

IDRC and Canadian researchers

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*This document is also available at: http://www.idrc.ca/admin/brochures/guide_chercheurs_e.htm
http://www.idrc.ca/admin/Pdf/guide_chercheurs_e.pdf*

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IDRC and Canadian researchers

Understanding the basic nature of IDRC and its programs will help any Canadian researcher wishing to develop a relationship with the Centre. What follows are some additional details of specific interest to Canadian researchers.

Points to note on funding for Canadians

IDRC principally supports Southern researchers, not Canadians. It does, however, allocate about 18 % of its annual program budget to cooperative projects, including joint research projects between Canadian and developing-country institutions. IDRC is not a granting council for Canadian scholars. IDRC does not normally provide sabbatical leave support to Canadian researchers, although it may be considered within a project supported by the Centre. IDRC does not provide funds to Canadian researchers to develop contacts in developing countries. IDRC does not generally provide fellowships for developing-country researchers or students unless they are participants in IDRC activities. IDRC will not fund or promote technical assistance projects or any projects for which the foreign expert assumes all the responsibility.

IDRC compared with CIDA

IDRC's mandate, status, and objectives are specific and different from the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). While both institutions work toward sustainable and equitable development, CIDA focuses on more practical applications, such as private-sector development and meeting basic human needs for safe water, education, and the like. As the federal government department that administers most of Canada's Official Development Assistance program, CIDA also provides humanitarian assistance. IDRC, on the other hand, directs support primarily to researchers and research institutions in the South. In this way, developing countries generate the tools and expertise they need to develop their own solutions to the problems they face.

IDRC and Canada: The numbers

- In 1999-2000, IDRC allocated \$8.4 million to cooperative projects with Canadian institutions.
- The average value of a Canadian university's share of an IDRC cooperative project grant is \$100,000 to \$150,000.

Working with IDRC

Our philosophy: Collaboration among equals

IDRC looks beyond traditional concepts of North-South technical assistance and focuses instead on the mutual interests of Canada and developing countries. IDRC believes that the best way to achieve its objectives through links among Canadian and Southern researchers is to promote the idea of collaboration among equals. Ideally, developing-country researchers should take the lead in defining and conducting a cooperative project. Canadian colleagues should be members of the research team, not visiting experts.

A history of cooperation

Since the Centre's inception, Canadian researchers and universities have participated in IDRC-supported projects. At the outset, most Canadians served as technical assistance experts rather than as full members of the research teams. Canadians were involved in this fashion in more than 100 projects during IDRC's

first decade. This changed in 1980 with the launch of the Cooperative Program, designed to promote closer collaboration between Canadian and developing-country research institutions.

Today, IDRC support for Canadian collaboration includes the establishment of much more direct links between researchers in the South and the Canadian scientific and development communities. At the same time, the Centre still supports specific cooperative projects, either to enrich existing research networks or to begin new ones. IDRC also offers more opportunities for Canadians with a knowledge-based international outlook that allow them to contribute to, and benefit from, international research.

Before approaching IDRC

“How to approach IDRC for funding” provides a general guide for researchers who are approaching IDRC for the first time. It can also serve as a checklist for those who are familiar with IDRC. You will find more specialized information below on how to develop cooperative projects, as well as on other ways that Canadians can work with IDRC. Much of this information is adapted from a previous “Guide for Canadian Researchers”, produced by the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC).

Preparing the way

Consult university sources

Before contacting IDRC, you should discuss your ideas with your university’s international liaison officer (ILO), or the person acting in that capacity. This officer has access to a range of information about researchers’ experiences with IDRC, both on their own campus and at others. If your university has no ILO, speak directly with the staff of the AUCC’s Office for International Relations.

Be sure to follow the procedures approved by the research administration office for dealing with IDRC and have the appropriate officer review and sign your proposal when it is ready for submission. University research administration offices and ILOs can also identify researchers on campus who have participated in IDRC projects or worked with the Centre in some other capacity. These offices and the foreign student advisor should also have information concerning any IDRC-sponsored individuals pursuing research or receiving some specialized training at the university.

Consult AUCC’s international division

Staff within AUCC’s international division is in frequent contact with IDRC personnel and may be of assistance in developing projects. The division houses two useful databases: International Exchange Agreements (CUE), and International Development Projects (CUPID). The CUPID database contains more than 2,000 records on Canadian university international development projects. The AUCC also publishes *UniWorld*, a biannual insert to *University Affairs* covering the international cooperation activities of Canadian universities.

Contacting researchers in developing countries

No funds are available from IDRC to enable Canadian researchers to develop contacts with developing-world colleagues. Developing-country researchers often ask IDRC to identify people who might be interested in a cooperative project. IDRC officers try to provide a list of appropriate contacts from their informal networks and then encourage the Southern researchers to make contact themselves. During their regular field trips, officers may provide such information to project leaders if they believe a cooperative project would be appropriate.

If you are travelling to developing countries, contacts may also be made through IDRC regional offices.

Making contact with IDRC

Where to go

When approaching IDRC, you should first contact the program officers (in Ottawa and in the appropriate regional office) whose discipline area most closely matches yours. If you cannot identify a specific officer, you should contact the team leader of the program initiative whose discipline area includes yours, and the appropriate regional director. If they cannot identify a specific program initiative, contact the Canadian Partnerships Program Officer in the Special Initiatives Program, who will forward your request to the appropriate staff in Ottawa and the regional offices.

Assessing the cooperative spirit

Once you and your research partner have made contact with IDRC and presented an initial project proposal, the program officers assess your commitment to each other, to the project goals, and to IDRC's ideal of cooperation. Funds are available to enable partners to meet to develop promising projects. While the partners are developing a formal proposal, program officers observe how they get along with each other, how they contribute to discussions during planning meetings, how much time and energy they put into the project, and even how they talk about it. Is it "my project" or "our project"?

The results of partnership

After a cooperative project is approved, the program officers monitor it and provide advice and support to the partners. Evaluation of the project will take into account the nature and quality of the partnership and its contribution to the project results. IDRC hopes that the spirit of cooperation evident during a project will also manifest itself in other ways, such as the joint publication of articles. It hopes these projects will establish permanent ties between Canadian and Southern researchers.

Other roles for Canadian researchers

Although cooperative projects provide most opportunities for Canadian researchers to be involved in IDRC-sponsored work, there are a few other areas in which Canadians can play a useful role.

- **Assessment, evaluation, and monitoring:** Traditionally, IDRC has depended upon staff expertise to assess project proposals, to evaluate manuscripts, policies or programs, to review the state of research in a specific field, and to monitor or coordinate information and research networks. Growing staff workloads, however, means that the Centre is turning to external assessors and experts, both abroad and in Canada. The IDRC Evaluation Unit website is the primary source of information about the Centre's evaluation activities. There may also be a need to call upon Canadian expertise to apply and adapt the results of IDRC-sponsored research.
- **Secondments:** Canadian researchers may be seconded to IDRC to work in one of its program initiatives or secretariats while on leave from their faculty positions.
- **Technical assistance:** IDRC does not normally fund consultancies. It interprets such activity as technical assistance to be funded by aid agencies and international financial institutions. On rare occasions the Centre will fund an "outside Canadian expert" to take part in an existing project.

- **Training:** Although most IDRC-sponsored training takes place in developing countries, a number of developing-country researchers working in IDRC-sponsored projects come to Canada every year for specialized training. Over the last few years, some program initiatives have built awards into their projects and consequently, more Canadian universities have become involved in training. As an example, see:
 - G Ecosystem Approaches to Human Health Training Awards
 - G AGROPOLIS: International Graduate Research Awards in Urban Agriculture

- **Awards for Canadians:** IDRC funds and administers a number of award programs, including several for Canadian researchers. You can find a full description on the Training and Awards Unit site as well as profiles of several recipients.
 - G The University Partnerships in Cooperation and Development (UPCD) Program funded by the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) is another avenue Canadian researchers may wish to explore.