



Request for Proposal (RFP): High School Recruitment and Early Pipeline Development for Dental Schools Admissions

1. Introduction and Background

In 2019, the Canadian Dental Association (CDA) committed \$1 million to support research on dental school admissions in Canada, with the goal of strengthening the evidence base underpinning admissions tools and processes and ensuring their continued relevance to the profession. Working in collaboration with Canadian dental schools and other partners, CDA established a national research agenda focused on predictive validity, fairness, professional competencies, and the identification of promising admissions practices. Initial projects examined the role of manual dexterity assessments and explored the humanistic characteristics of successful dental school candidates.

Following pandemic-related disruptions, CDA reconvened its admissions research committee in 2025 to reassess priorities and identify opportunities for the remaining research funding. Subsequent consultations, including the 2026 CDA–ACFD Admissions Conference, highlighted the need for greater attention to increasing representation within the dental profession by strengthening pathways into dental education for students from underrepresented communities.

Through this Request for Proposals (RFP), CDA seeks research to inform the design, feasibility, and potential implementation of a coordinated national approach to high school recruitment and early pipeline development. The study will assess strategies to engage and support students from underrepresented communities—including, but not limited to, Indigenous, Black, other racialized populations, individuals from low socioeconomic backgrounds, and those from rural or remote communities—by increasing awareness of dentistry as a career, strengthening academic readiness, and reducing barriers to access.

This work is intended to complement existing and emerging admissions initiatives by expanding and diversifying the future pool of qualified applicants to Canadian dental schools.

2. Scope of Work

The scope of this component will include, but is not limited to, the following:

1. Environmental Scan of Existing Pipeline Initiatives

- Identify and document existing outreach, pipeline, or early recruitment initiatives in Canada and, where relevant, in comparable international contexts.
- Describe key program characteristics.
- Identify common approaches, variations across models, and emerging trends.

2. Assessment of Recruitment and Engagement Approaches

- Examine strategies used to engage high school students from underrepresented communities.
- Identify factors associated with effective engagement, sustained participation, and student retention in pipeline programs.

3. Barriers and Enablers to Participation

- Identify key barriers that may limit participation in early pipeline.
- Identify enabling factors that support participation and success, including the role of representation, culturally responsive programming, family engagement, and institutional support.

4. Impact on Awareness, Readiness, and Aspirations

- Assess the potential or demonstrated impact of early pipeline initiatives on:
 - Student awareness of dentistry as a career
 - Academic preparedness and confidence in pursuing post-secondary education
 - Interest in and intention to apply to dental programs
- Where data permits, examine connections between early exposure and subsequent application and admissions outcomes.

5. Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Considerations

- Evaluate how early pipeline initiatives contribute to improving access for underrepresented and underserved populations.
- Identify considerations to ensure that recruitment strategies are inclusive, culturally appropriate, and responsive to the needs of diverse communities.

6. Implementation and Scalability

- Assess the feasibility of implementing pipeline initiatives at scale across Canada, including:
 - Resource and funding requirements
 - Opportunities for coordination across institutions
 - Potential roles for CDA and partner organizations in supporting or facilitating national efforts
 - Consider governance models and potential coordination mechanisms for a pan-Canadian approach.
- Identify program models that could be adapted, expanded, or standardized within the Canadian context.

Proponents are expected to employ rigorous and appropriate methodologies, which may include literature reviews, environmental scans, qualitative and/or quantitative analysis, and stakeholder engagement.

7. Recommendations

- Provide clear, actionable, and evidence-based recommendations on:
 - Effective models for early recruitment and sustained engagement
 - Alignment between high school pipeline initiatives and existing special pathways programs
 - Opportunities to develop a coordinated or national approach to pipeline development

3. Reporting and Governance

- The consultant will report to a designated CDA project lead.

- Updates will be provided to the Committee on Dental School Admissions Assessment Tools, including progress, risks, and preliminary findings.

The researcher may be requested to attend select committee meetings to present interim findings.

4. Proposal Requirements

Interested parties should submit a proposal that includes:

- A one-page project summary
- The main proposal (maximum of 5 pages)
- An overview of the research team comprising a one-page description of the team highlighting relevant expertise and experience, plus two-page CV's or biosketches of the applicants
- The project timeline and milestones.
- The project budget.

All these materials should be submitted using 1.0 line-spacing and 12-point font.

5. Evaluation Criteria

Proposals will be evaluated based on the following:

- Relevant experience and expertise of the research team, including inter-institutional collaboration, and diversity of length and type of experience of applicants (25%)
- Methodological approach including justification for approaches proposed (25%)
- Coherence of the proposal to achieve the goal of improving admissions for DMD-DDS (20%)
- Clear indicators of success of the proposal (20%)
- Appropriateness of budget (10%)

6. Submission Details

- **Submission Method:** Please e-mail your proposal to Isabelle Gingras: igingras@cda-adc.ca
- **Questions and Clarifications:** All inquiries should be directed to Isabelle Gingras at igingras@cda-adc.ca.

7. Timeline

Milestone	Date
RFP Issued	September 2, 2026
Proposal Submission Deadline	November 6, 2026
Communication of results	January, 2027
Project Start Date	February, 2027
Interim Reports	Semi-Annually Reporting
Final Report Due	2 years after the beginning of project

8. Confidentiality

All information shared during the proposal process and throughout the project must be treated as confidential. Before information is shared, bidders must sign a confidentiality agreement. Internal documents will be shared after a non-disclosure agreement is executed.

9. Budget

The budget allocated for this project is estimated to be between \$50,000 and \$225,000. Respondents are encouraged to submit proposals that fall within this range and provide clear justification for the proposed costs. The final budget will be determined based on the scope of work, value offered, and alignment with the project's objectives. Proposals exceeding the upper limit may not be considered unless exceptional value is clearly