

Future Skills Centre - Centre des Compétences futures

Guidelines and Instructions **for Stage 2** **Applications**

November 20th, 2019

Call for Proposals Overview and FSC-CCF Objectives

The Future Skills Centre – Centre des Compétences futures (“Centre”) is currently seeking proposals for innovative projects that test and evaluate new or emerging approaches, or that expand, scale and/or replicate promising approaches, to advance the following three objectives:

1. Support Canadian workers facing labour market disruption to transition to new jobs or industries.
2. Engage employers in more effectively developing and delivering demand-driven solutions to skills gap challenges.
3. Optimize skill development systems by building the capacity of service providers to better collaborate with each other and other organizations that could expand or improve their services.

This call for proposals is intended to fund new activities, the evaluation of promising approaches or the expansion of existing activities to new clients and/or geographic areas and/or industry sectors. **Existing, ongoing service delivery activities are not eligible.**

This is Stage 2 of a three-stage process. Only successful applicants from Stage 1 are invited to submit applications for this stage. A limited number of projects will be invited to an interview at the end of February.

About the Future Skills Centre – Centre des

Canada's competitiveness and prosperity rely on a skilled and competent workforce. However, there is mounting evidence that, in a time of rapid economic and labour market change, we need to act collectively to ensure our skill development ecosystem keeps pace with the scale of change we are facing. There is an urgent need to better understand what skills Canadians require to prosper and how Canada can leverage its skill development infrastructure to meet the needs of workers and employers across the country today and into the future.

The Future Skills Centre – Centre des Compétences futures is a forward-thinking research centre dedicated to preparing Canadians for employment success. As a pan-Canadian initiative, we are collaborating across sectors and industries to identify, prototype, test and rigorously measure innovative approaches to skill assessment and development.

Our approach begins with a collaborative and systematic process of identifying solutions with the most promise to move the dial on pressing challenges, and then supporting sustained, high-quality implementation with project partners as we work together to learn what works, for whom, and under what conditions. Our growing portfolio of projects is testing models and approaches across the country to generate and share evidence about how to ensure Canadians are prepared to succeed in the new economy.

FSC-CCF has a particular focus on those who are not currently participating fully in Canada's prosperity — under- and unemployed people, women, youth, Indigenous peoples, newcomers, racialized people, persons with disabilities, LGBTQ2S+ people, veterans, people from rural, remote and northern communities, and people living in official language minority communities.

Application Process and Timelines

The application process for this call for proposals will take place in three stages. This guideline document supports applicants invited to submit full applications for Stage 2.

- Stage 1:** In September 2019, 360 Letters of Intent (LOI) were submitted and assessed by an adjudication panel, subject matter experts and staff. Decisions were communicated to all applicants in early November of the same year.
- Stage 2:** **Successful Stage 1 applicants are now being invited to submit a full application on the [application portal](#) by 5 pm (EDT) on January 13, 2020.**
- Stage 3:** Interviews with Stage 2 shortlisted projects will take place in February 2020. Final decisions will be communicated by the end of February.

Successful projects will be announced in March 2020.

Projects must launch by June 30, 2020, and must be completed and funds spent by June 30, 2022.

FSC-CCF Objectives

The purpose of this Call for Proposals is to identify innovative projects for funding and support. Projects should test and evaluate new or emerging approaches, or expand, scale and/or replicate promising approaches that help advance the Future Skills Centre's three objectives (outlined below). Projects should have the potential to generate actionable evidence about how to better equip Canadians with the skills required to navigate a fast-changing labour market.

This call for proposals is intended to fund new activities, the evaluation of promising approaches and the expansion of existing activities to new clients and/or geographic areas and/or industry sectors. **Existing, ongoing service delivery activities are not eligible.**

The FSC-CCF is seeking proposals that address one or more of these three objectives:

Objective 1: Support Canadians facing labour market disruption to transition to new jobs or industries.

A number of factors, including technological advances, shifting business models and environmental changes, are transforming the workplace at an unprecedented pace. To support Canadians in confidently navigating this new reality, timely and accessible opportunities for upskilling and reskilling are required throughout working lives. This includes strategies to help young people, newcomers and other groups facing barriers to enter the workforce, as well as those seeking to re-enter the labour market after an absence or transition from one career to another.

Potential areas of focus could include:

- Testing new models that improve access, streamline pathways and accelerate the reskilling and upskilling process for Canadian workers.
- Gaining a better understanding of how strategies that strengthen social and emotional resilience can enable more effective career transitions.
- Improving sector-specific career transition supports to enable faster (re) employment for workers who are displaced.
- Developing new learning frameworks (methodologies/curriculum) focused on disruptive technologies to better equip workers for transitions.
- Supporting labour market entry and sustainable employment for youth, newcomers and individuals facing barriers.

Objective 2: Engage employers more effectively in developing and delivering demand-driven solutions to skills gap challenges.

Canadian employers across all sectors of our economy are grappling with how to keep pace with disruptive changes as well as with how to attract, manage, train and retain workers with the right skill sets and competencies. Addressing these challenges is critical to domestic and global competitiveness and, ultimately, to Canada's economic growth. Actively engaging employers in the co-creation of workforce development and training systems solutions is key to ensuring a more inclusive, demand-driven approach to skill building, hiring practices and partnerships that support onboarding and ongoing training of employees.

Potential areas of focus could include:

- Creating demand-driven sectoral pathways that provide pathways to employment, including in-demand skills training and relevant wraparound supports for workers facing barriers.
- Developing work-integrated learning opportunities to support upskilling and reskilling.
- Supporting employers to keep pace with disruptive changes as well as to attract, manage, train and retain workers with future proof skill sets, including technology literate employees.
- Aligning training and skill development approaches with emerging employer demands and sector-specific strategies to address transitions.
- Advancing employer policies, processes and tools to create more inclusive workplaces for Canadians who are not currently participating fully in the workforce.

Objective 3: Optimize skill development systems by building the capacity of service providers to better collaborate with each other and other organizations that could expand or improve their services.

Canada's skills ecosystem is fragmented, challenging our ability to ensure coherent and coordinated approaches for Canadians to access quality training and skills development opportunities and supports. Given the number of disrupting factors challenging the status quo (e.g., aging workforce, accelerating technology advancements, new business models), a stronger ecosystem is essential to ensuring that all Canadians have access to the right opportunities at the right time to develop their skills, and that employers have access to the talent pools they need to grow and prosper. Potential areas of focus could include:

- Supporting technological advancements and emerging practices that enable more collaborative and integrated models of service delivery to improve access to, and quality of, skill development and training.
- Understanding the role of capacity building and technical supports in optimizing workforce development systems by helping employers, practitioners and institutions better coordinate, integrate and measure efforts.
- Developing multi-stakeholder networks, hubs and incubators (which may include business, education, community, Indigenous organizations, labour, not-for-profit organizations, governments) to steer and accelerate progress collectively.
- Supporting new approaches to educational delivery such as micro-credentials, fast-track education, online and blended learning, alternative pathways and other innovative approaches that provide accessible and flexible opportunities to develop marketable skills. and/or
- Understanding how expanded access to more quality, timely and accessible sector-specific labour market forecasts can position employers to better support on-the-job skill development.

Innovation and Evidence Streams

The Future Skills Centre supports projects across the innovation-to-evidence continuum. Our approach to implementation support and evidence generation aims to provide a clear path towards growth and development for each project, whether it involves developing an innovative new model or rigorously testing the impact of an established model to provide evidence needed to make a scaling decision and inform policy.

As part of the assessment process for Stage 2 applications, an assessment panel will evaluate the applications to determine whether they best fit in our innovation or evidence stream:

- The **Innovation Stream** will support successful projects addressing any of the three FSC-CCF objectives that are in an early development phase. Projects in this stream will have access to technical advice and other implementation guidance to support development of robust theories of change, exploration of the extent to which project activities produce target outcomes and identification of factors that contribute to success.
- The **Evidence Stream** will support approaches addressing any of the three FSC-CCF objectives that have existing evidence of their effectiveness and have potential to be a replicable or scalable solution to Canada's most pressing skill development challenges.

The two streams will help the Centre ensure a balanced portfolio of projects across the innovation-to-evidence continuum. We will work closely with successful project partners in both streams to design a customized evaluation approach that aligns with each project's purpose, context and goals.

Funding Amounts and Project Duration

Projects of all different sizes and stages of development will be considered.

The total budget for this call is \$36 million. The maximum award for an individual project under the Innovation Stream is \$1.5 million, but we aim for most projects to be funded within the range of \$500,000 to \$1 million. The maximum award under the Evidence Stream is \$2.5 million, but we aim for most projects to be funded within the range of \$1 million to \$2 million. The maximum duration of projects is 24 months.

Stage 2 applications must include a detailed project budget and operational plan for your requested funding. Funding requests should be commensurate with the level of effort required to successfully deliver on project outcomes.

While direct matching funds are not required, a demonstration of in-kind support on a 1:1 basis is strongly encouraged. The Future Skills Centre aims for a target of 1:1 match funding overall; absence of matching resources must be justified in your application.

Assessment Criteria

Stage 2 applications will be reviewed by an assessment committee according to the following criteria:

- 1. Relevance and need** – Projects must address a pressing and well-specified need related to one of the three themes outlined in this call for proposals. Key assessment considerations include:
 - Project address a well-specified need related to one of the three FSC-CCF objectives as stated above
 - Project predicts relevant outcomes for participants and industry sector partners
 - Project specifies a clear and relevant target population and industry sector in a related geography
 - Barriers and needs of target population and industry are well understood
 - Project will advance knowledge and provide new learnings for FSC

- 2. Equity, diversity and inclusion**– Projects should align with the Centre’s goals to create opportunities for underrepresented, marginalized and vulnerable groups as well as incorporate diverse knowledge, worldviews and experiences. Key assessment considerations include:
 - There is a strong demonstrated commitment to EDI at the Lead organization and among the partners in their policies, practices and activities
 - Project emerges from an organization or partnership which serves under-represented, marginalized and vulnerable groups
 - Project includes beneficiaries in the design and implementation of the programs and services
 - Project, as designed, will have a positive EDI impact on the industry sector

- 3. Project Design** – Projects must provide a clear description of the model design they are proposing to test, including a list of contextual factors that could influence success. Key assessment considerations include:

 - Project exhibits an understanding of the context and contextual factors that could impact success and how they will address associated risks.
 - Project has innovative components (i.e. new approach, new tools, new platforms to engage, ability to replicate or expand)
 - There is a clear articulation of the connection between inputs, activities, outputs and expected outcomes
 - There is strong potential for sustainability and expansion of this work
- 4. Delivery capacity** – Applicants must demonstrate the capacity to deliver the project they propose. Key assessment considerations include:

 - Applicant (with partners) has the expertise and experience needed to deliver on the project, or will find those skills if successful
 - Partners have demonstrated experience serving diverse populations including the target population
 - Project has a clearly defined plan for delivery
 - The budget for the project is appropriate and costs are clearly justified; where possible, matching funds have been obtained
 - A strong and thoughtful knowledge mobilization plan is in place
- 5. Organizational health**—In addition to delivery capacity, applicants must demonstrate that their organization meets a satisfactory level of organizational health. While this criterion is not scored, it is a prerequisite for the large investments contemplated in this granting stream. Key assessment considerations include:

 - The Board/Governing Body is active and has the appropriate knowledges, skill and abilities to govern
 - The Board/Governing Body is active and has the appropriate knowledges, skill and abilities to govern
 - The Board and staff composition reflect the community they serve and are an appropriate mix of knowledge, skills and abilities.
 - The Lead organization is compliant and current with legislation and bylaws

- The Lead organization has a risk mitigation strategy in place and a planning process to stay current.
- There is strong financial management and oversight of the Lead organization
- The project budget is appropriate, well thought out and aligns with the workplan

6. Evidence—FSC’s approach to implementation support and evidence generation aims to provide a clear path towards growth and development for each project, whether it involves developing an innovative new model or rigorously testing the impact of an established model to provide evidence needed to make a scaling decision and inform policy. As part of the adjudication process for this Call for Proposals, the adjudication panel will assess each project’s potential to generate evidence through the innovation stream and the evidence stream. Innovation Stream projects will have access to technical advice and other implementation guidance to support the development of robust theories of change and exploration of the extent project activities produce target outcomes and identification of factors that contribute to success. Evidence Stream projects will have existing evidence of their effectiveness and have potential to be a scalable solution to our Canada’s most pressing skills development challenges. The following questions will be used to assess projects:

- Project has a clear model with a sound theory of change articulated with components (activities) that align with the needs of the identified population and the goals of the industry sector
- Project has strong evaluation or describes a well thought out measurement and evaluation plan relevant to the project
- Prior evaluations or evaluation on similar projects demonstrate positive results
- Project outcomes are clearly defined and measurable. These outcomes align to FSC-CCF’s common outcomes framework, if applicable (some projects for system change may suit different outcomes)
- Lead organization has a well thought out continuous improvement plan, incorporating the use of evidence, and has incorporated this project into organizational planning

Application Instructions

Stage 2 applications will be considered complete when they include the following:

- A. Full project application form and declaration—submitted using the [online form](#)
- B. Detailed [logic model](#)—submitted as a PDF attachment using the template provided
- C. Detailed [budget form](#)—submitted as an Excel attachment using the template provided

All documents should use the following filename format:

- A. Leadorganization Application.pdf
- B. Leadorganization Logic Model.pdf
- C. Leadorganization Budget.xlsx (note: ONLY “.xlsx” files can be uploaded)
- D. Any supporting documents should use the same filename format

All required documents must be provided at the time of submission along with any supporting documents you wish to include. Please note that incomplete or late applications will not be considered.

Applicants must follow the instructions contained in the application form, logic model and budget templates.

Questions about the application process and timelines may be submitted to projects@fsc-ccf.ca and responses will be posted to the [FAQ](#) section of the website. The deadline for submitting questions is 5 pm (EDT) on January 5, 2020.

Organization Eligibility

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

1. Legally incorporated not-for-profit organizations, including not-for-profit social enterprises and registered charities
2. Publicly-funded post-secondary institutions
3. Industry associations
4. Professional associations
5. An Indigenous organization that is a legal entity
6. Municipalities or district social services administration boards
For profit organizations (provided the project is undertaken at cost, with no mark-ups or profit incorporated)

The following types of organizations are not eligible to apply:

1. Provinces or territories
2. Federal government bodies
3. Individuals

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. The lead organization must be a Canadian entity. 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.

Evaluation and Knowledge Mobilization

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

FSC-CCF's evaluation team will co-design the evaluation approach and tools with project proponents. FSC-CCF will match projects to a qualified independent evaluator based on project needs and evaluator skills and competencies. Project proponents do not need to have an evaluator. FSC-CCF's evaluation team will reach out to successful proponents within the first 60 days following the announcement of the funding decision to begin co-designing an evaluation approach.

All evaluation tools and approaches will be designed to ensure relevance, appropriateness, and usability. Evaluations will be designed with a focus on building the proponent's capacity to use evaluation and evaluative thinking to improve their performance.

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.

FSC-CCF is measuring a set of shared outcomes and participant socio-demographic characteristics across projects. This core set of measures was developed in consultation with our partners and was informed by review of employment-related outcomes frameworks and measurement approaches both within Canada and internationally. The shared outcomes framework will allow Future Skills Centre to measure and compare the performance of individual projects, groups of projects based on project type, sector, or target population, and estimate the collective impact of all funded projects.

The Future Skills Centre 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. FSC-CCF 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, recipients must agree to make widely publicly available all Research Information (reports, evaluations and end products) created, generated or otherwise arising from all project activities funded by the Future Skills Centre using as many channels as is required to fully support and facilitate the goals and objectives of FSC-CCF. Recipients must make reasonable efforts to make available to Canadians any intellectual property arising from activities funded by FSC-CCF.

In addition to working with the Future Skills Centre 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 FSC-CCF.

By applying, you are agreeing that you are committed to participating in evaluation and knowledge mobilization activities and that you will work openly and transparently on evidence-generation activities in collaboration with FSC-CCF.

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. FSC-CCF will work together with the evaluator for the project and the project proponent to prepare Ethics Board submissions with adherence to the guidelines, as appropriate.

Due Diligence

The Future Skills Centre reserves the right to conduct thorough due diligence on shortlisted projects invited to Stage 2 and/or Stage 3 of this application process.

Due diligence may include a review of the lead organization's financial health and funding sources, the project's management team, operational plans and existing resources. The FSC-CCF will also conduct reference checks and will reach out to provincial-territorial governments in those jurisdictions where activities would be undertaken to provide them with advance notice of the shortlisted projects to ensure they address local needs and complement existing initiatives.

It is the responsibility of any potential recipient of FSC-CCF funds in Quebec to determine if the Act respecting the [Ministère du Conseil Exécutif \(M-30\)](#) applies to them. Any entity that is subject to the Act is responsible for obtaining the necessary authorization prior to the conclusion of the agreement. The FSC-CCF will abide by the determination of the recipient whether they require an M-30 and will allow a reasonable amount of time for the Quebec proponent to obtain the authorization from the Government of Quebec, should it be required.

FSC-CCF will work with successful proponents to establish project agreements. As the host organization for the Future Skills Centre, all project agreements will be made with Ryerson University.

Confidentiality

Hosted by Ryerson University, the Future Skills Centre 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 the Future Skills Centre in confidence should be clearly marked as such. The Centre 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 FSC-CCF concerning disclosure in accordance with *FIPPA*.

The Future Skills Centre – Centre des Compétences futures is funded by the [Government of Canada's Future Skills Program](#).

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