Frequently Asked Questions for Stage 2 of the August 2019 Call for Proposals

Updated December 4, 2019

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52. Can image files be submitted as part of the full proposal application? Or would they need to be embedded in the documents?

53. Is it possible to get a list of the file types and extensions that will work?

54. Is there a space/part in the application form for an appendix? Additional supporting text or figures?

55. Given the limited character count, can we embed roll-over links as sources for evidence for our project? Should there be hyperlinks to source information? There is no need for citations, e.g. MLA or APA citation, correct?

56. For in-kind and other financial contributions, should this indicated in the letters of support? In the case where we have contribution agreements are those agreements sufficient as proof of contribution?

57. You mentioned that the target audience, intended group of people that the application addresses, *needs* to be included in the program creation ? Or did I hear that wrong?

58. Regarding the inclusion of the target group in the project, would you hope to see this with youth and child relevant programs as well?

59. Is the work plan specific to knowledge mobilization or for the project overall?

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61. Is it possible to access a downloadable version of the application questions?

62. Do rural workers fall under the EDI demographic groups?

1. **If an organization has a current Funding Agreement with the Future Skills Centre, can it submit a new proposal under this Call?**

In order for the Centre to identify, test, measure, and share innovative approaches regarding skills needs, we seek a range of proposals and encourage all eligible organizations to apply under this Call. Please refer to the Organization Eligibility section of the Call for Proposals Guidelines.

An organization with a current Funding Agreement can submit one Letter of Interest as the lead organization to this Call. It can participate as a partner on one or several Letters of Interest.

Additional funds for the continuation of existing activities and/or to support substantive scope changes of currently funded projects are not eligible for funding under this Call.

2. **How are the following defined: essential skills; skills development; skills development systems; skills development infrastructure; and, training methods?**

Essential skills include reading, writing, document use, numeracy, thinking, computer use/digital skills, soft skills (e.g. problem-solving, oral communication, working with others) and continuous learning skills.

Skills development is defined as the creation or strengthening of skills, which are relevant to the workforce system, that enable individuals to participate in trade(s) or occupation(s).

A skills development system includes the intellectual knowledge; human resources; organizations; networks; infrastructure; policies, institutions, procedures and practices; and physical assets that enable skills identification, transfer, application, testing, etc.

Skills development infrastructure encompasses the digital technologies, intellectual property, physical and other resources related to the formation of skills.

Training methods include in-person, through online platforms, coaching, experiential opportunities or a combination of approaches.

3. **Can I revise an application from a previous Call and submit a Letter of Interest for this Call?**

All submissions will be considered regardless of the outcome of previous requests for funding.

4. **Our project involves costs associated with curriculum modification, assessment development, staff training, equipment, and physical infrastructure costs. Are these permitted?**

All of these costs appear to be eligible as they relate to the direct development and delivery of the project. A full list of eligible and ineligible costs will be shared with shortlisted projects for the application stage; and detailed project budgets will be reviewed at that time.

5. **Who would own intellectual property arising from the project?**

The Future Skills Centre or Canada will not claim any ownership rights in any intellectual property arising from a funded project.

Project proponents must agree to allow FSC and Canada to use all data, information and documentary material related to the project that is necessary for the purpose of evaluation of the project, and verification of compliance with the funding Agreement.

The goal of the Future Skills Centre is to create and disseminate new knowledge and learning for the benefit of Canada and Canadians. As such, project proponents must agree to make public all research and evaluation information resulting from the project, including the project results, interim and final articles, papers, interim and final reports. This would include publication on the FSC website, and through other means that will achieve a wide distribution.

Given the goal of the Centre is to help identity new approaches, interventions and tools that will help Canadians succeed in the current and future workforce, project proponents must agree to use reasonable efforts to make beneficial approaches, interventions or tools developed or tested through the funded project available to the public. This could include making it available free of charge, or for a fee.

6. **Can newcomers to Canada or permanent residents of Canada be included in the target demographics of projects?**

Yes. The Centre has a particular focus on equity-seeking groups and underserved communities, including women, youth, Indigenous peoples, newcomers, racialized peoples, LGBTQ2S+ peoples, persons with disabilities, veterans, and people from rural, remote, and northern communities.

7. **What stream (innovation or evidence) would our proposal fall under if it is based on a series of assessments that have significant bodies of research and are not new to the marketplace, but the combination of approaches is unique?**

As part of the adjudication process for this Call for Proposals, the adjudication panel will assess Letters of Interest to determine whether they best fit in the innovation stream or evidence stream. This would be based on a review of existing substantive evidence (as applicable).

8. **Can an organization that is part of or affiliated with the Future Skills Centre or its partners submit a Letter of Interest?**

All eligible organizations may apply and Letters of Interest would be considered on their own merit. The Future Skills Centre follows strict conflict of interest protocols to ensure that all appropriate measures are taken to identify and avoid unfair advantage and perceived conflicts of interest before and during the review, adjudication, due diligence and selection processes.

9. **What budget items are eligible? Are the following eligible: student scholarships or stipends; indirect costs/overhead?**

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.

10. **Is there a maximum percentage of direct costs that can be included in the budget?**

There is no prescribed maximum percentage for direct costs.

11. What is the maximum percentage of overhead/indirect costs that can be applied to a request?

Eligible expenses can include expenses related to project administration, up to 12% of the funding requested.

12. What would enable a project to qualify for the Evidence Stream over the Innovation Stream? What can be considered as evidence examples?

Evidence Stream projects will have demonstrated that their proposed project effectively addresses a pressing skills development challenge. Evidence would include data and/or information that supports or disputes the proposed intervention. It can be qualitative and/or quantitative. Evidence that could qualify a project for the evidence stream could include previous evaluation results, published literature on the proposed intervention, organizational history of data-driven learning, field leadership approach or organizational history of identifying and implementing best practice.

Innovation stream projects will be in an earlier development phase and need to develop robust theories of change and/or explore to what extent project activities produce target outcomes.

13. Can seniors be considered a relevant target population or an under-represented group?

Seniors can be considered as a target group as they may not be (fully) participating in the workforce.

14. Do projects need to be national in scope or can they be regional or local, based on need?

The geographic scope of the project can be local, regional or national. It can be executed virtually, in-person and/or hybrid formats.

15. Does the Future Skills Centre intend to fund projects that aim to enhance certain sub-components within the post secondary education system, which can be considered as part of a skills development ecosystem?

The Centre is currently seeking proposals for innovative projects that develop and test new or emerging approaches under three broad themes. The post secondary education system is part of the skills development system and therefore is relevant to the third theme.

16. Are programs with a long duration a good fit for this Call?

It depends on a number of factors. For instance, the duration of the project, schedule of activities that are to generate actionable evidence, alternative financing secured beyond the Call time-frame. For this Call, projects must launch by June 30, 2020, and must be completed and funds spent by June 30, 2022 (i.e. the duration of projects is 24 months maximum).

17. What stream (Innovation or Evidence) would our proposal fall under if it is based on a series of assessments that have significant bodies of research but the combination of approaches is unique?

Applications with both new and tested elements will be reviewed carefully by the adjudication panel to determine which evidence-generation approach, and technical support, are best suited to successful implementation of the project. Successful applicants may be asked for more information to help inform the best stream as part of the invitation to submit a full proposal.

18. **The Call indicates that it is designed to fund new activities and the expansion of existing activities to new clients and geographies. Can a project concept originate from outside of Canada?**

Yes

19. **Are 'young people' stated in the Call synonymous with 'youth' in this Call and what is their age range?**

Yes and the age range is 15-30 years old.

20. **Our project will involve working with Indigenous communities and Indigenous youth workers, and we follow the OCAP principles. Will we be able to ensure that we can continue following the OCAP principles in whatever evaluation and knowledge mobilization strategy is co-developed?**

The Centre is presently funding projects that focus on indigenous communities and follow The First Nations principles of OCAP®. The Centre's goal of knowledge mobilization is to distribute information to communities in a way that works for them and is respectful of their beliefs.

21. **My organization is relatively new, is that a disadvantage?**

Applicants can consider the internal and/or external resources available and required to undertake the proposed activities. The adjudication committee will assess the information provided in the Letter of Interest to determine the capacity of the organization or consortium to execute the project.

22. **Can persons who may eventually become self-employed or an entrepreneur, be a target group?**

Yes. The Call does not specify the type of employment a person should eventually attain.

23. **Who is a project partner?**

As it relates to 'Organization Eligibility' in the Letter of Interest, a project partner is the organization that will be jointly applying with the lead organization for funding. Entities providing professional services (i.e. undertaking the project activities and tasks) can include the lead organization, applicant's partners, external organizations.

24. **How many cohorts of training can be undertaken in the maximum project duration (24 months)?**

Project design is the applicant's responsibility although the Centre and/or its consortium partners may meet with grantees to discuss how substantive findings would be generated, as it relates to the Common Indicators Framework and research.

Considerations may include the availability of resources to conduct the training, training duration, data collection and reporting period, number of cohorts required to generate substantive findings (i.e. control and repeats), etc.

25. When will the next call for proposals take place?

Dates for future funding opportunities have not been specified as yet; the Centre will publicize these through the website, newsletter, etc.

26. We noticed that there is no economic impact/minimum participant threshold sections. Do most applicants provide this information in Relevance and Need?

The Letter of Interest indicates the required information and selection criteria related to the problem being addressed and the long-term impacts (i.e. outcomes).

The Centre does not share information on submissions to third parties, external to the grant management processes. The Centre has a Common Indicator Framework which includes socio-economic indicators to be captured through the projects (as applicable). Several of these evaluation indicators are related to economic impact, e.g. employment, salary.

Organizations may add additional indicators related to their projects, and efforts will be made to increase efficiency of data collection, reporting, etc..

The Centre is not prescriptive regarding sample sizes or minimum participant level recommendations. A range of projects may be submitted, some of which may not include participants. In other cases, organizations have the responsibility to make these determinations and apply acceptable and standard best practices of project design, analysis, reporting, etc.

27. Is there a methodology for calculating in-kind contributions? For example, how should we estimate the dollar amount that should be attributed to one-day of professional time and will this be the standard used by all applicants)?

There is no standardized methodology

28. When is the submission deadline for the full proposal?

The deadline is 5 p.m. EST on Monday January 13, 2020.

29. Why do I no longer have access to Bonfire?

Submission of the full proposal (stage two of the process) is through a different application portal, short-listed applications should refer to page four of the Guidelines.

30. Can I meet with Future Skills Centre about the proposal?

We are committed to ensuring all project proponents are treated the same. We are not meeting individually with project applicants or their partners. We will not provide answers to questions by telephone.

The Centre is a series of invitational webinars for applicants and their partners. There is the opportunity for questions at these webinars. Recordings will be posted, and questions will be incorporated into our FAQ page.

Webinar Schedule:

Innovation stream
November 28, 2019 1 p.m. EST (English)
December 3, 2019 1 p.m. EST (English)
TBA (French)
Evidence stream
December 4 at 1 p.m. EST (English)
French Innovation Stream
TBA

Also, applicants may submit questions in writing however all queries *must* be submitted before January 5, 2020 at 5 p.m. EST. (i.e. for all but the last week of the proposal period). Written responses will be prepared and posted for all applicants to see.

31. The full proposal application requires information about formal organizational governance, board composition, organizational risk management and compliance, etc. *How will these questions be evaluated? What scoring / weighting will they be assigned within the proposal review?*

These questions are not scored, but organizational health is a prerequisite for capacity, stewardship and accountability for these significant investments in an organization. Satisfactory organizational health will be a requirement for funding.

32. Are organizations without a formal board governance structure able to qualify for funding within the recently released call for proposals for approved Letters of Intent (LOI)?

The Call for Proposals is open to any eligible organization (i.e. 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, and for profit organizations (provided the project is undertaken at cost, with no mark-ups or profit incorporated).
If your organization does not have a formal board governance structure, you must be able to explain the structure for strategic leadership and accountability in your organization.

33. Is it acceptable to submit our proposal with the post-secondary partner as the lead, as they can respond to all the criteria in the application form?

We are only accepting one proposal for each lead organization. If your post-secondary partner is **not** leading another project, **was** named in the initial LOI, is based in the same geography as your organization, and all partners agree they are the most appropriate entity to lead, you may reorganize the leadership roles in your team.

34. Could be an example of a high-quality completed logic model be shared as an example?

The Centre cannot share previously submitted logic models, to individuals and organizations unaffiliated with the review and adjudication processes, publicly and without consent.
There are open access resources available online, in public libraries, etc. Several of these resources explain results based management and the logical framework approach (LFA). These guides may address goal and

objective development, the "if-then" logic between objectives, SMART indicators, activities and outputs, etc. with examples, taking into consideration available human resources, data proxies, etc. Some available resources are available at https://whatworks.org.nz/logic-model/ and https://www.thecompassforsbc.org/how-to-guides/how-develop-logic-model-0

Applicants may wish to be mindful of the FSC Common Indicators Framework during the development of their logic model.

35. Do we have to use you logic model template or can we use our own?
Please use the logic model template provided. Proponents may upload their own as a supplementary attachment if they wish.

36. Is there a word count limitation for the logic model?
No, there is no word count. We are looking for high-level, clear summary.

37. Can you please confirm the size of budget for an innovation project?
The Call can provide support up to a maximum of $1.5 M, for direct eligible expenses, *per project* in the innovation stream. An applicant can determine the amount to be requested from the Centre based on the costs of the proposed activities that would enable it to achieve the project objectives (not covered by other sources), the list of eligible expenses, etc.

38. How many projects will be selected for funding with the innovation stream?
The total funding for the call, including both evidence and innovation streams, is up to $36 million. Final decisions about funding will be based on independent assessment of project quality and potential for evidence, organizational health and the need for a balanced portfolio of projects. We estimate that the proposals in the second round have approximately between a one in two to one in three chance of being funded.

39. Will a copy of the webinar slide deck be sent to participants afterwards?
A recording of the webinar, the slide deck and updated FAQs will be sent to all applicants.

40. Do in-kind contributions fit into matching funds or must it be dollar to dollar match?
Yes, in kind contributions could be considered matching funds.

In-kind contributions and matching funds may be indicated in the project budget (as part of the full proposal application). The budget income sections enable the Centre to determine if the income is in-kind or otherwise.

41. Does in-kind contributions include pro-bono support?
Yes.

42. How flexible are you on the 1:1 contribution? What does it depend on?
We are flexible. A 1:1 contribution was not a requirement of this call but is a goal for Centre funding as a whole.

43. We have letters of support on file, that were generated for other applications, can we use them or do we need new ones?

We expect letters of support be closely tailored to this project, showing partners' understanding of the proposal, the objectives of the Centre, and the nature of their proposed contribution and how they will work with the lead organization.

44. Are we limited to partners within Canada?

The lead organization must be a Canadian entity. Partners may be internal and/or external to Canada and they must meet the eligibility criteria outlined in the LOI Guidelines.

45. Can infrastructure expenses be covered by the Call?

No. Please refer to the list of eligible and ineligible expenses. If unclear about the eligibility of an expense, please email the Centre at projects@fsc-ccf.ca

46. The proposal has character limits, do you mean word count not character count? Does the character count include spaces or just letters?

The proposal limits the number of characters, including spaces. The character counts are based on a standard calculation of 1 word to 7 characters in English, 1 word to 8 characters in French.

47. Will there be an opportunity to receive substantial feedback on our LOI submissions? Particularly our logic model? Are there comments that have been recorded by the reviewers?

Feedback will not be provided on specific LOIs, there will however be a summary of the review findings on the Call for Proposal web page the week of December 2.

48. Can we attach figures to the full proposal application?

Yes, there is space to upload graphics or figures. It can be found in section B3 of the application form.

49. Do we need to or is there a preference that we adhere closely to the common outcomes framework outcomes and indicators in our logic model?

All successful projects will have clearly defined outcomes.

The Common Outcomes Framework is not relevant to *all* projects, particularly systems projects. It is, however, applicable to many service delivery proposals where outcomes such as skills gains, employment or improved quality of work are central to the initiative. Where it is relevant, we will consider favourably proposals that have applied the common outcomes framework as it shows an understanding of the goals of FSC and allows us to estimate our collective impact.

50. Is there the ability to submit video files as a part of this submission?

Video files can not be uploaded. Links to videos may be embedded in text, but reviewers are expected to read the text and will not necessarily follow all hyperlinks.

51. The online application portal enables us to save our work but there is a pop-up that indicated that the draft application would be saved for 28 days, or we had up to 28 days to submit our responses. Does the 28 days "renew" each time we save, or would you suggest we simply save our responses in a Word document and then copy and paste everything into the application form closer to the due date?

We are seeking clarification on the 28 day timeframe from the form provider. In the meantime, and for several reasons, we recommend that you develop your draft in a document and copy and paste when you are close to submission.

52. Can image files be submitted as part of the full proposal application? Or would they need to be embedded in the documents?

Image files (e.g.jpg extension) can be uploaded for certain questions.

53. Is it possible to get a list of the file types and extensions that will work?

The full proposal application form accepts PDF uploads for all fields, except the budget field which is for an Excel (xls or xlsx extension) file upload.

54. Is there a space/part in the application form for an appendix? Additional supporting text or figures?

There are a number of points in the application form where you are invited to upload supplementary documents (e.g., evaluations, diagrams relevant to project design, reference lists). There is no space for a general appendix.

55. Given the limited character count, can we embed roll-over links as sources for evidence for our project? Should there be hyperlinks to source information? There is no need for citations, e.g. MLA or APA citation, correct?

Reviewers may, but are not expected, to pursue hyperlinks. Key information should be embedded in the text.

Applicants are asked what evidence they are using to suggest their project will likely be effective. There is space to upload either evaluations or reference lists in response to those questions. Citations (whatever format) for evidence on which you are relying are expected.

56. For in-kind and other financial contributions, should this indicated in the letters of support? In the case where we have contribution agreements are those agreements sufficient as proof of contribution?

Yes, they should be in the letter of support. If you have a financial commitment from a partner, that can be included in the budget.

57. You mentioned that the target audience, intended group of people that the application addresses, *needs* to be included in the program creation ? Or did I hear that wrong?

Proposals will be evaluated on the question of whether applicants have been able to involve representatives of the target audience and key stakeholders in project planning, design, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. The applicant can indicate its engagement efforts and how the target groups contributed (if relevant). E.g. partnership development, board participation, participation in focus groups.

58. Regarding the inclusion of the target group in the project, would you hope to see this with youth and child relevant programs as well?

Yes, we would like to see involvement of youth at every stage. Appropriate ways of involving different communities will vary depending on the group.

59. Is the work plan specific to knowledge mobilization or for the project overall?

The work plan may include knowledge mobilization activities but should cover the project overall.

60. How many projects will be selected funded under the innovation stream?

The Call budget is $36M but the final number of supported projects under this Call is not known at this point, potentially 20-30 projects might be funded. We do not have a fixed number of projects to be funded under the innovation and evidence streams at this stage, it depends on the projects budgets of the strongest projects and representativeness of a range of challenges, beneficiaries groups, etc. (i.e. funding/investment portfolio diversity).

61. Is it possible to access a downloadable version of the application questions?

No, the application form is an online form.

62. Do rural workers fall under the EDI demographic groups?

Yes.