

Future Skills Centre – Centre des Compétences futures

Thematic call guidelines for projects to support mid-career
workers

Introduction

Canada's competitiveness and prosperity relies on the skills of its workforce, however it is clear that we are in a time of disruptive change. There is ample evidence that traditional approaches, linear models, and conventional structures for training and skills development are not keeping pace with change. There is an urgent need to understand what skills Canadians will need to prosper in the future and how Canada can better leverage its current skills development infrastructure to meet these needs.

The Future Skills Centre – Centre des Compétences futures (FSC-CCF) has been established to advance evidence-driven innovation in Canada's skills and training ecosystem that will prepare Canadians to adapt and succeed in tomorrow's workforce. To achieve this goal, the FSC-CCF is working with stakeholders across the country to develop, test and evaluate innovative projects focused on preparing Canadians for the workplace of tomorrow.

Call overview

As noted by the Advisory Council on Economic Growth, Canada's current skills development infrastructure offers few training opportunities for mid-career workers.¹ Yet this group will increasingly be impacted by labour market disruptions that will displace existing jobs, create new jobs that demand different skills, and change the trajectory of many Canadians' working lives. In many sectors and regions labour market disruption is already occurring, leaving many Canadians in precarious economic positions without the support they need to build new skills, increase their capacity, and navigate an increasingly complex world of work.

The FSC-CCF is seeking proposals for innovative projects that help fill gaps in training opportunities for mid-career workers (i.e. individuals who have been working for several years). The Centre will work with successful project proponents to support efforts to generate forward looking, responsive, and evidence-informed solutions to better meet the needs of mid-career workers facing challenges in the labour market.

Submission deadline

The deadline to submit a proposal is 4pm EST, May 2, 2019.

¹ Advisory Council on Economic Growth. (2017). *Learning Nation: Equipping Canada's Workforce with Skills for the Future*.

All required documents must be provided at the time of submission. Please note that incomplete or late applications will not be considered.

Objective

The objective of this *Support for Mid-Career Workers* call is to test and evaluate innovative projects that have the potential to generate actionable evidence about how to better meet the skills needs of mid-career workers. FSC-CCF is seeking proposals from applicants to deliver projects that help answer the question: *how can Canada better support mid-career workers to succeed in the labour market?* Potential areas of focus include:

- Supporting displaced workers – In the future Canadian workers will face new and changing skills requirements in the workplace. What are the most promising approaches for supporting these workers, and are there innovative solutions that could help these workers build resilience and adapt to future changes in the labour market?
- Building skills of workers in need of up-skilling – Many more mid-career workers are at risk of displacement or will face new job requirements in the future. How can stakeholders work together to support these incumbent workers to ensure they are prepared for the workplace of tomorrow?
- Ongoing learning and career progression – Current skills development systems are largely oriented towards helping people find jobs. Fewer supports exist to promote lifelong learning, career advancement, and resilience to labour market changes for mid-career workers, especially those with out of date skills. What can be done to better support ongoing learning and career progression for these workers?

Examples of eligible activities include:

- Development and evaluation of new approaches for measuring or communicating skills to help facilitate more successful labour market transitions for mid-career workers;
- Development of new approaches or adaptation of existing models of potential skills development solutions for mid-career workers; and,
- Rigorous testing of innovative skills development solutions for mid-career workers to assess their effectiveness in improving participants' labour market prospects.

This call is not designed to fund existing, ongoing service delivery activities.

All projects should show awareness of recent innovations in skills development, and should aim to make a meaningful contribution to the skills development evidence-base. Proposed projects should align with the FSC-CCF's goals to create opportunities for under-represented,

marginalized and vulnerable groups and incorporate diverse knowledge, worldviews and experiences.

Organization eligibility

Applications may be submitted by a sole organization, or a consortium of organizations, including:

- Legally incorporated not-for-profit organizations, including not-for-profit social enterprises and registered charities
- Publicly-funded post-secondary institutions
- Industry associations
- Professional associations
- An Indigenous organization that is a legal entity
- Municipalities or District Social Services Administration Boards
- For profit companies (provided the project is undertaken at cost with no mark-ups or profit incorporated)

The following types of organizations are not eligible to apply:

- Provinces or territories
- Federal government bodies
- Individual persons

Applications with multiple partners are eligible to apply however, one organization must be identified as the lead applicant for the purpose of signing the funding agreement, receiving and managing the funds, ensuring coordination of project parties and activities, and communicating with the FSC-CCF regarding the status of the project on behalf of all partners. All participating organizations must be eligible as set out above.

Applicants are only eligible to lead on one application, but may participate in more than one application.

Funding amounts, duration and eligible expenses

Projects of all different sizes and stages of development will be considered. The maximum award for an individual project is \$1.5 million, for a total disbursement of \$4 million. The maximum duration of projects is 24 months.

Applications are required to provided a detailed budget and funding requests should be commensurate with the level of effort required to successfully deliver on project outcomes.

While direct matching funds are not required for this call, a demonstration of in-kind support on a 1:1 basis is strongly encouraged.

Expenditures that are reasonable and necessary for the successful implementation of the project will be eligible for reimbursement, subject to the parameters below. Expenditures must be incurred in accordance with an approved budget, supported by acceptable documentation, and occur during the project term in direct support of the project. Eligible expenditures must all pertain to “net new” or incremental activity that would not otherwise occur without project funding. The expenditures must therefore not relate to existing or planned activities delivered with government or other funding. The recipient must maintain documentation / receipts for all expenditures.

Eligible expenditures include:

- Salaries, including benefits for personnel;
- Expenses related to project administration, up to 12% of the funding requested;
- Project participant costs (i.e. honorariums for surveys, focus group participation, etc);
- Office supplies and services;
- Equipment and software;
- Financial and professional services required for the delivery of the project;
- Telecommunications/courier charges (e.g., telephone, Internet, mail and courier);
- Production costs for resource development such as graphic design, printing, translation into other languages, alternative formats;
- Expenses associated with outreach events and training sessions directly related to program activities;
- Audit costs, notwithstanding they are incurred outside of the Project Period;
- The cost of travel, meals and accommodation in accordance with the rates for public servants set out in the National Joint Council of Canada’s Travel Directive; and,
- Hospitality costs incurred in accordance with rates set out in the Directive on the Management of Expenditures on Travel, Hospitality and Conferences, Appendix A, section 2.3 of Canada's Treasury Board.

Ineligible expenses include:

- Costs not directly associated with meeting the deliverables and milestones;
- Costs related to proposal development (including personnel costs);
- Capital costs (e.g. land, building, vehicles, leasehold improvements);
- Entertainment expenses, gifts and alcoholic beverages;
- Reimbursement for airfare purchased with personal frequent flyer points programs;
- Fines and penalties;
- Donations in the form of goodwill and other intangibles;
- Opportunity costs;
- Standard discounts;
- Interest charges;

- Allowance for interest on invested capital, bonds, debentures, bank or other loans together with related bond discounts and finance charges;
- Depreciation of assets;
- Expenses and depreciation of excess facilities;
- Annual general meetings, budget deficits, membership fees, fundraising activities, committee and political meetings, or religious activities;
- Costs covered by other government funding;
- Profit;
- Contingency or unexplained miscellaneous costs; and,
- The portion of the cost of any goods and services purchased by the Recipient for which the Recipient may claim a tax credit or reimbursement.

Annual audited financial statements will be required for all projects that have annual budgets in excess of \$500,000 a year. Audited final reports must be provided for projects that have a total a budget of \$1,000,000 or higher. Audit costs should be included in the budget if relevant.

The program is a discretionary and non-entitlement fund with a limited budget. Therefore, notwithstanding any other statement or provision in these Guidelines, even if an application meets all stated criteria there is no guarantee that funding will be awarded as there may be other applicants that more effectively meet the objectives. FSC-CCF reserves the right to take into consideration location and diversity of applications to ensure program objectives are met.

Tri-Council Policy Statement

The Tri-Council Policy Statement (TCPS 2) is a Canadian Government policy statement that sets ethics standards for conducting research on human subjects. All funded projects must comply with the guidelines set out in the TCPS 2, and must be approved by a qualified research ethics board if required by those guidelines. Organizations that do not otherwise have access to a research ethics board may utilize the services of the Ryerson University Research Ethics Board to obtain approval. All such approvals must be obtained prior to the commencement of the project.

Evaluation and knowledge mobilization

The FSC-CCF is committed to generating evidence about what works in skills development. As part of this commitment, the Centre is requiring all funded projects to participate in evaluation activities funded by the FSC-CCF.

Evaluation tools and approaches will be co-designed with project proponents to ensure relevance, appropriateness, and usability. In addition, evaluations will be designed with a focus

on building the proponent’s capacity to use evaluation and evaluative thinking to improve their performance. The Centre’s evaluation team will reach out to successful proponents within the first 60 days to begin co-designing an evaluation approach.

A gender plus diversity lens will be embedded in the evaluation approach, respecting the “nothing about us without us” approach that ensures evaluations are informed by and aligned with the needs of diverse groups who are impacted by innovation projects.

The FSC-CCF is also committed to sharing the results of the projects with a wide audience to enhance the use of evidence in the skills development ecosystem. The Centre will work with successful proponents to implement effective knowledge translation and dissemination activities to share important findings and lessons learned.

As a requirement of the funding FSC-CCF recipients of the funding must agree to make the findings created, generated or otherwise arising from activities carried under the auspices of the Project available free of charge to the public as widely as, and using as many channels as is required to fully support and facilitate the goals and objectives of the FSC-CCF, and must agree to give a license to the FSC-CCF and Canada to enable such publication and dissemination in furtherance of fulfilling the FSC-CCF’s mandate.

In addition to working with the FSC-CCF to support evaluation and knowledge mobilization activities, project proponents will also be required to participate in collaborative events and activities to support shared learning, knowledge mobilization, and build a community of practice among projects supported by the FSC-CCF.

By submitting an application, you are agreeing that you are committed to participating in evaluation and knowledge mobilization activities.

Selection criteria

Submissions will be reviewed by a selection committee according to the following criteria:

- **Relevance and need** – Projects must be designed to address a clearly defined and well-specified need related to skills development challenges faced by mid-career workers as outlined in this call.
- **Equity, diversity and inclusion** – Projects should align with the FSC-CCF’s goals to create opportunities for under-represented, marginalized and vulnerable groups and incorporate diverse knowledge, worldviews, and experiences.
- **Innovation** – Projects will use new approaches and ideas to answer questions that have not been previously answered. This could include:
 - testing promising approaches from outside of Canada;

- using new tools or approaches that have not been widely applied in skills training;
 - using new platforms or approaches for consulting with target populations;
 - piloting an established approach with a new target population; and,
 - scaling a small-scale approach to rigorously assess its impact.
- Impact and evidence – Projects must be positioned to add to the knowledge base and generate actionable evidence that contributes to a better understanding of how to strengthen Canada’s skills development ecosystem.
 - Capacity to deliver – Project proponents must have proven organizational capacity to implement innovative skills development approaches at the scale and scope required and to participate in research and evaluation activities.
 - Aligns scale and budget – The budget of pilot projects will reflect their scale and complexity.

Following decisions, the FSC-CCF will reach out to provincial-territorial governments where activities will be undertaken to provide them with advance notice of projects that will be funded in their jurisdictions. Once that outreach has been completed, the FSC-CCF will work with successful proponents to establish project agreements. As the host organization for the FSC-CCF, all project agreements will be made with Ryerson University.

Confidentiality

Ryerson University (the host organization for FSC-CCF) is subject to the *Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (FIPPA)*. The Act provides every person with a right of access to information in the custody or under the control of the Ryerson University, subject to a limited set of exemptions. Section 17 of the Act provides a limited exemption for third party information that reveals a trade secret or scientific, commercial, technical, financial or labour relations information supplied in confidence where disclosure of the information could reasonably be expected to result in certain harms.

Any trade secret or any scientific, technical, commercial, financial or labour relations information submitted to Ryerson University in confidence should be clearly marked as such. Ryerson University will provide notice before allowing access to a record that might contain information referred to in Section 17 so that the affected party may make representations to Ryerson University concerning disclosure in accordance with FIPPA.