhaustive and proposals addressing other aspects of synthetic content will be considered, provided they focus on mitigating risks of advanced AI at scale.

Two Solution Networks will be funded under this stream.

Stream B: AI Safety in the Global South

Proposals in this stream can address any topic related to mitigating the safety risks associated with advanced AI systems. For this stream, proposals must address the unique challenges and opportunities in the region(s) where the solution will be implemented. We are particularly interested in proposals that tackle the priority areas from the final [International AI Safety Report](#), with a particular focus on risk management and mitigation strategies.

Teams should be international collaborations with a balanced composition of members from Canada and the Global South (see eligibility criteria for more details). The solution funded through this call should be focused on countries in the Global South that are classified as low- and middle-income under the [World Bank definitions](#).

The successful Solution Network in this stream should advance safe, sustainable AI applications and policies that account for both the benefits and risks of AI — scaling responsible AI innovations, supporting policy research, and capacity-building and local dataset creation.

One Solution Network will be funded under this stream.

Funding & Duration

For this call, CIFAR will provide dedicated, flexible funding support for eligible research and development (R&D) activities for three successful Solution Networks **over two years** to design, develop and implement a novel solution to an AI safety-related challenge. The successful Solution Network will receive up to \$700,000 CAD total, broken down as follows:

- \$60,000 CAD per year for each co-director (up to two) and \$25,000 CAD per year for each core team member (up to four) to support R&D related to the Network.
- Up to \$60,000 CAD for each year to support the direct costs of the Network's R&D activities.
- Project management, financial and logistical support from CIFAR to enable bi-annual in-person interactions between members of the Network and external experts.

Eligibility Criteria

Each Solution Network should be made up of a multidisciplinary team and should:

- Be led by two Co-Directors and composed of up to four additional members.
- Include at least one team member with a faculty or staff affiliation at a National AI Institute (Amii, Mila, or Vector Institute)
- Consider equity, diversity and inclusion in the team composition (including gender representation)
- Team members may represent any sector (academia, government, industry), but should be included on the project based on their expertise and not as representatives of an organization. CIFAR will not provide stipends to team members from government or industry.
- **Stream A: Mitigating the Safety Risks of Synthetic Content**
 - Includes at least one team member with expertise in social sciences, humanities, or legal studies
 - Include at least one team member with technical expertise in AI
 - International collaborators may be included, however the majority of the team should be based in Canada
- **Stream B: AI Safety in the Global South**
 - Have at least one member based in Canada, and at least one member based in the Global South (the setting where the solution will be applied)
 - Teams that include members from at least two countries in the Global South are preferred.

Application Process & Timelines

- Applications for Expressions of Interest (EOIs) open **March 4** and close **April 15, 2025**. All EOIs must be submitted through [CIFAR's online portal](#) by 11:59 pm AoE.
- Acknowledgement of receipt will be sent to all applicants whose EOI was received before the deadline.
- Applications (EOIs and Full proposals) can be submitted in either English or French.
- Applicants that have been invited to submit full proposals will be notified by mid-May, 2025. Evaluation and review criteria for full proposals will be provided at that time
- Full proposals must be submitted through the online application system by July 15, 2025, at 11:59 pm AoE. Proposals received after the submission deadline will not be considered.
- The Expert Review Panel will invite select finalists to present their full proposal at an in-person or virtual review panel meeting.
- The review panel meeting will be held in September 2025. The successful Network will be selected following the review panel meeting.
- CIFAR will aim to notify the successful Network by early October 2025 with public announcement to follow.

Expression of Interest Requirements

The exact submission requirements, questions, and length limitations can be found in the CIFAR portal. Submissions must include the following information:

- Administrative Information:
 - Project title
 - Names, affiliations, and full addresses of all individuals that will be part of the Network team
- Solution
 - Rationale
 - CIFAR convenes the world's best minds around the most complex and difficult questions of our times. Proposals should describe the current context in which the solution is being developed and the gap and challenges that the proposed solution will address. Proposals should articulate how this solution differs from others that have been attempted.
 - Impact
 - Proposed solutions should aim to move beyond the advancement of knowledge and the development of principles and frameworks for AI governance. Successful proposals will aim to make a transformative impact within a specific sector of society and should articulate how the solution proposed will drive positive change, what that will look like, and the intended societal impacts including who will benefit.
- Methodology
 - Proposals should articulate the methodology by which the Network will implement the solution, including experts the Network plans to engage during development and implementation.
 - For Stream A, engaging users of tools or communities affected by the safety risks of synthetic content will be important.
 - For Stream B, engaging the public or potential regional stakeholders will be important so that the solution takes into account, and is appropriate for, the specific limitations and possibilities of that region.
 - Proposals should include a plan to address equity, diversity, inclusion and sustainability in the project design and implementation. Applicants are encouraged to have their proposals evaluated according to the requirements of their institutional ethics review process.

- Alignment with the mission and priorities of the CAISI Research Program at CIFAR
 - Applicants should describe how CIFAR’s model of supporting international or multidisciplinary engagement and deep collaboration will add particular value to the project and help to uniquely position the team for impact
 - Applicants should describe how their Solution Network aligns with the description of the applicable Stream
 - Applicants should position their project within the context of the [International AI Safety Report 2025](#) and speak to how they will directly address specific risks identified within the Report.
- Project Risk Assessment
 - Applicants should describe any potential risks they foresee in implementation of their solution. Please include any cultural, political, technical/computational, or societal factors that may hinder success of the solution. Applicants should articulate how they plan to mitigate these risks.
- Solution Network
 - Potential Leadership
 - CIFAR’s experience is that leadership plays a crucial role in the success of a given project. The EOI applicants are expected to describe the potential leadership of the proposed project. The two potential co-directors should be selected not only for their influence within their given area but also for their openness to disruptive thinking, ability to drive deep collaboration across disciplines, geographies and sectors, and their commitment to impact. The proposal should make clear why these two individuals are best suited to lead this team and solution.
 - Excellence of Team
 - CIFAR creates global communities of exceptional experts dedicated to open, sustained collaboration, exploration and impact creation. Potential team members should be experts in their communities. Applicants should demonstrate the excellence of proposed team members and make clear how the team members reflect the necessary multidisciplinary expertise required to support the solution proposed.

EOI Review process and evaluation criteria

Reviews will be undertaken by CIFAR under the CAISI Research Program at CIFAR's Research Council and other experts. EOIs will be evaluated on the following criteria:

- Solution Relevance & Impact (30%)
 - Originality and relevance of the solution, including alignment with call (15%)
 - Societal and technical significance of the anticipated impact (15%)
- Solution Methodology (20%)
 - Appropriateness of the scope and size of planned activities and methodologies to achieve expected outcomes, including feasibility of timeline and resources (10%)
 - Project demonstrates that public engagement, equity, diversity, inclusion and sustainability have been appropriately considered in project design and implementation (10%)
- Project Risk Assessment (10%)
 - Outlines implementation risks and identifies appropriate mitigation strategies
- Leadership (20%)
 - Demonstrated excellence and appropriateness of the identified co-directors to lead the project; evidence of their ability to lead, drive collaboration and disruptive thinking
- Team (20%)
 - Demonstrated excellence and appropriateness of the project team members to achieve the intended outcomes; leveraging of different types of experts and the integration of their unique perspectives and knowledge in the project is appropriate
 - Gender balance of team
 - Representation of expertise, either disciplinary or geographical, according to eligibility requirements of the specific stream

Frequently Asked Questions

1. What is a Solution Network?

A Solution Network is a team of cross-sectoral, interdisciplinary experts who design, develop and implement responsible, safe and beneficial AI solutions.

2. Can an organization be part of a Solution Network?

No, the proposed members of the Solution Network must be individuals. Organizations as a whole can not be part of the Solution Network. An individual can represent their respective organization, however they must be the active contributor and dedicated member of the Solution Network.

3. Can an individual from a for-profit organization be part of the Solution Network?

Yes, however they will not receive Network member funding support. CIFAR will provide funding support for meeting travel and accommodation costs only.

4. Can an individual apply as part of more than one Solution Network?

No, individuals can only apply as part of one proposed Solution Network.

5. Will unsuccessful expressions of interest receive feedback?

No, due to the amount of submitted expressions of interest expected we will not be providing feedback to unsuccessful applicants.

6. Can I apply with a solution that has already been designed?

Applicants may apply with a solution that has already been designed but has yet to be developed and implemented.

7. Can CIFAR help me connect to others interested in the Solution Networks call?

CIFAR staff, may, at their discretion, help make connections to specific individuals of interest in the CIFAR community (such as CIFAR research fellows or Canada CIFAR AI Chairs).

8. How can the funding be spent for the Solution Network?

The Solution Networks funding is flexible and may be used for teaching/course release, salary support, trainee support, travel-hosting expense, professional and technical services, in addition to other research and development related activity costs.

9. Can the Solution Network receive funding from other sources for the proposed solution?

Yes, the Solution Network is permitted to receive funding from other sources for the proposed solution.

10. Can alternate financial arrangements be made in cases where a Solution Network member can not receive financial support?

No, we can not make alternative arrangements if there is an individual that cannot receive Solution Network funding.

11. How many Solution Networks will be funded?

For Stream A, two successful Solution Networks will be funded. For Stream B, one successful Solution Network will be funded through this call. Future calls for Solution Networks will be announced on the cifar.ca website.

12. What are the different components of the EOI application?

Questions for the EOI application can be found in the [CIFAR application portal](#). Create an account to view all of the questions. The application requires one Network member to be the submitting applicant. We encourage you to work on a shared document before entering the EOI responses in the application portal.

13. What are the qualifications you are looking for in a proposed Solution Network member, in terms of experience and expertise?

Other than the eligibility requirements as stated for the membership of the Network, we do not have specific criteria in terms of work experience and expertise. CIFAR creates global communities of exceptional experts dedicated to open, sustained collaboration, exploration, and impact creation. Potential team members should be experts in their communities. Applicants should demonstrate the excellence of proposed team members and make clear how the team members reflect the necessary expertise required to support the solution proposed.

14. Should proposals be more oriented to research or to the implementation of solutions to concrete problems with real users?

The Solution Network funded through this call should:

- Apply leading research and practice insights in the development of novel interventions, applications, or approaches to respond to current societal challenges related to safe AI implementation;

- Test prototypes to ensure uptake, including a community consultation within the first 18 months of the project (if not already completed at the time the Network is funded);
- Inform policies or practices that support and build trust in AI and mitigate potential social, ethical and economic harms; and
- Initiate efforts to scale the intervention

Proposals whose primary goal is to drive new knowledge or understanding in order to advance a field of study or that focus solely on technical solutions (e.g. improving machine learning algorithms) will not be considered.

For any further questions about this call, please contact ai@cifar.ca