

# 2017/18 CANADIAN SCIENCE POLICY FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM (MITACS) FAQs



## ABOUT MITACS

### **1. WHAT IS MITACS?**

- Mitacs is a national not-for-profit organization that works with universities, private companies, and public sector organizations.
- Its purpose is to build research partnerships that support innovation across all academic disciplines and industry sectors in Canada.
- For the *Science Policy Fellowship program*, Mitacs makes matches between government organizations and individuals who have completed their PhD and are looking for a training opportunity within government.
- The Science Policy Fellowship program is open to all PhD holders, including faculty affiliated with a Canadian university.

### **2. WHAT IS THE COSTING MODEL FOR THE SCIENCE POLICY FELLOWSHIP PROGRAM?**

- Salary and benefits are the responsibility of the hosting ministry.
- The salary is \$72,455.73 plus 6% at the rate of pay of regular earnings in lieu of vacation and \$0.72 per hour (\$0.74 effective April 2018) in lieu of health and welfare benefits.
- Mitacs will receive \$15,000 per fellow for professional development, skill-building and networking events for the fellows including the fee to participate at the Canadian Science Policy Conference, which is part of the Mitacs Science Policy Fellowship training component. The cost will be covered corporately.
- It is anticipated fellows will be expected to participate in up to 15 days of Mitacs led professional development (orientation, conference, workshops).

### **3. WHAT ARE THE FELLOWSHIP TIMELINES?**

- Fellowship work terms are 12-month auxiliary terms, beginning September 5, 2017.
- Science Policy Fellows abide by the Terms and Conditions of the BCGEU Collective Agreement.

### **4. WHAT DOES “FELLOW” MEAN AND WHY IS THIS TERM USED?**

- A research fellow is an academic research position. The position of research fellow normally requires a doctoral degree. In the case of this program, participants are part of the (Mitacs) Canadian Science Policy Fellowship program.

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## **ABOUT THE FELLOWS**

### **1. *WHAT LEVEL OF EXPERTISE DO SCIENCE POLICY FELLOWS BRING?***

- Fellows bring advanced expertise of a PhD-level researcher.

### **2. *IS THE RESEARCH FELLOW AN EMPLOYEE?***

- Yes. The research fellow is hired as an auxiliary employee, with the same responsibilities and rights as other auxiliary employees.
- Like other employees, the research fellow must swear the Oath of Employment and abide by the Standards of Conduct.

### **3. *WHAT IS THE RESEARCH FELLOW'S JOB TITLE?***

- It is important that a consistent job title be used for all the research fellows. This will help them have a consistent experience of working with government. Their official job title is "Science Policy Fellow." Identifying them as a "Science Policy Fellow" will help their colleagues understand their new co-worker's role as an expert researcher.

## **ABOUT APPLICATIONS, SCREENING AND SELECTION**

### **1. *WHAT IS OUR INTERNAL PROJECT SUBMISSION PROCESS?***

- Intake for policy project submissions commenced in December 2016.
- Project submissions were completed using the Mitacs host application template available at [Mitacs Science Policy Fellowship](#).

### **2. *WHAT TYPE OF POLICY PROJECT IS EXPECTED OR PREFERRED?***

- The subject areas and research questions may vary widely in topic, but all should strengthen the role of science in evidence-informed decision making in a policy context.
- The type of project proposed by the business area and researcher will be specific to that program area.
- The nature of the work should be challenging, typically not achievable by existing staff, and aimed to move the program area forward in either process or program delivery.
- There is a requirement for clear and definable objectives and performance measures.

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### **3. WHAT IS THE MITACS 2017 SCIENCE POLICY FELLOWSHIP APPLICATION PROCESS?**

- **Stage one:** A potential host ministry submits a policy project, appropriate for the advanced expertise of a PhD level researcher to Mitacs. Eligible projects are then posted on the Mitacs website.
- **Stage two:** Eligible Canadian Science Policy Fellow Candidates apply via Mitacs application process and timelines. Please contact [policyfellowship@mitacs.ca](mailto:policyfellowship@mitacs.ca) for more information.

### **4. WHAT IS THE PROJECT SCREENING PROCESS?**

- A small Agency-led committee reviewed the project applications before they were submitted. The approval process included but was not limited to the following items:
  - Resources required, in addition to funding the fellowship. This would include training, technology and time provided by other employees to manage, mentor, collaborate and/or contribute to the project.
  - Identifying risk to the program area and government. Risk may be acceptable if it is clearly defined, reasonable in relation to the anticipated benefits and the knowledge potential gained by the results.
  - Proprietary rights of the data collection, analysis, and any dissemination.
  - Reasonable review and editing of any dissemination by the program area.
- The Agency forwarded all ministry project submissions to Mitacs.

### **5. WHAT IF I DON'T GET THE PERFECT FIT?**

#### ***a. E.g. can we switch with another ministry?***

- Kind of. Any host office that has a fellow whose expertise may be applicable to another project should communicate first with Mitacs at [policyfellowship@mitacs.ca](mailto:policyfellowship@mitacs.ca). Mitacs will assess whether the candidate(s) are suitable and if the host office in question requires additional profiles.

#### ***b. Can we match new fellows if none of their first matches are a fit? Is there always going to be a second round of matching?***

- Mitacs can provide additional candidates for a project, but if a successful match is not found, the best course of action is the project forward in a future competition. Projects with a high level of specificity can be difficult to recruit for, but the Mitacs Business Development Team can assist in identifying the right talent from the national pool of academic researchers.

#### ***c. Can we match new fellows to in-progress projects if the current fellow leaves?***

- Currently, Mitacs will not place fellows off-cycle. In accordance with Mitacs guidelines, fellowships must be 12-months and commence in September.

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***d. How do we mitigate fellows leaving mid-way through the project? Do any leave prior the year project?***

- Mitacs did not experience this with the 2016-17 federal co-hort. Providing a quality placement and experience will curtail early departures.

***6. CAN GOVERNMENT ADD ADDITIONAL FELLOWS TO ONE PROJECT? CAN THEY TAKE ALL THREE MATCHED CANDIDATES OR EVEN TAKE SOME NON-MATCHED CANDIDATES FROM OTHER PROJECTS?***

Yes. If individual ministries/agencies wish to have multiple fellows and funding approvals are secured, Mitacs can match more than one fellow to a project.

## **ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES**

***1. HOW WILL PARTICIPANTS IN THE PILOT CONTRIBUTE TOWARD CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT?***

- Mitacs expects ministry hosts and fellows to participate in program evaluation tools, including surveys throughout the fellowship cycle, as requested. The findings from these tools will be used to monitor the program's success and identify areas for improvement.

***2. WHAT IS THE SUPERVISOR'S ROLE?***

- Interview your top-ranked candidates from the shortlist provided by Mitacs.
- Be open to outside-the-box candidates; maybe a physicist or a mathematician can tackle your data project.
- Introduce the policy project and proposed activities at the interview stage (ideally); a good match should have strong buy-in from everyone involved.
- Identify more than one candidate from the shortlist as a match; certain candidates may also be top-ranked candidates for another project.
- Note:
  - Some projects do not find a match; the shortlist may not include suitable candidates, or your top candidate may have a stronger match with another project.
  - Some candidates will decline the match, or some hosts may retract their project proposal.
  - Having 3 or more ranked candidates per project is preferable.
- Provide a project description and any background material to your matched fellow.
- Provide appropriate office space, equipment and building pass, facilitate introductions to coworkers and key people in the office, notify coworkers of the arrival of the fellow, set-up meetings for arrival of fellow, and so on.

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- When the fellow arrives, determine if the project has changed since it was submitted. Clearly communicate any changes on the project since the interview, including staffing changes to the project.
- Supervisors are expected to accommodate fellows' participation in the Canadian Science Program activities, such as professional development and networking sessions.
- Supervisors may be invited to participate in some of the fellowship program activities.

### 3. *WHAT IS THE ROLE OF EXECUTIVE?*

- A Deputy Minister or Assistant Deputy Minister will be identified as the champion of the project(s).
- The champion will identify the senior level manager responsible for overseeing the project.
- The champion should be briefed quarterly (at a minimum) and provided documentation as to the progress of the project, including whether the project is meeting its milestones and on track to meet its deliverable.
- The champion should ensure that the senior level manager responsible for overseeing the project provides the resources identified in the application that are accessible to the fellow and that the fellow is not redirected to complete public sector work that doesn't contribute to the project.

### 4. *WHAT IS THE AGENCY'S ROLE?*

- To complete an initial review of the project proposals, submit the proposals to Mitacs and provide oversight to the hiring process including providing common resources and information on security processes.
- To be a valuable resource for host ministry supervisors to ensure a successful placement.
- To support the fellows throughout the duration of their term by facilitating opportunities to provide a consistent, corporate experience of the BC Public Service.

### 5. *WHAT IS THE ROLE OF THE SCIENCE POLICY FELLOW?*

- During the fellowship cycle, fellows are considered **full-time** auxiliary employees of their host ministries or agencies. Academic work is to be completed on their own time unless directly contributing to the project objectives and deliverables.
- The fellow will be responsible for meeting the objectives and deliverables originally identified collaboratively with the fellow and the senior supervising manager.
- The fellow is expected to participate in all program activities, including those of their project and events facilitated/hosted by Mitacs.

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- The fellows must be physically located within host offices full time and are expected to relocate as needed.
- The fellow will be responsible for:
  - The design and day to day management of the project
  - Producing the quarterly documentation
  - Knowledge transfer of the project results

## **6. WHAT IS THE ROLE OF MITACS?**

- Mitacs administers the calls for ministry projects and fellows, respectively, and provides necessary information and requirements to prospective participants.
- Mitacs designs and delivers the fellowship's accompanying professional development training and networking event.
- Mitacs also administers fellowship matching through the following process:
  - Reviewing eligibility of host and fellow applicants;
  - Supplying a short list of applicants to host departments, who then interview and rank candidates;
  - Upon receipt of hosts' rankings, facilitating the matching of applicants and hosts based on mutual interest.

## **WORKING WITH YOUR RESEARCH FELLOW**

### **1. WHAT TYPES OF AGREEMENTS NEED TO BE IN PLACE?**

- Agreements such as research agreements, information sharing agreements, and electronic access agreements may need to be in place within the first 30 days of the fellowship.
- A Privacy Impact Assessment (PIA) may need to be in place before the fellowships begin.
- It is strongly recommended supervisors and their fellows meet and work with your [Ministry Information Security Officer](#) to understand information security policies and practices in relation to the their project.

### **2. CAN RESEARCH FELLOWS PUBLISH IN PEER-REVIEWED JOURNALS IN THE COURSE OF THEIR EMPLOYMENT?**

- It is important that fellows have the freedom to publish in peer-reviewed journals during the 12-month period of employment, should they wish to do so.

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- However, supervisors are encouraged to have proactive conversations about expectations regarding proprietary data. They also should discuss whether work on the journal article is an appropriate use of work time given the individual project as well as the subject of the journal article.
- Supervisors should also discuss with their research fellows how a peer-reviewed publication may or may not support the employee's future job applications to public service jobs.

### **3. WHAT KIND OF ORIENTATION DO I NEED TO DO?**

- Fellows should receive a thoughtful orientation to your branch, division, and ministry. A positive orientation experience will position them to be more successful and increase the likelihood of retention.
- The program will organize an orientation session for all fellows for the beginning of September. This session will cover the basics of working in government.
- Employees will also swear the Oath of Employment at this orientation session.

### **4. HOW DO WE INCLUDE THEM IN THE TEAM?**

- Although your fellow is coming on board to work on a specific project, it's important for them to have the experience of being part of the team.
- Attendance at team meetings should be considered part of their employment expectations.
- Being cautious not to divert them unduly from their project, consider where you can involve them in other team work. If the experience helps expose them more broadly to the government context, it may be appropriate to involve them in branch work such as business planning, continuous improvement initiatives, and so on.
- Encourage the team to include the research fellow in regular informal activities that occur in your team (e.g. include them in invitations to coffee, social activities and so forth.)
- When your research fellow attends learning events, request that they share back at a team meeting highlights of what they've learned.