

Mitacs powers research & development by connecting industry with the best post-secondary institutions to solve business challenges — in Canada and internationally. For 20 years, Mitacs has funded cutting-edge research, created job opportunities for graduate students and helped companies reach their business goals, achieving results that have bolstered the Canadian economy.

## Program overview

The Mitacs **Canadian Science Policy Fellowship (CSPF)** places PhD holders in government host offices for a 12-month immersion into the policy-making process. Fellows learn how to apply their academic training, critical thinking, and analytical skills in a public policy context, while government host offices gain access to current, specialized academic expertise to address unique policy challenges.

The program objectives can be summarized as follows:

- Creating mutually beneficial relationships between government decision makers and academic researchers in support of evidence-informed decision making on policy challenges
- Enhancing science communication, collaboration, and capacity to use scientific knowledge in policy processes in government offices
- Equipping academic researchers with skills to address policy challenges and leverage their specific knowledge to inform policy while learning about government
- Contributing to a national network of science policy expertise across academia, government, not-for-profit organizations, and industry

Now entering its fourth year, the CSPF program has matched over 75 fellows with a variety of federal host departments and agencies in Ottawa and provincial ministries in Victoria, BC. For more details on the host offices involved, please refer to our news releases from each year found here:

[2019-20](#)

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[2018-19](#)

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[2017-18](#)

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[2016-17](#)

*“At Mitacs, we are proud to help some of Canada’s brightest minds bridge the worlds of academia, government, and business. Our ultimate goal is to innovate in ways that benefit every Canadian and participants in this program will be instrumental in that vision. Working in partnership with the host governments, fellows will provide invaluable, innovative solutions to some of society’s most critical challenges.”*

— Jennifer Wilkie, Interim Chief Executive Officer, Chief Financial and Human Resources Officer

## Professional development and networking activities

As part of the CSPF program, Mitacs provides professional development training for fellows throughout the year, as well as opportunities to network with stakeholders from the science policy community through invitations to conferences, events, and volunteer opportunities. Instructor-led courses focus on developing key science policy themes through their fellowships, including science communication and relationship-building skills with diverse stakeholders.

Fellowship training starts with Orientation at the outset of the cohort year, where fellows learn about a variety of topics, including:

- Science policy
- Science communication
- Government 101
- Media training

Throughout the year, fellows participate in mandatory instructor-led courses focusing on developing key science policy themes through their fellowships:

- Project management
- Defining each fellowship's impact on policy challenges
- Strengthening science communication
- Growing relationship-building skills with diverse stakeholders

## Fellow applicant eligibility

To be considered for a CSPF fellowship, **eligible fellows** must:

- Be a Canadian citizen or permanent resident\*
- Hold a PhD in any academic discipline at the start of the fellowship
- Participate full-time in a 12-month fellowship at the host office
- Secure accommodation in the host city, and relocate to their host office as needed
- Negotiate a leave of absence from their current employer, as applicable
- Meet any additional requirements as dictated by their hosts, including (but not limited to) additional security clearance requirements
- **Candidates cannot apply to multiple Mitacs programs at the same time**

\* Please note that Canadian citizenship or Permanent Resident status is required to obtain a security clearance with a host office to begin a fellowship. All applicants must have Canadian citizenship or permanent residency prior to the start of the interview process (May 2020) to be considered for the 2020-21 fellowship.

In addition to the requirements listed above, **faculty applicants** must also:

- Be a faculty member at a Canadian university
  - Faculty at [Mitacs Honorary Partner universities](#) must contact [policyfellowship\(at\)mitacs.ca](mailto:policyfellowship(at)mitacs.ca) to determine eligibility
- Negotiate a leave of absence or sabbatical from the university



## Host applicant eligibility

To host a CSPF fellow, **eligible host offices** must:

- Be an eligible federal or provincial government office:
  - Government of Canada
  - Government of Manitoba
  - Government of Quebec
- Provide remuneration and employee benefits to the fellow in the range of \$70,000-\$80,000 through an employment contract
- Physically host the fellow at the appropriate office space
- Accommodate fellow participation in Mitacs program professional development opportunities, including travel costs should the fellow be located outside the host city
- Provide mentoring and guidance to the fellow throughout the fellowship, particularly during the onboarding phase

Please visit our [web page](#) for more information on eligibility criteria for the program.

## Program structure and administration

Mitacs welcomes application submissions from prospective fellows and hosts on an annual call cycle running from fall throughout winter of each calendar year.

Applications are received through a concurrent, double-blind process. Fellows apply to the Mitacs Canadian Science Policy Fellowship program, and host offices apply to host a fellow for the upcoming cohort year running from September to August.

Fellows and hosts must submit an application through an online webform. All applicants will receive an automated electronic message confirming receipt of their application submission.

### Call for applications

The call for fellow applications launches in late November and closes in early February. Mitacs promotes the fellow call through its academic networks across Canada, and applicants submit their fellow applications to the program through the Mitacs website.

The call for host applications launches in late November and closes in early March. Government host offices are asked to consider and develop a position description that will outline the policy area of the file that the fellow will work on and the area of expertise sought for the position.

Position descriptions are not available to fellow applicants until after the adjudication process is complete. Fellow applicants will see the position description for specific host offices once they have been selected



for an interview with those hosts. Prospective participants can look at the previous year's news releases to get a sense of which government offices have participated in the past ([2016](#), [2017](#), [2018](#), [2019](#)).

Please visit our [web page](#) for more information on how to apply to the CSPF program.

### **Adjudication and shortlisting fellow applicants (February – April)**

All fellow applications go through an initial review for eligibility and completeness and Mitacs will contact prospective participants if their application is missing information. Following this, each fellow application is evaluated by a minimum of two members of an adjudication committee made up of prior fellows. Adjudication committee members evaluate applications based on leadership attributes, communication skills, research excellence, and a commitment to the objectives of the program. Candidates should show how the sum of their experiences and interests — research and otherwise — make them a good fit for the program. Please see the Fellow Guidelines for a Successful Application document for more detailed information on how to prepare a successful application.

The fellow adjudication committee develops a shortlist of semi-finalists and this list is presented to the host offices. Host offices will review this shortlist to select suitable candidates to interview for their fellowship positions. All applicants will be notified of their application status at this time.

Due to the individualized nature of the adjudication processes, Mitacs does not provide specific feedback on the application itself.

Please visit our [web page](#) for more information on the fellow adjudication process for the CSPF program.

### **Host adjudication (March)**

All host applications are reviewed by a Mitacs internal review committee to ensure that prospective fellowship positions meet the program requirements. All host applications are reviewed to ensure there is a clear policy focus and value-add for the position, as well as adequate support for the fellow to be successful in the position.

Please visit our [web page](#) for more information on the host adjudication process for the CSPF program.

### **Interviews (May – June)**

Government hosts will select semi-finalists to interview and position descriptions will be provided to fellows who are selected for interviews. Government host offices will filter candidates based on desired expertise, academic discipline, work location requested etc. Mitacs encourages hosts to be flexible on required expertise, as the success of fellowships is less dependent on academic discipline and more on broader skills that can be applied in the public service environment.

The interview is an opportunity for each party to learn more about the other. Host offices are encouraged to use their established HR processes for the interviews, however it is important for hosts to accommodate questions from fellow applicants, as this is the fellow's opportunity to evaluate the host office and fit for the work from their perspective. Fellow applicants should treat the interview process as they would any



professional interview. We suggest that fellows discuss how their expertise relates to the policy area of the host and to science policy in general and prepare any questions they may have about the role. As each host department has their own HR processes, the interview process will vary from host to host.

Hosts and fellow candidates will be asked to rank their choices and return their rankings to Mitacs. The rankings will be considered as part of the matching process.

#### **Host and fellow ranking and matching (May – June)**

Following the interview period, selected fellows and host offices will confidentially rank their choices for Mitacs to facilitate fellowship matches. We encourage all participants to provide as many rankings as possible to maximize potential matches. Fellows and hosts will be notified of the outcomes of these matches in June.

We will attempt to match all semi-finalists to host offices, however should any host offices not find a match in the first round, the process allows for a second round of matching. Unmatched semi-finalists will be given the remaining host office position descriptions and will have the opportunity to write a 500-word “pitch” to remaining host offices, describing why they would be a good match for the host office. After reviewing the pitches, hosts can decide if they’d like to interview additional candidates.

All successfully matched fellows begin their placements in September of each year.

#### **Pre-fellowship activities (July – August)**

Once the host has confirmed they would like to go ahead with the match, Mitacs will send the fellow a letter detailing the terms and conditions of the program. The letter must be signed and returned to Mitacs before starting your fellowship.

The host office will provide a letter of employment and determine salary (within the suggested range of \$70,000-80,000), plus any employee benefits with the fellow directly. Mitacs does not participate in the negotiation of the individual agreements. The employment agreement must be finalized before the fellowship start date in September.

At this point, fellows should prepare to relocate, if necessary. Fellows should inform Mitacs and their host office of any scheduling issues such as dissertation defense and/or convocation dates, or any required leave that may delay or disrupt the start date of the fellowship.

Additional details about the program, eligibility, application guidelines and program administration can be found on the [CSPF web page](#). Matched fellows and hosts will be provided with additional information in a Participant Toolkit before the fellowship begins. Please contact [policyfellowship@mitacs.ca](mailto:policyfellowship@mitacs.ca) with any further questions about the fellowship process.

**Thank you for your interest in applying to the Canadian Science Policy Fellowship.**

