Ontario Food Technology Pilot

Program Guide

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Canadian Food Innovation Network

The Canadian Food Innovation Network (CFIN) is an industry-led, not-for-profit corporation dedicated to becoming the world-leading innovation network for food and beverage. This vision means that over time Canada will develop benchmarks for measuring its relative global position in food innovation and it will continuously strive to bolster Canada's global ranking in food industry competitiveness. The result will be that Canada is recognized globally as an excellent place to undertake food and beverage innovation and that recognition, in turn, will draw more investment and talent to Canada that leads to world class outcomes.

CFIN's program goals are to:

- Accelerate the food innovation performance of companies in Canada;
- Connect innovators and foster collaboration across enterprises and organizations of all sizes, disciplines, sectors, roles, and geography to enable discovery, development and commercial deployment of innovation outcomes for Canada's benefit; and
- Drive the utilization of Canada's innovation capacity for economic advantage and higher returns on public and private investment.

CFIN Members can leverage YODL™, an interactive online platform designed to help Canadian food and beverage professionals from all sectors of the industry connect, learn, and grow their businesses. YODL is a place for entrepreneurs to discover cutting-edge technology and solutions, meet new business partners throughout the Canadian supply chain, and access government funding opportunities.

On YODL members can find:

- Unique daily content;
- Access to CFIN's innovation challenges and members-only events;
- Access to direct mentorship from CFIN's five Regional Innovation Directors;
- Opportunities to network and collaborate with other food and beverage professionals from across Canada; and
- Business resources, including original research and information on best business practices, consumer trends, R&D, training and much more.

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1. Ontario Food Technology Pilot (OFTP) Program Overview

The Ontario Food Technology Pilot program is a targeted funding initiative designed to accelerate the commercialization of emerging food technologies (foodtech) developed in southern Ontario. The program helps early-stage foodtech companies overcome the significant barriers associated with piloting and validating novel technologies or ingredients in real-world environments.

OFTP addresses a critical gap in the food innovation ecosystem by supporting technology developers—particularly those with limited revenue and internal capacity—to advance from product development to market entry. By financing eligible pilot projects within food processing, foodservice, retail, and distribution environments, the program helps firms gather operational data, secure customer validation, and build a pathway to commercialization.

The intention of the program is to reduce the cost and risk for both technology innovators and adopters, strengthen industry collaboration, and support technologies aligned with the sector's key innovation priorities, including:

- Cleantech
- Food Manufacturing Technology
- Food Waste & Circularity
- Digital Supply Chain
- Food Safety & Traceability
- Kitchen & Restaurant Technology
- NextGen Ingredients & Food
- Food Packaging
- Consumer Apps & Services

The program will provide non-repayable project financing to foodtech entrepreneurs at a minimum of $10,000, up to $100,000 per business, to support up to 50% of eligible costs for validating, demonstrating and testing food technology innovations during the piloting stage (TRL 6-9). This includes technologies with potential for improving circularity, efficiency, innovative ingredients, automation, data and AI, and/or packaging and retail. The program will target technology firms who: are or want to sell in the food sector (processing, distribution, foodservice, retail, etc.); have a novel, technology-based solution that has a strong intellectual property profile that has been developed in southern Ontario; and focus on a solution that is not yet commercialized. Applicants must propose to demonstrate new industry processes, new product categories, new knowledge, or a new application of science. Food product development initiatives, such as the development or iteration of a new brand or product formulation in an existing category (example, a new protein bar) are not eligible under the program.

To qualify for funding, all project proposals for any call must be:

- Submitted by incorporated businesses with less than $5M in annual sales in their most recently completed fiscal year.
- Seeking to demonstrate B2B focused innovations that are not yet commercialized. Innovations should be between a technology readiness level of 6 to 7, with ideal projects

ending in a system prototype demonstration in an operational environment or beyond (TRL 8 or 9).
- Projects should be no more than one year (12 months) in length.
- Located in one of the eligible census catchment areas in Ontario as listed in Section 4.1 Applicant Eligibility Requirements.
- The innovation must focus on a post-farmgate solution, i.e., not focused on agricultural activities. The primary application of these solutions must be in food processing, distribution, foodservice or grocery retail.
- **All OFTP** funding applicants must demonstrate that they have an Intellectual Property strategy in place or in development. Applicants who have not yet started on their IP strategy will be required to outline budget line items for these costs or prove their involvement with intellectual property resources such as Elevate IP, Intellectual Property Ontario, or a law firm to receive CFIN funding.

The total eligible project costs must be between $20,000 and $200,000, and the maximum level of matching funding from CFIN will be up to 50% of total eligible project costs, or $100,000.

Funding will be provided on a reimbursement basis and CFIN will require a non-refundable project management fee of 5% of total project costs eligible for CFIN reimbursement.

Applicants must be CFIN members. Membership is free and can be applied for through www.cfin-rcia.ca.

The program application can be found at https://cfin-rcia.smartsimple.ca/

An overview of the program and all the associated guides, as well as a link to the application portal, can be found here: https://www.cfin-rcia.ca/programs/ontariofoodtechnologypilot

If there are any questions after reviewing the program guide, reach out to the CFIN team at innovation@cfin-rcia.ca.

2. CFIN Innovation Priorities

All projects must have alignment under at least one CFIN innovation priority. The nine (9) CFIN innovation priorities for projects are:

- **Cleantech:** that reduce environmental impact and promote sustainable food production and processing, largely through energy recapture, decarbonisation tools, and more.
- **Food Manufacturing Technology:** Technologies or services that leverage innovative techniques to process food or to improve the functionality of food ingredients.
- **Food Waste & Circularity:** Products and solutions that help reduce food waste, upcycle ingredients, and improve efficiency.
- **Digital Supply Chain:** Solutions and technologies that digitize key processes and improve the flow of information and data accessibility across the supply chain.

- **Food Safety & Traceability:** Tech-powered solutions to sanitize food processing equipment, assess products' freshness and increase their shelf life.
- **Kitchen & Restaurant Technology:** Smart equipment or technologies that help restaurants get food to customers and manage their operations more efficiently.
- **NextGen Ingredients and Food:** Products and processes that leverage science and technology to create new types of ingredients, foods and beverages.
- **Packaging:** Solutions to improve the sustainability and functionality of food packaging or eliminate our use of single use plastics in the food supply chain.
- **Consumer Apps & Services:** Apps and services that facilitate access to food and the information behind it.

3. Eligibility Requirements

3.1 Applicant Eligibility Requirements

To be considered for funding, all applications must be:

- Led by an incorporated business that has not generated more than $5M in annual revenues as per their last filed fiscal year;
- Identifying a specific piloting or demonstration opportunity for a B2B technology or solution that has yet to be commercialized;
- Located in one of the following census catchment areas within Ontario:
    - Brant, Bruce, Chatham-Kent, Dufferin, Durham, Elgin, Essex, Frontenac, Grey, Haldimand-Norfolk, Haliburton, Halton, Hamilton, Hastings, Huron, Kawartha Lakes, Lambton, Lanark, Leeds and Grenville, Lennox and Addington, Middlesex, Niagara, Northumberland, Ottawa, Oxford, Peel, Perth, Peterborough, Prescott and Russell, Prince Edward and Lambton, Renfrew, Simcoe, Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry, Toronto, Waterloo, Wellington, York;
- Undertaken by a CFIN member;
- Addressing an area of the post- farmgate supply chain (cannot focus on agricultural production activities – the primary area of application for the solution must be food processing, distribution, foodservice or grocery retail);
- Seeking to demonstrate innovations between a technology readiness level of 6 or 7, with ideal projects ending in a system prototype demonstration in an operational environment or beyond (TRL of 7, 8, or 9). (see 4.3 Technology Readiness Level Eligibility Requirements or Appendix B for further information);
- Proposing activities that would begin no earlier than 60 days from the intake deadline, and complete within 12 months, and no later than March 31, 2027; and,
- All OFTP funding recipients must demonstrate that they have an Intellectual Property strategy in place or in development. Applicants who have not yet started on their IP strategy will be required to outline budget line items for these costs or prove their

involvement with intellectual property resources such as Elevate IP, Intellectual Property Ontario, or a law firm to receive CFIN funding.

Lead Applicant and Project Partners

Applications must be led by the technology or solution developer, who owns or will create intellectual property to be demonstrated or piloted through the project (the Lead Applicant).

Priority will be given to projects that have matching funds coming from both the applicant (tech developer) and partner (tech adopter). Projects funded through the program must have potential to benefit to more than one company once commercialized.

Project partners, most likely to be food sector stakeholders, must ensure pilot tests and demonstrations take place in operational environments. Partners may incur expenses as part of an OFTP project and can submit for reimbursement to CFIN. These expenses must be detailed in the application stage and be approved by CFIN prior to project start.

Partners are encouraged to contribute cash directly to lead applicants as part of the OFTP program. These contributions must be outlined in the application. There are no minimum requirements for financial contributions from the Partners; however, the application must clearly demonstrate that each Partner plays an active role in the project and their involvement is necessary to achieve the project outcomes.

The focus of the program is to support pilots and demonstrations of novel food technology and ingredients in the Ontario market. However, in exceptional circumstances, organizations from other provinces or international organizations (offshore companies and research organizations without an incorporated presence in Canada) may participate as Partners in CFIN projects, with prior written approval from CFIN. Please contact us if you have interprovincial or international partners to determine eligibility of your project for CFIN funds.

There must be a collaboration agreement in place to define the roles of the Lead Applicant and Partners, allocation of projected costs, and joint risk management provisions among other items. The collaboration agreement must set out how intellectual property arising in projects will be managed. It is the responsibility of the Lead Applicant and Partners to develop their own collaboration agreement, and a copy must be filed with CFIN after the Master Project Agreement is executed.

The responsibilities of the Lead Applicant will include, but are not limited to:

- Ensuring compliance with the CFIN Master Project Agreement;
- Ensuring all Partners are contributing to the project, as outlined in the collaboration agreement;
- Overseeing the performance of the project in line with the project and risk management plans;
- Approving and consolidating requests for reimbursement of eligible project expenses and submitting them to CFIN; and,

- Monitoring and reporting on the progress of the project in line with information requests and performance metrics outlined in the CFIN Master Project Agreement.

The responsibilities of the Project Partners will include, but are not limited to:

- Ensuring compliance with the CFIN Master Project Agreement;
- Submitting their eligible project expenses for reimbursement, as directed by the Lead Applicant and outlined in the CFIN Master Project Agreement; and,
- Reporting on the progress of the project in line with information requests and performance metrics, as directed by the Lead Applicant and outlined in the CFIN Master Project Agreement.

CFIN general applicant requirements and Intellectual Property details are further outlined in Appendix A – CFIN General Requirements.

3.2 Eligible Activities

Eligible Costs will generally include expenditures related to the following activities:

- Large-scale technology demonstration, including the advancement and development of new technologies into specific applications at mid-to-late-stage technology readiness levels.

3.3 Technology Readiness Level Eligibility Requirements

There are nine TRLs, with TRL 1 being the least ready for commercialization and TRL 9 being ready to be used in real-life conditions. To be eligible for the Ontario Food Technology Pilot (OFTP) program, all projects must be conducting activities within TRL 6 to 9. For full TRL definitions see Appendix B – Technology Readiness Level (TRL) Scale.

Applicants will outline project activities in their project work plan and identify the TRL associated with each activity.

3.4 Eligible Project Costs

The total eligible project costs must be between $20,000 and $200,000, and the maximum level of matching funding from CFIN will be up to 50% of total eligible project costs, or $100,000.

Project funds will only support in-market pilots of food technology solutions. Applicants can apply with an identified partner/testbed or an ideal partner type. Should the applicant lack a partner, CFIN can help find a testbed for the project among its members, but sourcing one is not guaranteed.

The funds will support the cost of equipment, materials, labour, and consulting required to execute a pilot project that will advance the solution from a TRL of 6 or 7 to 8 or 9.

Eligible project costs must be:
- Directly related to the intent of the project;
- Reasonable;
- Outlined in the project budget;
- Incurred as part of the project activities, and be outside of the usual activities for the recipient; and,
- Incurred between the eligibility date and the completion date.

Costs are categorized into the following:
- Direct Labour
- Subcontractors and Consultants
- Direct materials
- Equipment
- Other Direct Costs

In the following tables, applicant refers to the Lead Applicant and/or Partners.

Direct Labour
Labour and benefit costs claimed by the Recipient as direct Eligible and Supported Costs toward the Project will include only that time worked directly on the Project at the payroll rate and excludes indirect time, non-project related time, holidays, vacation, bonuses, paid sickness, etc. Time claimed will normally be expressed in hours. The payroll rate is the actual gross pay rate for each employee (normal periodic remuneration before deductions). The payroll rate excludes all premiums (e.g. overtime, payment in lieu of vacation), shift differentials and any reimbursement or benefit conferred in lieu of salaries or wages except those noted below. All labour claims must be supported by a signed timesheet by the employee.
Subcontractors and Consultants
The costs of Subcontracts or Consultants incurred and paid for approved project activities are the costs for work or services performed by an external third party, which can be specifically identified and measured as having been incurred and paid for the approved project activities.
Direct Materials
The cost of materials which are incurred and paid, and can be specifically identified and measured as having been processed, manufactured and used in the performance of the approved project activities, which are measured consistently by the applicant's cost accounting system. Materials purchased solely for the approved project activities shall be at net laid down cost to the applicant, net of any sale taxes and after any discounts offered by the suppliers. Materials issued from the applicant's general stocks shall be measured in accordance with the material pricing method consistently used by the applicant.

Direct Materials include, but are not limited to, any raw material that is "used up" by completing approved project activities.
Equipment
The capital cost of Equipment, which are incurred and paid and can be specifically identified as having been purchased for approved project activities and measured consistently by the applicant's costing system. Significant Equipment required to complete the approved project activities should be detailed in the project work plan. Equipment costs include, but are not limited to, the purchase of equipment necessary for the approved project activities, costs to alter or modernize the equipment, costs to get the equipment into working order, and shipping costs.
Other Direct Costs
These are eligible direct costs, not falling within the categories of Direct Costs mentioned above, but which are incurred and paid, and can be specifically identified and measured as having been incurred and paid by the applicant for approved project activities and which are so identified and measured consistently by the applicant's costing system. Travel and Outreach Costs, meaning those eligible direct costs incurred and paid by the applicant that are directly related to approved project activities. To be eligible, travel costs must be clearly documented as to the purpose of each trip. Travel expenses, at economy rates, shall be charged at actual costs, but only to the extent that they are considered reasonable. Necessary return airfare, train fare or bus fare at economy rates for participating personnel, where a personal automobile is to be used, kilometer (mileage) allowance will be based on current Treasury Board of Canada Travel Directives. Eligible and Supported Costs shall be limited to the cost that would have been incurred and paid had normal public transportation at economy rates been used.

Costs incurred in the development of project applications will not be eligible for funding. CFIN will provide funding for projects by reimbursing approved applicants for a portion of their project expenses that are reasonable and eligible.

3.4.1 Affiliated Persons Clause

Resource providers or subcontractors must be independent of the applicant and have no conflict of interest in undertaking the project.

Affiliated Persons are to be understood and treated as defined in the Income Tax Act, which includes but is not limited to; two or more entities that have similar ownership personnel; or entities that have a working business relationship.

In the case of Eligible Costs for goods or services incurred and paid with an Affiliated Person, the amount of the costs incurred and paid must:

- not exceed their Fair Market Value; or,

- in the case of a good or service for which there is no Fair Market Value, the amount must not exceed the Fair Market Value of Similar Goods.

Note: It is important for the applicant from the outset, to self-identify any related parties or Affiliated Persons who will be contracted to provide goods or perform services for completion of approved project activities.

For wholly owned subsidiaries of the Lead Applicant/Partner completing approved project activities, its Eligible Costs incurred and paid will be claimed by the Lead Applicant/Partner on their behalf and costs are to be treated as if the wholly owned subsidiary is the Lead Applicant/Partner.

3.4.2 Foreign Costs

Any Eligible Supported Costs occurring outside of Canada (foreign costs) must be pre-approved by CFIN in writing before the cost is incurred. These costs will be identified by the collaboration at the application stage. The Canadian Food Innovation Network is limited in its ability to support a large volume of foreign costs.

Foreign costs occur when the materials, equipment, staff, or resources are physically located outside of Canada. For example, a US-based employee of a Canadian Corporation is considered a foreign cost, as their place of work is outside of Canada.

Subcontractors or consultants of non-Canadian firms are considered foreign costs if they perform their work outside of Canada. If they come to a project site in Canada, their activities are not foreign costs.

For equipment or materials, if they are sourced internationally but brought to Canada for installation and use in project activities, these are deemed non-foreign costs.

3.4.3 Ineligible Costs

Expenses defined in the list below are considered ineligible for CFIN reimbursement and should be incurred at the Applicants own expense.

Ineligible costs include:

i. Costs of land, building, or vehicle purchases
ii. Refinancing of existing debts or obligations
iii. Costs of intangible assets such as goodwill, whether capitalized or expensed
iv. Depreciation or amortization expenses, including:
    a. Depreciation of assets paid for by the program
    b. Amortization of unrealized appreciation of assets

v. Interest on invested capital, bonds, debentures, mortgages, bank or other loans, including:
   a. Bond discounts
   b. Finance charges
   c. Interest portion of lease costs attributable to borrowing, regardless of lease type
vi. Losses on investments, bad debts, collection charges, or other debts, including:
   a. Losses on other projects or contracts
vii. Fines or penalties
viii. Costs related to litigation or prosecution of claims against CFIN or FedDev Ontario
ix. Non-incremental wages
x. Unreasonable compensation for officers and employees
xi. Fees for administrators, including payments to any member or officer of the recipient's Board of Directors
xii. Opportunity costs
xiii. Hospitality and entertainment costs, including:
   a. Catering
   b. Alcohol
   c. Non-travel-related entertainment expenses
xiv. Costs of individual memberships in professional bodies or organizations (e.g., for professional designations)
xv. Dues other than those for regular trade and professional associations
xvi. Lobbyist fees
xvii. Legal, accounting, and consulting fees related to:
   a. Financial reorganization, including set-up of new not-for-profit organizations
   b. Security or capital stock issues
   c. Obtaining licenses or agreements with the applicant
   d. Litigation against CFIN or The Agency
   Note: Legal costs for obtaining patents or statutory protection of project intellectual property are eligible
xviii. Federal and provincial income taxes, goods and services taxes (GST), value-added taxes (VAT), excess profit taxes, surtaxes, and related special expenses
   Note: Duty taxes paid for importing are eligible
xix. Provisions for contingencies
xx. Premiums for life insurance where proceeds accrue to the applicant
xxi. Expenses and depreciation related to excess facilities
xxii. Product development or improvement costs not directly related to the approved project activities
xxiii. Advertising expenses, except reasonable industry or institutional advertising in trade, technical, or professional journals for information dissemination
xxiv. Donations
xxv. Extraordinary or abnormal professional fees for technical, administrative, or accounting advice, unless pre-approved by CFIN
xxvi. Selling and marketing expenses associated with products or services being developed under the agreement
xxvii. In-kind costs
xxviii. Recruiting fees

4. Application Process

The Applicant must register as a CFIN member through www.cfin-rcia.ca.

CFIN members can apply to the program at https://cfin-rcia.smartsimple.ca/

Submissions must be completed using our online portal.

4.1 Program Timelines

Applications will be accepted during posted intakes. See our website for upcoming application dates. All intakes close at 11:59PM local time on the intake close date. CFIN at its sole discretion, reserves the right to alter or cancel the program timelines.

To assist with your project timeline, CFIN will aim to communicate funding results within 60 business days of the intake deadline; project costs are not eligible prior to this date. Applicants approved for funding will be required to enter into a Master Project Agreement with CFIN within 30 business days from the date of receipt of the Master Project Agreement.

4.2 Application Submission

Applications are submitted on CFIN's Application Portal:
https://cfin-rcia.smartsimple.ca/

Eligibility pre-screening questions are included in the online Application Portal to ensure projects meet the basic eligibility requirements.

The application portal allows applicants to submit supplemental documents, such as pitch decks, letters of support, quotes or cost proposals, or other documentation they feel will add context to their submission.

As a requirement, we request two (2) years financials (audited, review engagement, or notice to reader) to be submitted with your application. If you cannot meet this requirement, a term sheet, a bank statement, or other documentation demonstrating your financial position, and letter showing you have the balance of your request is the bare minimum. Providing proof of financial capability does not guarantee approval of your application.

4.3 Application Questions

Project and Applicant Overview
Information marked with an asterisk (*) may be disclosed publicly.

- A short title and description of the project *;
- Start and end dates of the proposed project;
- Primary Contact for the Project: The primary contact for the project will be the individual responsible for communicating with CFIN staff during the application process. This person should be knowledgeable of the application and project partners;
- Business data for the applicant, including;
    - The legal business and operating name of the Lead Applicant*;
    - Business number, Mailing address (including street address, city, province and postal code), website URL, CRA business number, date and location of incorporation, Business Type;
    - Some of information shown in the portal is copied directly from your organization and user profiles and will appear in a read-only state within this form. If the information displayed is not current, please update your organization and user profiles;
    - NAICS Code - The North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) is an industry classification system developed by the statistical agencies of Canada, Mexico and the United States. For more information, visit the Statistics Canada website;
    - Percentage Canadian Ownership – indicate the name and percentage of the company that is ultimately owned by Canadians or by firms incorporated in Canada (as determined by voting shares);
    - List of Shareholders – indicate the name and portion of ownership of majority shareholders for the applicant;
    - Is the Applicant, its directors, or officers a party to legal proceedings that may adversely affect the business?; and
    - Applicant Leadership Demographics – please respond to the demographic questions regarding business ownership.
- Applicant Fiscal Year Data: Please complete the data for your most recent completed fiscal year. Please note that regular reporting on this data is required should your project be approved.
    - Indicate the month and year of your most recently completed fiscal year and complete the below data points as per that timeframe:
        - Month
        - Year
        - Revenues of Canadian Operations
        - Revenues from Domestic Sales
        - Value of Exports
        - Gross Canadian Expenditures on R&D
        - Business' Gross Capital Expenditures in Canada

- Total number of full time equivalents (FTE)s in your business in the past calendar year – Employment figures should be provided using the following definition of an FTE: “means each employee or, where applicable, intern, who works for the client on a full-time basis (i.e. they are responsible to work at least 2080 hours when calculated on an annual basis) and, in the case of hourly paid employees or interns who are responsible to work for the business less than on a full-time basis, each equivalent to such a full-time worker, where the number of such equivalents is calculated by dividing (a) by (b) where (a) = the aggregate of all hours worked by such individuals for the client including hours taken by them as paid vacation, sick leave, and for other similar reasons, calculated on an annual basis, and (b) =2080 hour”. Please include all paid employees in reporting and exclude employees on unpaid leave of absence.
- Project Partner(s) Data: Legal Business Name, Operating Name, Contact Name, Status;
- Service Provider(s) Data: Legal Business Name, Operating Name, Contact Name, Status.

Application Questions

The following information request and responses will be scored. It is highly recommended you review the scoring grid when preparing your responses.

- **A brief 5-minute video pitch**: Applicants will be required to prepare a 5-minute video pitch presentation about their project. The video will be presented to the application reviewers and staff, for review as part of their decision-making process.

- **Firm Profile:** Please provide an overview of your business, revenue model, and value proposition.
    - *Describe your current business operations, key markets and verticals, and offerings.*
    - *For pre-revenue ventures, describe your current state, path to revenues, and proposed revenue model for your organization.*

- **Financial Capacity and History:** Please describe your current financial position, and your ability to finance the project activities.
    - *CFIN funding operates on a reimbursement basis; you must incur the expense then claim the cost and wait for reimbursement.*
    - *Describe your ability to bridge finance the project costs, and any available cash, investments, or financing that your organization has access to. Include other funding programs you are currently pursuing or in receipt of.*
    - *If your organization has recently closed or begun an investment round or is in the process of raising capital, please describe the amounts and stage of the investments.*

- **Project Outline:** Please outline the proposed objectives and scope of work for the project.

    - *Clearly define the objectives and scope of work, including intended outcomes and milestones.*
    - *Outline your project plan and identify any major technical hurdles to be overcome.*

- **Internal Team and Partners:** Please describe your internal project team and the partners involved in delivering this project.
    - *Identify the key staff, vendors, and suppliers who will be responsible for execution, as well as the role and contributions of your pilot partners.*
    - *Outline the current state of your partnerships, whether they are in discovery, proposal, or confirmed stages. If partners are providing financial or in-kind contributions, please detail and quantify them. Letters of support that clearly outline partner roles and contributions are strongly recommended.*

- **Innovation and Scalability**: Describe the innovative aspects of the technology and how it has potential to scale and meaningfully respond to food sector challenges.
    - *Detail specific technologies or tools you are deploying to create your solution (for example, artificial intelligence, genomics, biotechnology, precision fermentation, block chain, robotics, internet of things, etc.).*
    - *Outline your go-to-market strategy and revenue generation model.*

- **Product-Market Fit:** Provide evidence that this is a problem that exists within the food sector, and that it's an important problem for your customers.
    - *Describe the rationale for the project, identifying the persona, problem, promise and product fit for your target market.*
    - *Who are others working to solve this problem and how does the proposed solution differ or improve upon existing solutions. Reference early customers, industry reports, surveys or other materials. Letters of support are encouraged and should clearly articulate product-market fit.*

- **Intellectual Property:** Detail your intellectual property strategy and your work to date in this area.
    - *What are the IP agreements (proposed or in place) between yourself and your partners?*
    - *What protections are you pursuing, how will your portfolio be documented and handled?*
    - *Applicants who have not begun their IP strategy work yet will be required to outline budget line items for these costs or prove their involvement with IP resources such as Elevate IP, Intellectual Property Ontario, or a law firm to receive CFIN funding. If this is the case, please use this area to describe the work to be undertaken.*

Project Impacts:

- **Next Steps:** What are the next steps for your firm if this project is successful?

- *Detail the expected benefits to your firm should the project objectives be successfully achieved. Impacts such as new jobs, new intellectual property, new processes, revenues, investment rounds, exports, etc. should be quantified.*

Workplan and Budget:

- *Please provide a detailed project plan. A minimum of 5 activities are required.*
- *Your budget needs to be detailed enough for assessment. For direct labour resources, outline the job title and number of hours on the project. For consultants, outline the vendor's name if available, and the scope of work (e.g. Testing Services, Outsourced Engineering, etc.).*

Applicants will receive an email confirmation when they submit their application.

Full proposals will be reviewed by CFIN to determine if the proposal is compliant with the eligibility requirements. **If information is missing or updates are required, CFIN staff will contact you via email and provide you with 48 hours to make changes. If changes are not made in this window, the application will be withdrawn.** If the requirements are met the proposal will proceed to the review process. CFIN staff will conduct due diligence to verify the accuracy of information provided in the proposal and may request additional information to assist in the review process. The full review process is expected to take up to 45 business days.

4.4 Project Assessment Criteria

Each application that meets the eligibility requirements will be assessed using the following criteria:

Ontario Food Technology Pilot Assessment Criteria	Scoring
Firm Profile – Applicant has provided an overview of their business, and the Firm's model and value proposition outlined and well communicated.	5
Financial Capacity – Applicant has clearly articulated their financial capacity to fund project activities, outlined other grant or incentive funding received to date, and identified secured or pending investment or financing.	5
Project Outline – Applicant has clearly defined the objectives and proposed scope of work for completing the project. The response details intended outcomes, milestones and outlines a clear project plan for execution. Key technical hurdles to be overcome are clearly identified.	15
Internal Team and Partners – Applicant has described the internal team and project partners involved in delivering the project. The response identifies key staff, vendors, and suppliers, outlines the role and contributions of pilot partners, and provides details on the stage of partnerships and any financial or in-kind contributions.	10
Innovation and Scalability – Applicant has identified the novel aspects of their solution, the core technologies or innovations behind their solution, and identified their go to market strategy and revenue model.	20

Product-Market Fit – Applicant has clearly identified the rationale for the project, describing the persona, problem, promise and product fit for their target market. Competing or existing solutions are named and differentiated from the proposed innovation. The response references early customers, industry reports, surveys or other materials. Letters of support are encouraged and should clearly articulate product-market fit.	20
Intellectual Property – Applicants outline a clear strategy and identify IP to be created because of the project. Consideration of how to handle IP among partners is outlined and reasonable. Actions or a plan to action are clearly identified for managing intellectual property arising from this project.	10
Next Steps for the Firm – Applicant has identified next steps towards commercialization, such as additional investment raises, pilots, and intellectual property protection. Benefits to the firm have been quantified, such as new employment, revenues, export sales, etc.	10
Workplan and Budget – The workplan contains at least 5 activities and presents a reasonable approach that aligns with the project details provided within the application. The budget is detailed and supported by quotes if available. Internal labour resources are clearly technical contributors and have job title and the number of hours assigned to the project. A scope of work for vendors is highlighted, with names if available.	5
Total Score	**100**

Applications are scored by CFIN staff and external reviewers based on this rubric. Based on the scores and available funds, winning projects are selected for each intake.

4.5 Final Funding Decisions

CFIN will aim to communicate funding results within 60 business days of the intake deadline. Applicants will be notified if the decision will be delayed.

Applicants approved for funding will be required to enter into a Master Project Agreement with CFIN within 30 business days from the date of receipt of the Master Project Agreement. The funding decision is finalized upon the signing of the Master Project Agreement agreeing to, without limitation: reporting requirements, timelines, IP strategy and other performance management criteria and compliance requirements.

Applicants who are not accepted for funding will be notified, with a summary of how their project proposal was evaluated outlining the reasons why they were not approved, as well as recommendations to strengthen their proposal. Projects may not be recommended for funding if they score low on the assessment criteria and/or there are insufficient funds available.

Should an application be unsuccessful but still be deemed eligible, CFIN may encourage applicants to apply to future calls for proposals or other CFIN programs.

5. Funding Parameters

5.1 Cost Sharing

Total eligible project costs must be between $20,000 and $200,000. The maximum level of matching funding from CFIN will be 50% of total eligible project costs, to a maximum contribution of $100,000.

Applicants must justify the amount of CFIN funding requested. CFIN may choose to award project funding for less than the requested amount.

Costs incurred in the development of project applications will not be eligible for funding. CFIN will provide funding for projects by reimbursing approved applicants for a portion of their project expenses that are reasonable and eligible.

5.2 Government Funding and Stacking

Stacking is possible with other government funding up to 75% of the total eligible project costs. Applicants must outline what other government support programs they are leveraging for their project.

5.3 Project Management Fee

CFIN will require a non-refundable project management fee of 5% of total project costs eligible for CFIN funding (as calculated in the budget template). The fee will be invoiced to the Lead Applicant with net 30 terms and payable to CFIN prior to the first reimbursement of funds, as outlined in the Master Project Agreement. The proportion of the fee contributed by the Lead Applicant and Partners will be agreed to amongst the collaborators This fee cannot be claimed as an Eligible Project Cost.

5.4 Project Duration

The earliest start date for projects will be the Eligibility Date as outlined in the signed Master Project Agreement. The earliest start date is 60 days from the project intake close date. Project-related costs incurred prior to that date will not be considered eligible project costs. Projects must be completed in accordance with the Master Project Agreement and no later than one year from the start date.

6. Project Monitoring and Reporting

CFIN will monitor the progress of each project to ensure that project participants are fulfilling their obligations, and report on the progress of the project against financial and performance metrics. CFIN will track performance of applicants according to the key performance indicators as specified in the Master Project Agreement.

Claims for funding will be accepted for all projects on a quarterly basis; March 31, June 30, September 30, and December 31 of each year. This will entail a quarterly submission of claims for reimbursement and reporting as well as an annual outcomes reporting. In addition, CFIN will request annual update meetings with the CFIN Program Team and Regional Innovation Director to obtain direct feedback, encouragement, as well as ensure a high standard of accountability.

The Lead Applicant will be responsible for monitoring and reporting on the progress of the project in line with information requests and performance metrics agreed with CFIN and coordinating the Partners for the review meetings. Failure to complete the require reporting, as outlined in the CFIN Master Project Agreement, will impact timely reimbursement of eligible project costs.

All Partners will be responsible for submitting their eligible project costs for reimbursement, as directed by the Lead Applicant and outlined in the CFIN Master Project Agreement. Financial reporting will be completed through CFIN's secure online portal. The Lead Applicant and Partners will be required to maintain accurate accounts of the project for at least seven (7) years after its termination and comply with the financial reporting and auditing requirements, as outlined in the CFIN Master Project Agreement.

Throughout the process, the project may be profiled in CFIN communications. Where possible, the purpose of this is to share knowledge, learning and results gained to serve as a catalyst to other businesses and innovators across Canada's food ecosystem. There may also be opportunities to communicate the project, its progress, and collaborative efforts throughout the duration of the project activities.

Appendix A – CFIN General Requirements

Project Applicant Requirements

When submitting their application, the Lead Applicant must confirm that:

- They have read, understand, and are willing to comply with CFIN's project requirements;
- The Lead Applicant and any Partners are incorporated in Canada;
- The project will be carried out in Canada;
- The project is incremental and new;
- The project would not be undertaken to the same extent without CFIN funding;
- They are willing to invest in the project within the timelines of CFIN's funding horizon;
- They have not paid, nor agreed to pay to any person, either directly or indirectly, a commission, fee or other consideration that is contingent upon the approval of this application or execution of this Agreement, or upon the person arranging a meeting with a public office holder;
- They have adequate financial means and project management capabilities to carry out the project; and,
- They agree to provide information necessary for CFIN to conduct required due diligence (this may include the submission of additional information, including, but not limited to the last two years of external accountant prepared financial statements for the Lead Applicant and Partners, upon the request of CFIN).

To be considered for project funding, applicants must:

- Certify that the same project they are proposing is not already approved or in progress, and that financial commitments would not otherwise have been made to the project in its current form;
- Ensure that only eligible project costs defined under the CFIN guidelines are to be claimed for reimbursement;
- Agree to incur all expenses for which CFIN funding is sought no earlier than the eligible date for the call, and the end date of the Master Project Agreement, which must be no later than 12-months from project start and no later than March 31, 2027;
- Specify any other sources of government funding anticipated for their project;
- Agree to adhere to CFIN's conflict of interest policy (included in the Master Project Agreement); and,
- Agree that, if their project is selected, they will maintain auditable financial records substantiating their expense claims and provide CFIN with the information it requires to monitor and report on the progress of their project.

Intellectual Property

CFIN will support industry-led projects that will generate IP of potential benefit to Canada's food ecosystem. The Project proposal is a key document to be used by applicants to detail their intellectual property strategies for their outlined project. Applicants who have not begun their IP strategy work yet will be required to outline budget line items for these costs or prove their involvement with intellectual property resources such as Elevate IP, Intellectual Property

Ontario, or a law firm in order to receive CFIN funding. Your Regional Innovation Director can connect you to regional or provincial resources to assist with intellectual property protection.

Project proposals are required to provide an IP rationale that demonstrates how the Project will provide CFIN members, including those who are not participating in a Project, the opportunity to access IP arising from the Project. This is the basis of our focus on the 'transformative' innovation potential of a project.

Successful applicants must comply with the terms of CFIN's Intellectual Property Policy (included in the Master Project Agreement) and agree that:

- Any IP deriving from CFIN projects, ownership rights and exploitation thereof, will remain in Canada for a minimum of five (5) years after the end of the project funding agreement unless otherwise approved in writing by the Minister on a case-by-case basis.

CFIN will not itself take any interest in Intellectual Property in any project, but it may assist with facilitating the commercialization of Intellectual Property by applicants for Canada's benefit.

CFIN's Intellectual Property Policy for Applicants can be accessed on YODL™.

Appendix B - Technology Readiness Level (TRL) Scale

Technology Readiness Level	**Description**
TRL 1—Basic principles observed and reported	Lowest level of technology readiness. Scientific research begins to be translated into applied research and development (R&D). Examples might include paper studies of a technology's basic properties.
TRL 2—Technology concept and/or application formulated	Invention begins. Once basic principles are observed, practical applications can be invented. Applications are speculative, and there may be no proof or detailed analysis to support the assumptions.
TRL 3—Analytical and experimental critical function and/or characteristic proof of concept	Active R&D is initiated. This includes analytical studies and laboratory studies to physically validate the analytical predictions of separate elements of the technology.
TRL 4—Product and/or process validation in laboratory environment	Basic technological products and/or processes are tested to establish that they will work.
TRL 5—Product and/or process validation in relevant environment	Reliability of product and/or process innovation increases significantly. The basic products and/or processes are integrated so they can be tested in a simulated environment.
TRL 6—Product and/or process prototype demonstration in a relevant environment	Prototypes are tested in a relevant environment. Represents a major step up in a technology's demonstrated readiness. Examples include testing a prototype in a simulated operational environment.
TRL 7—Product and/or process prototype demonstration in an operational environment	Prototype near or at planned operational system and requires demonstration of an actual prototype in an operational environment (e.g. in a vehicle).
TRL 8—Actual product and/or process completed and qualified through test and demonstration	Innovation has been proven to work in its final form and under expected conditions. In almost all cases, this TRL represents the end of true system development.
TRL 9—Actual product and/or process proven successful	Actual application of the product and/or process innovation in its final form or function.

(**Source**: https://www.ic.gc.ca/eic/site/125.nsf/eng/00007.html#annex-a)