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Strategic clusters fall 2016 (Regroupement stratégique)

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Summary

Competition year :	2017-2018
Deadline (notice or letter of intent) :	May 4th, 2016, 4 PM
Deadline (application) :	November 16th, 2016, 4 PM
Amount :	Up to $250,000 per year
Duration :	Up to 6 years
Announcement of results :	Fin avril 2017

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1. Foreword

NOTE : In the event of a discrepancy between the English and French versions of this program, the French version prevails.

The Strategic Clusters *(Regroupements stratégiques)* program to support large-scale research projects was launched in 2000. The ambitious initiative involves a wide array of program components and significant funding for extended periods in an effort to substantially increase the transfer credits of the Fonds de recherche and provide a unique key means to structure research. Alongside this triennial program, the Fonds has also implemented an annuel, more flexible complementary structuring option, the Team Support program (*Soutien aux équipes de recherche).*

The Strategic Clusters program is aimed at two types of structures. The centres and networks have distinct goals and meet different structuring needs. The strategic clusters (centres and networks) must set out ambitious scientific objectives, bring together a critical mass of researchers and meet the highest standards of excellence with regards to their research and research training activities. The centres must develop a scientific program to understand complex phenomena through the

concerted efforts of researchers in different fields. With the implementation of large-scale projects, the networks seek to meet the research structuring needs of a specific field by deploying a structuring initiative to create ties between research environments and practice settings.

The types of activities led by the centres and networks (research expertise pooling, scientific activities, research training, broad results dissemination) have a collaborative scope that reaches beyond the teams' responsibilities to their members.

The Strategic Clusters program aims to foster:

- The optimal use of major scientific facilities in the social sciences, humanities, arts and literature;
- The commercialization of research results for potential users and society as a whole;
- The development of formal and structured international ties.

The Strategic Clusters program was implemented as a key leveraging tool to structure research and position Québec researchers on the international stage and in national research programs led, for example, by the Canada Foundation for Innovation and the Canada Research Chairs.

2. Program objectives

The main objective of the program is to strengthen the research sectors of excellence that could yield significant potential scientific, cultural, social and economic benefits for Québec. Through this program, the Fonds therefore aims to:

- Foster the consolidation of large groups of researchers in different fields and university institutions to give impetus to the research system;
- Promote the emergence of research centres and networks in strategic sectors;
- Establish Québec researchers as leaders in their fields by supporting their participation in national and international research programs and their integration in large scientific networks;
- Foster knowledge transfers and partnerships with the potential users of the research results, in keeping with the **Plan d'action en matière de transfert des connaissances 2011-2014** ⬈, which was adopted by the Fonds;
- Contribute to the implementation of stimulating quality environments for new researcher-professors and train researchers and highly-qualified personnel;
- Create an impactful leverage effect to maximize research investments in Québec.

3. Nature and characteristics of the clusters

3.1 Definition of a strategic cluster

Each strategic cluster brings together researchers, research teams and student-researchers from various disciplines, academic units and institutions. Each cluster must demonstrate that it possesses the critical mass required to reach its objectives and foster excellence in research by:

- Developing platforms to exchange ideas and share research results;
- Stimulating the development of joint projects;
- Constituting a unique environment for research initiation and training;
- Offering privileged opportunities to postdoctoral trainees;
- Supporting the integration of new researchers;
- Focusing on research results dissemination, transfer and commercialization whenever possible;
- Cultivating links and exchanges with national and international researchers;
- Carrying out initiatives geared towards the scientific community (researchers and students).

Each strategic cluster in Québec must set itself apart from the other groups in the same or related fields and demonstrate particular strengths. Clusters must also take an innovative approach to Canadian and international research trends.

To facilitate the dissemination efforts of the strategic clusters, the Fonds asks groups to register for the Documents and Data Repository Service of the Érudit Consortium, which receives financial support from the Fonds Société et Culture.

3.2 Composition of a strategic cluster (see Appendix for definitions)

3.2.1 Regular members

A strategic cluster must include regular members with university researcher (CHU, CHUN, CRU,

CRUN, CHUT), college researcher (CHC), institutional researcher (CE), research scolar (CHB) researcher practitioner (PC) and/or government researcher (CHG) status. Only university researchers (CHU) and university researcher-creators (CRU) may lead a cluster. Researchers are deemed to be regular members if at least 40% of their research activities are dedicated to pursuing the cluster's program.

3.2.2 Collaborating members

Collaborating members of strategic clusters may have any of the statuses recognized by the Fonds: university researcher (CHU), new university researcher (CHUN), university researcher-creator (CRU), new university researcher-creator (CRUN), retired university researcher (CHU), college researcher (CHC), institutional researcher (CE), affiliated researcher (CHA), collaborating practitioner (COP), government researcher (CHG), research practitioner (PC), industrial researcher (CHI), researcher outside Québec (CHH), visiting researcher (VIS), research without a recognized institutional affiliation (CHS) or postdoctoral research fellow (STP).

The researcher statuses recognized by the Fonds are defined in the **_Common General Rules_** 🔗 📄 , _Appendix 1._

3.3 The two types of clusters

For social reasons, a strategic cluster may be commonly known as a centre, institute, observatory, network, etc. This program uses the terms _centre_ and _network_ to designate these groups.

3.3.1 Centres

Strategic cluster centres must include researchers or research teams working in close collaboration in a concerted and coordinated manner on a joint research program. The scientific program must explore a general research topic through projects that are interrelated and grouped into research thrusts and evolve over time with the addition of new research projects and the completion of earlier ones. The scientific program must eventually lead to the significant and collective contribution of regular members to the advancement of knowledge. In the proposal submitted to the Strategic Clusters program, the centres must demonstrate the ways in which their regular members support the integrated scientific research program, according to the following criteria:

- The research program is targeted, coherent and based on research thrusts in which projects are conducted;
- The research program advances the understanding of the outlined phenomena, and the separation into thrusts leads to knowledge-building;
- Centre researcher consensus-building activities foster knowledge integration;
- Regular centre researchers dedicate at least 40% the greater part of their research activities to pursuing the centre's program; *This requirement also applies to networks
- The centre's management team ensures scientific leadership, joint research action and the development of the research program;
- The centre is located in a clearly identified, exclusive facility.

3.3.2 Networks

Strategic cluster networks must be developed at the interface of research and practice settings. The group must bring together strong members in a specific field for a large-scale project involving researchers, research teams, research networks, institutional and interinstitutional centres, observatories, research institutes and other types of facilities and partners from the public, private and community sectors. This structuring initiative may be a large-scale project (scientific dissemination, promotion or exchange, research field, etc.), a collective infrastructure (development of joint services or a technical or electronic platform) or a pool of expertise for researchers (database development, etc.).

In the proposal submitted to the Strategic Clusters program, the networks must define a research method and establish the need it will fulfill (federate Québec expertise, develop and optimize methodological skills or multidisciplinary approaches, create and consolidate links between researchers and end-users, set up extensive joint research infrastructure, prototypes or broad exploratory approaches, etc.). The group must also demonstrate the ways in which the planned initiative will lead to the development of coherent and productive links between researchers based on the needs, objectives, priorities, means and activities set out in the proposal.

While networks may adopt the configuration of their choice, they must meet the following criteria:

- Regular network members are primarily researchers and dedicate at least 40% of their research activities to the structuring initiative;
- Regular networks reseachers
- Expertise complementarity that is relevant to the proposed research project;
- Clearly-defined research priorities and activities that foster development;
- Interdisciplinary and interuniversity research activities;
- A structuring project that brings significant added value to the research activities of network members;
- A leader who sets research and development priorities, ensures that the project is carried out (means and activities) and sees to the development of productive links between members based on the objectives;

- A clearly identified, exclusive facility.

3.3.3 At the end of an emergence or operational grant, a team may choose to continue in its initial configuration (centre or network) or evolve to another structure if this configuration is more conducive to the development and structure of research in the field.

3.4 Two development stages

Each strategic cluster must be acknowledged as a research infrastructure by its home institution or a recognized funding agency and have the support of its home and partner institutions when submitting a letter of intent.

3.4.1 Emergence funding

This type of funding is meant for groups of researchers seeking to consolidate a research program or structuring project before applying for operational funding. Obtaining strategic cluster operational support is not conditional on prior emergence funding.

3.4.2 Operational funding

Operational funding is meant for:

A) Strategic clusters that are not funded by the Fonds but which have been acknowledged as research infrastructures for at least three years by their home institution or by a recognized funding agency and which have maintained a high level of scientific activity and output in at least the three years prior to submitting the application for funding;

B) Strategic clusters seeking funding following an emergence grant, as described in paragraph **3.4.1**;

C) Strategic clusters seeking follow-up operational funding. Unlike the clusters described in points A and B, the evaluation criteria pertaining to the performance of clusters seeking to renew their operational funding involve a minimum score. See section **8.1** for further details.

4. Eligibility criteria

4.1 University support

The managing institution must acknowledge the cluster's place in its research development plan and state the type and level of support that will be granted. The cluster must also include as least one partner institution that contributes financially or in kind to the cluster.

4.2 Eligibility of the cluster leader

The cluster leader (main applicant) must have the status of CHU, CHUN, CRU or CRUN and must meet the general eligibility criteria set out in the **Common General Rules** and all of the criteria set out in this program. A researcher may not lead more than one major infrastructure (*Soutien aux infrastructures de recherche, des Instituts et des Centres affiliés universitaires* program or *Strategic Clusters* program).

5. Membership of researchers in clusters, university institutes, affiliated university centres and/or research teams

A researcher may be a **regular member** of up to two major infrastructures. The following are considered to be major infrastructures: Research Groups and Centres (FRQS), Strategic Clusters (FRQSC and FRQNT) and IU-CAU Infrastructures (FRQSC). However, no more than 20% of the researchers affiliated with a given infrastructure may belong to more than one infrastructure.

Researchers may also, work with other university institutes, affiliated university centres or strategic clusters as collaborating members. In these cases, their scientific output will not be considered when assessing the applications of these other major infrastructures. Barring exceptional circumstances, researchers will keep their status (regular or collaborator) for the duration of the funding.

Researchers who oversee or who are regular members of a university institute, affiliated university centre or strategic cluster may also be regular members or leaders of research teams funded as part of the Research Team Support program. Please refer to the **Common General Rules** for information on cumulating Fonds de recherche du Québec infrastructure funding.

6. Application process

In all of the documents referred to below, applicants may cite web addresses in the style of a bibliographic reference. However, a letter of intent or funding application based in whole or in part on online content could be deemed non-receivable.

6.1 Letter of intent

The first step in submitting an application to the Strategic Clusters program is the submission of the letter of intent and the *Canadian Common CV* of the cluster leader.

Provided that they meet the program requirements, strategic clusters that are already funded on the competition opening date **do not need** to submit a letter of intent or a support letter, and will have direct access to the application form via the eRegroupement platform.

Provided that they meet the general program requirements, centres and networks that were previously funded under the Strategic Clusters program and that wish to reapply under the same configuration, do not need to submit a letter of intent. However, previously funded clusters that wish to change configuration (from centre to network or from network to centre) must submit a letter of intent.

Finally, research clusters that have never received funding from the FRQSC under this program and wish to apply to the program must submit a letter of intent. The assessment of the letter of intent is eliminatory.

The Fonds will carefully assess the letters of intent and interview new centres and networks seeking funding. Only certain clusters will be authorized to submit a complete application.

The letter of intent consists of the letter of intent form and the letter of support from the managing institution—both of which are available on the **website of the FRQSC** 🗗—along with the Canadian Common CV of the principal investigator.

6.1.1 Letter of intent form

The letter of intent form must be received by **Wednesday May 4, 2016, at 4 p.m.** The committee must be able to verify whether the applicant group meets the criteria set out in section **3.1**. The letters must include information on the expected composition of the cluster (researchers must be from different fields and university institutions), the rationale behind the choice of cluster (centre or network) and the cluster's stage of development (emergence or operational). The letters of intent must address the following elements:

- Main components of the scientific program (for centres) or the research structure need and planned structuring initiative (for networks);
- Coherence of the team structure and the scientific program or structuring initiative;
- Planned strategies funding;
- Current level of activity of the group;
- Expected benefits (advancement of knowledge, knowledge transfer, international scope, leverage effect);
- The group's distinctiveness from the provincial, national and international perspectives.

The interviews will be held on **Thusday june 21 and Wenndsday june 22, 2016** in Montreal. Applicant groups will receive interview instructions during the third week of May 2016.

6.1.2 Letter of support from the managing institution

The letter of support from the managing institution must be received by **Wednesday May 11, 2016, at 4 p.m**. In this letter, the managing institution must describe the place held by the cluster in its research development plan and the type and level of support that will be granted. The managing institution must also list the partner institutions.

6.1.3 Canadian Common CV (Only Cluster leader)

The Fonds uses the ***Canadian Common CV*** 🗗 and also requires the attachment of a ***PDF file detailing any contributions*** 🗗 (in *My account*). For instructions on submitting your CCV to the Fonds, please refer to the documents entitled ***Preparing a CV for the Fonds*** 🗗 and ***Attached file for detailed contributions*** 🗗 **(see toolbox)**.

6.2 Submitting an application

The second step in submitting an application to the Strategic Clusters program is to present an application for funding.

6.2.1 Funding application form

The funding application may be written in French or English and must be filled out electronically through the eCluster (eRegroupement) system. The funding application must be accompanied by a text of no more than twenty (20) pages explicitly addressing the evaluation criteria that apply to the cluster based on its configuration and stage of development, AND a bibliography.

The Canadian Common CVs of the clusters' regular members with the status of university researcher

(CHU, CHUN, CRU, CRUN, CHUT, CHB) or college researcher (CHC, CHCT) must be submitted with the online application. All regular members have to attach to their CCV the *Fichier joint des contributions détaillées* available on the program's web site, in the Toolbox.

6.2.2 Managing institution and partner institution Declaration (*Déclaration de l'établissement gestionnaire et des établissements partenaires***)**

As of **October 12, 2016**, a "photograph" of the composition will be taken and transmitted to managing and partner university institutions so that they may formalize an agreement based on the participation of researchers from these institutions in the strategic cluster. The declaration must clearly state the source of the funds granted to the cluster by each partner university institution. The submission deadline is **Wednesday November 2, 2016, at 4 p.m.** The managing institution and partner institution declaration form is available online on the Web site of the **FRQSC** 🗗.

6.2.3 Additional documents

Additional documents must be transmitted **in one transmission** by e-mail to **regstrat.sc@frq.gouv.qc.ca** 🗗 with the application number in the subject, before the grant application deadline of **4:00 p.m. on Wednesday November 16, 2016.**

For regular members with the status of institutional researcher (CE), researcher practitioner (PC), collaborator in a practice setting (COP) or government researcher CHG) :

- an abridged resume (maximum two pages) that provides an overview of: 1) their training, 2) their experience and 3) their publications or other scientific achievements (if applicable), in that order, as they pertain to the scientific program (centre) or structuring initiative (network). The abridged resumes must be created using word processing software, converted to PDF format and merged into a single document.

For regular members belonging to two major infrastructures:

- a letter of no more than two pages demonstrating the merit of the double membership (distinctive nature of the researcher's contribution to both programs/initiatives; added value to both programs/initiatives; method of functioning). This document must be provided at the time of application or at such time as a regular member joins a second infrastructure during the funding period

For retired researchers:

- A letter from the university institution attesting that the retired researcher had CHU status as defined by the institution prior to his/her retirement, that he/she will be given a workspace and the logistical support necessary to carry out his/her research activities and that he/she will continue to train students and the next generations of experts in his/her field.

For researchers who do not hold a doctorate degree or an equivalent status:

- A letter from the university institution attesting to a doctoral equivalent.

For researchers who are not Canadian citizens or permanent residents:

- A copy of the documents attesting that steps have been taken to obtain permanent resident status.

Any additional items will not be included in the application and will not be given to the evaluation committee. Applicants will not be asked to submit any missing documents. Any document received after the application deadline will not be considered, and no applications will be updated. The Canada Post postmark or dated acknowledgement of a messenger service will serve as proof of the date of receipt for all documents sent via post. Because the funding applications are sent electronically, all electronic transaction guidelines must be followed. Any applications that do not contain the information required to establish eligibility or carry out an evaluation will be deemed non-receivable by the Fonds Société et Culture.

The individuals who sign a grant application attest that all of the information provided is exact and complete. They agree to respect the rules and principles of the Fonds Société et Culture and, in particular, any rules in effect pertaining to ethics and scientific integrity. The researchers authorize the institution to transmit any personal information in accordance with this policy, if applicable. They also accept that the information contained in the application will be communicated for evaluation or study purposes on the condition that the people who have access to the information respect all confidentiality rules. In addition, signing applicants must respect the division of responsibilities defined by the government of Québec in its action plan regarding intellectual property management ("*Plan d'action en gestion de la propriété intellectuelle dans les universités et les établissements du réseau de la santé et des services sociaux où se déroulent des activités de recherche*").

7. Funding and funding period

Once the results are announced, researchers are invited to consult the ***Commun General Rules*** 🔗
📕 on the Fonds' Web site. The guide details the rules pertaining to the use and management of the funds that are granted.

The funding is meant to support the human and material infrastructure required to ensure the proper functioning of the strategic cluster. In this case, the term *infrastructure* refers to all of the joint resources and services required to carry out the cluster's activities. The cluster's budget must consolidate all infrastructure-related expenses.

The application for funding must include a budget for the first year of the grant, taking into account all of the cluster's funding, including the financial support from the university institutions.

7.1 Basic amount

An annual basic amount will be granted to each type of team. The funding is based on the intensity of the implemented activities and the overall scientific quality of the research group.

Emergence funding

	Centre	Network
Duration	3 years	3 years
Basic amount	$85,000	$75,000

Operational funding

	Centre	Network
Duration	6 years	6 years
Basic amount	$180,000-$250,000	$155,000-$230,000

7.2 Additional funds for major research facilities

In addition to the basic amount, additional funds may be granted to support major research facilities ($15 000/year for emerging groups and $45 000/year for operational groups). Teams must request this funding to cover development and operational costs for research facilities (e.g. databases, equipment, laboratories, etc.). The strategic clusters that receive the additional funding must ensure that the facilities are made available to researchers, student researchers and partners, provide extended access to others, offer interinstitutional services and develop access, use and data storage policies, if applicable. Requests for additional funding to support major research facilities must be justified in the Budget section of the eRegroupement platform (7.2.3 for emerging groups, 8.2.3 for operational groups).

7.3 Grant increase and release from teaching duties for college researchers

In addition to the basic amount, a maximum statutory supplement of $7,000/year may be awarded for each college researcher who is a regular member of a funded cluster. These additional amounts are meant for college researchers to cover part of their research expenses and are paid out to the cluster, providing that the college researcher takes part in the team's research activities, regardless of whether or not he/she is released from his/her teaching duties.

College researchers who are regular members of a cluster may request to be released from their teaching duties under the *Programme pour le dégagement de la tâche d'enseignement des chercheurs de collège*. College researchers must fill out the relevant section of the Strategic Clusters program application form.

It is important to note that the release from teaching duties granted to college researchers and the statutory supplement for college researchers are conditional upon the renewal the availability of funds to support these measures. Statutory supplement requests must be justified in the Budget section of the eRegroupement platform (7.2.2 for emerging groups, 8.2.2 for operational groups).

7.4 Grant increase for interregional clusters

A third grant increase of up to $25,000/year is available to clusters with a strong interregional

component to cover the distance-related expenses (travel and living expenses, video conferencing fees, etc.) of regular cluster members. The amount awarded will be calculated by the Fonds on the basis of the geographic distribution of the regular members across Québec and the plan submitted by the centre or network (see **6.2.1**). This increase is aimed at fostering the full participation of all regular members in the scientific development of the cluster. The interregional integration action plan must be presented in the Budget section of the eRegroupement platform (7.2.4 for emerging groups, 8.2.4 for operational groups).

7.5 Eligible expenses

All eligible expenses with regards to the basic amount and college researcher and interregional cluster funding increases are described in the table below.

ELIGIBLE EXPENSES

Expense	Description	Basic amount	CHC *	Interregional cluster
Salaries				
- Release from teaching duties - Release for partners - Undergraduate students - Graduate students - Postgraduate students - Postdoctoral research trainees - Research professionals - Research technicians - Administrative staff	The release from teaching duties must be used to carry out management and coordination tasks. It may be attributed to the cluster leader or to researchers who are responsible for management or coordination tasks. The salaries of cluster students, trainees (1) and staff members must cover management and coordination tasks and tasks related to research, training, research structuring, dissemination, transfer and commercialization activities. (1) Salary expenses for postdoctoral trainees (STP) with collaborating researcher status within the cluster are eligible.	X	X	
Scholarships				
- Undergraduate students - Graduate students - Postgraduate students - Postdoctoral research trainees	Amounts must support students.	X	X	X
Professional fees				
- Guest researchers - Guest speakers - Consultants	Professional fees and travel and living expenses	X	X	X
Travel and living expenses	For regular or collaborating member researchers, students and fellows and research personnel	X	X	X

Materials, supplies and equipment (non Information Technology-related)	X	X	
Computer supplies, telecommunications and data banks	X	X	
Dissemination of research outcomes, reproduction, publishing, reprography or translation	X	X	

* **CHC**: College researcher

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8. Evaluation

The Fonds will assemble an international multidisciplinary evaluation committee made up of university researchers and representatives from various public and private research sectors. The committee may call upon a sub-committee for site visits or to meet with cluster representatives and university administrators. If necessary, the committee may also call upon the services of external experts.

Multidisciplinary committee members will assess the funding applications based on the evaluation criteria and indicators in effect as part of the Strategic Clusters program.

An overall passing score of 70% is required. In addition, a passing score of 70% is also required for the progress report (*Bilan des réalisations*) for the clusters that are already funded as part of the program, the scientific program section (*Programmation scientifique*) for centre teams and structuring initiative section (*Initiative structurante*) for networks.

The program officer will ensure that all committee members comply with the evaluation criteria, processes and ethical rules in effect. In collaboration with the multidisciplinary evaluation committee chairperson, the program officer will determine the sub-committee members and external experts who will be consulted and see that the funding proposals remain in line with the program's budget.

8.1 Evaluation criteria and indicators

The applications will only be evaluated based on the information submitted by the team. It is the responsibility of the applicants to provide all of the information that must be taken into account in the evaluation process. The budget estimates must illustrate the team's intentions in terms of the structuring of the activities, and the coherence between the application and the budget will therefore be considered in the evaluation. The committee will especially assess the effectiveness and added value of the requested support as it pertains to the criteria outlined below. More specifically, the applications will be evaluated according the following criteria and weighting.

8.1.1 Operating centre

Centre progress report and advancement of knowledge a) with regards to the previous application (for centres seeking to renew their funding) or b) in the past three years (for centres that are not currently funded and which are applying for operational funding) : 20 points

- Contribution of the research thrusts to the advancement of knowledge in the field and relevance of the development of the scientific program, including follow-up on any recommendations outlined in the mid-point evaluation, if applicable (10 points);
- Quality and relevance of the activities that made the team a leading research group, including scientific activities, training, dissemination and transfer (10 points).

A passing score of 70% for this criterion is required.

Scientific program : 30 points

- Originality, relevance and scope of the scientific program based on current knowledge in the field (10 points);
- Relevance and accuracy of the theoretical, conceptual and methodological bases of the scientific program (10 points);
- Relevance of the research thrusts and of their interrelation; coherence of the objectives and current and planned projects (10 points).

A passing score of 70% for this criterion is required.

Composition and coordination: 20 points

- Leader's ability to carry out the research program (skills, leadership, experience) and relevance of the coordination efforts (10 points);
- Quality of the scientific output of team members and complementarity of their skills as they pertain

to the scientific program (10 points).

Researcher collaboration: 10 points

- Quality and scope of the collaborative activities for centre members.

Research training: 10 points

- Quality, coherence and diversity of the experiences and support available to student-researchers beyond their study programs, including mechanisms provided for their integration.

Reach: 5 points

- Relevance and diversity of the actions planned to foster the centre's national and international reach.

Transfer: 5 points

- Quality and relevance of the activities planned to disseminate the research results and ensure they are transferred to the practice settings involved in the program.

8.1.2 Operating network

Network progress report a) with regards to the previous application (for networks seeking to renew their funding) or b) in the past three years (for networks that are not currently funded and which are applying for operational funding) : 20 points

- Structuring effect of the network's activities on the targeted field of research, including follow-up on any recommendations outlined in the mid-point evaluation, if applicable (10 points);
- Quality and relevance of the activities that made the team a leading research group, including scientific activities, training, dissemination and transfer (10 points).

A passing score of 70% for this criterion is required.

Structuring initiative: 40 points

- Significance and relevance of the research field and targeted needs (10 points);
- Relevance of the means that will be deployed in light of the objectives (10 points);
- Quality and relevance of the planned partner activities to foster knowledge development and the commercialization of research results and their appropriation by organizations, practitioners and decision-makers (10 points);
- Scope of the anticipated structuring effects, added value of the network's activities in the research field and quality and relevance of planned actions to foster the network's national and international reach (10 points).

A passing score of 70% for this criterion is required.

Composition and coordination: 20 points

- Leader's ability to carry out the structuring initiative (skills, leadership, experience) and relevance of the coordination efforts (10 points);
- Quality of the scientific output of team members and complementarity of their skills as they pertain to the network project (10 points).

Researcher collaboration: 10 points

- Quality and scope of the collaborative activities to create and maintain productive links between network members.

Research training: 10 points

- Quality, coherence and diversity of the experiences and support available to student-researchers beyond their study programs, including mechanisms provided for their integration.

8.1.3 Emerging centre

Scientific program : 30 points

- Originality, relevance and scope of the scientific program to be consolidated based on current knowledge (10 points);
- Relevance and accuracy of the theoretical, conceptual and methodological bases of the scientific program that will be consolidated (10 points);
- Relevance of the research thrusts of the scientific program that will be consolidated and of their interrelation (10 points).

A passing score of 70% for this criterion is required.

Centre development plan : 40 points

- Quality and relevance of the centre's development plan: clarity of the objectives, effectiveness of the planned measures, soundness of the project schedule, quality of the research training plan, scientific activities, reach and transfer (20 points);
- Quality and relevance of the planned consultation activities and added value of the grant to

ensure the consolidation of the scientific program and the development of the centre (20 points).

Composition and coordination: 30 points

- Leader's ability to develop the centre (skills, leadership, experience) and relevance of the coordination efforts (10 points);
- Quality of the scientific output of team members as it pertains to the scientific program that will be consolidated (10 points);
- Complementarity of team members' skills as they pertain to the scientific program that will be consolidated (10 points).

8.1.4 Emerging network

Structuring initiative: 30 points

- Significance and relevance of the research field and targeted needs (10 points);
- Added value of the development of the structuring initiative for the research field and research training, including benefits for research training (20 points).

A passing score of 70% for this criterion is required.

Network development plan: 40 points

- Quality and relevance of the network's development plan: clarity of the objectives, effectiveness of the planned measures, soundness of the project schedule, quality of the research training plan, scientific activities, reach and transfer (20 points);
- Quality of the planned consultation activities and added value of the grant to ensure the consolidation of the network project (20 points).

Composition and coordination: 30 points

- Leader's ability to develop the network (skills, leadership, experience) and relevance of the coordination efforts (10 points);
- Quality of the scientific output of team members (10 points);
- Complementarity of team members' skills as they pertain to the structuring initiative (10 points).

9. Follow up

Every strategic cluster must provide the Fonds with a revised budget and a financial report, in May and June respectively of each year of funding. In furthermore, each Cluster has the responsability to update its dossier yearly through the eRegroupement application, including the membership, before the end of the financial year (March 31st). The FRQSC will only make a reminder notice at the time of the evaluation process. In addition, a mid-point evaluation will be carried out for groups that receive operational funding in order to evaluate the progress of the work according to the initial application. In light of the results of this evaluation, the mid-point evaluation committee may recommend whether or not to continue the funding or formulate any other recommendations deemed appropriate. Clusters subject to a mid-point evaluation will be notified well in advance of the conditions under which the evaluation will take place.

10. General considerations

All of the programs must be approved by the government, and the grants are subject to government credits.

The Fonds reserves the right to modify the value of the grant and the program rules detailed in this document without prior notice.

Applicants must respect the eligibility criteria of the program and the ***Common General Rules*** 🗗 PDF , which are available on the Web site of Fonds Société et Culture.

11. Effective date

These rules apply to the 2017-2018 fiscal year.

Updated April 18, 2016

Program rules (for print) 🖾 PDF

12. Appendix : Strategic cluster member categories

Regular researcher

A university researcher, college researcher, collaborator in a practice setting, research practitioner, institutional researcher or government researcher, who contributes significantly to carrying out the scientific program (centre) or structuring initiative (network). His/or scientific productivity is subject to evaluation.

Collaborating researcher

A university researcher or a researcher in community-based research, who contributes regularly or occasionally to the necessary research activities of a project within a scientific research program. This person is therefore a collaborator within the group and his scientific productivity is not evaluated.

For a definition of each researcher status, refer to Appendix 1 (b) of the **Commun General Rules.** 🖾 PDF

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