

**HORIZON**  
**NETWORKS**



**PROGRAM**  
**GUIDE**

**2026**

**CIFAR**

THE NEXT LEAP STARTS **HERE**

**CIFAR.CA**



## About CIFAR

The Canadian Institute for Advanced Research (CIFAR) is a globally influential research organization proudly based in Canada. We mobilize the world's most brilliant people across disciplines and at all career stages to advance transformative knowledge and solve humanity's biggest problems, together. Through our 15 research programs and the Pan-Canadian AI Strategy, CIFAR convenes more than 500 of the world's top researchers from over 160 institutions in 23 countries. This community has included 26 Nobel Prize laureates, 4 Turing Award winners, 37 recipients of the Gerhard Herzberg Canada Gold Medal for Science and Engineering and 2 recipients of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (Canada) Gold Medal. Our early-career programs attract and support some of the most exciting young researchers in the world today. We are supported by the governments of Canada, Alberta and Québec, as well as Canadian and international foundations, individuals, corporations and partner organizations.



## CIFAR Call for Horizon Networks

Led by early-to-mid career researchers, CIFAR Horizon Networks aim to provide an opportunity for new, interdisciplinary and international research networks to collaborate over a 3-year term. Horizon Networks will lay the groundwork for defining new fields of inquiry while establishing network members as emerging thought leaders.

**Deadline for submission:**

**June 17, 2026, 12 PM ET**



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## Program Overview

### Fostering Interdisciplinary Research Networks

Horizon Networks are a unique opportunity to articulate new interdisciplinary research questions and produce highly imaginative, interdisciplinary research agendas. Horizon Networks meet twice a year as a collaborative, interdisciplinary research network that charts a course for future research. Networks will be led by two early-to-mid-career researchers from different disciplines and will include up to eight additional colleagues at a similar career stage. Network members should be interdisciplinary, representing a broad range of fields and disciplines, and span the research continuum, from fundamental to translational to applied. Each Network member will invite a trainee (senior graduate student or postdoctoral researcher) to become part of the Network. Horizon Networks are a unique opportunity to articulate new interdisciplinary research questions and produce highly imaginative, interdisciplinary research agendas.

### Accelerate New Ideas to Drive Impact

Collaborative Research Funding will be a key component of Horizon Networks and will support projects that facilitate high-risk, potentially high-reward ideas through time-limited grants for program members. The funds provide flexibility for early-stage projects, encourage collaboration, and address emerging and exploratory themes within the Horizon Network.

#### Horizon Networks:

- 3 year networks, meet twice per year in-person; CIFAR handles all meeting logistics, financial and administrative support
- Receive collaborative research funding over three years to pursue activities across the network
  - Funding is distributed by CIFAR to team members, but allocation and management of the funds is by the Horizon Network leads
- Annual professional development for all network members

### Strengthening Leadership & Networking Skills

Horizon Networks provide the opportunity to put leadership skills in action by forming a new extended community of researchers who are poised to identify new directions in their fields and set a new research and impact agenda. Working with CIFAR, we anticipate each supported network will culminate in high-impact and influential publications, such as a roadmap or position paper laying out a new research agenda for the field, further positioning the members as thought leaders.

- Opportunity to form and lead an interdisciplinary research network
- Further develop leadership skills and share those skills with the next generation (trainees)
- Meet with other Horizon Networks to share lessons learned, research ideas, and network across communities

## Eligibility

Co-led by proven leaders from CIFAR's hallmark early career leadership programs, each Horizon Network will include up to 8 additional early- to mid-career faculty, most of whom have not had formal involvement in a CIFAR program. Network co-leaders will draw on researchers from a diversity of institutions.

## Expectations

Teams should be composed of interdisciplinary and international researchers from multiple institutions, with at most 30% participation from any one country. The team should propose a novel network that may be complementary to the [CIFAR portfolio](#), but not duplicative of an existing program's current research themes. Horizon Networks will meet twice per year and be provided funding to pursue collaborative activities across the network.

By the end of the first Network meeting, teams will be expected to develop a roadmap detailing both their research and impact goals, and who is required outside the network to help meet these milestones. In addition to meeting twice per year, Horizon Networks are expected to involve and engage with non-academic partners to help further their impact goals. This could include establishing an informal Advisory Council, if desired by the Network to help actively build partnerships with civil society organizations, industry, or government that will meaningfully impact the research trajectory and accelerate real-world impact.

At the conclusion of the three-year term, we anticipate that each supported network will produce a report or paper that charts a course for future research and frames an agenda informed by the active involvement of non-academic partners.

Horizon Networks will:

1. Advance a novel, frontier research agenda that complements but does not duplicate existing CIFAR research programs;
2. Convene and community-build, meeting in-person twice annually for collaboration, peer mentorship, and leadership development;
3. Produce a roadmap or positioning paper outlining emerging areas of inquiry and future research priorities;
4. Build partnerships with civil society, industry, or government to accelerate real-world impact.

## Deadline & How to Apply

### Application deadline:

- June 17, 2026, 12 PM ET

### Application submission:

- All applications must be submitted online [using the form](#)

# Criteria for Selection

## **Transformative Research Potential**

Proposals should clearly demonstrate their relevance to the call, including their connection to themes if they are identified, or, where appropriate, extending beyond them. They must articulate the unique or novel aspects of the proposed research, highlight its potential for societal impact, and outline how it could influence multiple sectors. We especially encourage proposals that are timely in the context of current world events, involve high-risk or high-reward ideas, and can benefit significantly from an international, collaborative, and interdisciplinary approach.

## **Excellence & Interdisciplinarity of the Research Team**

Proposals should elaborate the need for an international and interdisciplinary approach to tackle the identified question or theme, and explain why CIFAR's involvement is essential to developing this approach. CIFAR strongly encourages teams that reflect a high degree of diversity across geographies, disciplines, and personal or professional backgrounds.

The proposal should emphasize the overall excellence of the core research team and provide a thoughtful rationale for bringing this group together. CIFAR is committed to fostering inclusive excellence by recognizing diverse perspectives, experiences, and ways of knowing, carefully considering potential biases in

the evaluation process. Our assessment of proposed program members will be holistic, taking into account their scholarly achievements, interdisciplinary openness, and commitment to collaboration. Proposed members should reflect the necessary interdisciplinarity required to address the research challenges.

## **Potential Leadership**

Horizon Networks should propose two co-leads selected not only for their research excellence, but also for their openness to disruptive thinking and deep collaboration across disciplines and borders, and their commitment to impact. Proposed leadership should be reflective of at least two axes of research exploration within the proposed network, and illustrate the complementarity between their research expertise to the research question(s). Proposed co-leads should have evidence of working across disciplines and a willingness to engage with new ideas.

## **Alignment with CIFAR's Mandate**

Proponents should clearly articulate how CIFAR support will add value to the pursuit of the identified questions, including how CIFAR's model of supporting international, interdisciplinary engagement over a sustained period will contribute toward transformative knowledge creation and impact.

## Application Review Process

Applications will be reviewed by CIFAR staff for eligibility before moving to a reciprocal peer review process. Proposed Horizon Network leads will act as reviewers and be assigned a reasonable maximum number of applications to review and evaluate. Final decisions will be made by CIFAR and funding partners, where appropriate.

By submitting a proposal, Horizon Network leads agree to review proposals and have their proposal reviewed by peers, which includes scoring applications along a rubric reflective of the selection criteria.

## Administrative Guidelines & Policies

### **Term:**

Horizon Networks hold a 3-year term. The next term begins July 1, 2026 - June 30, 2029. Within that 3-year term, networks will meet in-person, twice per year.

### **Collaborative research funding:**

Horizon Network co-leads will manage allocation of the funds to network members. CIFAR will handle financial disbursement of the funds.

*Please note that CIFAR does not support indirect costs. As a non-profit charitable organization, we request that no overhead or administrative fees be charged on these funds.*

### **Understanding longer-term impact:**

CIFAR will continue to engage with Horizon Network members to measure the longer-term impact of the program. CIFAR will conduct exit surveys and follow-up surveys at intervals to track career progression, interaction patterns, and other outcomes.

## Frequently Asked Questions

### What is a CIFAR Research Program?

CIFAR's global research programs connect many of the world's leading researchers, across disciplines and borders, to shape new perspectives and spark ground-breaking ideas. At the heart of every program is sustained, in-depth interaction among its Fellows.

Each program convenes a carefully selected group of top-tier researchers who contribute different disciplinary perspectives and research approaches to address a complex, global challenge. Program members typically meet in person twice a year over a renewable five-year period. These meetings foster a trusted environment where members can openly discuss emerging ideas and research-in-progress.

This model encourages bold thinking, creative risk-taking, and the formation of unexpected collaborations. By enabling long-term, interdisciplinary exchange, CIFAR research programs push the boundaries of knowledge in ways that would be difficult to achieve otherwise.

### My workshop proposal overlaps slightly with an area that you already support. Should I still apply?

Yes. Horizon Networks should be complementary, not duplicative of existing CIFAR research areas. If you believe there to be overlap, please tell us how your idea is distinct and/or extends from CIFAR's current research areas.

### Can I be part of a CIFAR program and Horizon Network?

Yes.

### Can I be part of more than one Horizon Network proposal?

Yes.

### What opportunities are there to engage non-university based partners?

All successful Horizon Networks will work with CIFAR to identify additional intellectual resources (such as additional participants or partners) needed to make progress on the selected research questions. Horizon Networks are expected to engage with partners outside of academia, and can come from a variety of backgrounds. They should have unique expertise that can contribute value to the aims of the Network.

### Is a budget required for the submission?

We do not expect applicants to provide any budget details. Our practice is to provide the necessary funding for a given initiative, based on the size of the team and the planned activity. CIFAR develops the necessary budget once a proposal has been approved.