

# Skills Horizon

## Call for Proposal: Skills Research

Released October 30, 2024



## INTRODUCTION

The Future Skills Centre is a pan-Canadian organization that supports new approaches to addressing Canada's most pressing labour market development issues. We work with a diverse network of partners from coast to coast to coast to invest in solutions, generate insights, and catalyze systems change to advance a future of shared prosperity where no one is left behind.

Since 2019, we have been building a pipeline of innovation to generate learning and insights so that decision-makers—workers, families, employers and labour unions, educators, policymakers, service providers and community leaders—have the knowledge they need to address current labour market challenges more effectively, better prepare people in Canada for major transitions such as the shift to a net-zero economy or accelerating technological change, and usher in a more inclusive and equitable labour market.

The Future Skills Centre is entering an exciting phase and seeking partners to develop the next generation of research projects that will generate evidence and insights to help Canadians understand our country's most pressing skills development challenges and develop sound, evidence-based solutions.

## CALL OVERVIEW

We invite organizations based in Canada to submit proposals to conduct research projects that address pressing knowledge or information gaps connected to our five **Focus Areas** or that shed light on emerging skills issues or challenges.

We strongly encourage potential partners to review our [Focus Areas Brief](#) and consider how their proposals align with the Strategic Questions we have identified in each of the five Focus Areas. To fulfill our commitment to being agile and responsive to emerging issues and labour market developments, we remain open to proposals that make a strong case for tackling an issue or challenge related to the future of work that falls outside our five Focus Areas. We expect such proposals to meet a high standard of relevance (see *Selection Criteria* below) as we do for all proposals submitted for our consideration.

The Future Skills Centre welcomes proposals developed around diverse research methodologies including quantitative, qualitative or mixed methods. Research projects may take on any number of approaches including:





- developing new analytical concepts and frameworks
- documenting and reviewing evidence on skills interventions
- public policy analysis
- comparative/international research
- forecasting studies using labour market information (LMI)
- thematic or field reviews
- studies which document and analyze labour market and skills issues affecting certain population groups
- studies exploring the potential impact of policies and practices on particular industries, communities or regions.

The Future Skills Centre expects all partners to integrate [Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Reconciliation \(EDI&R\)](#) into the design and delivery of research projects. In particular, we want to encourage applications from organizations led by individuals from equity deserving groups. All projects should reflect meaningful partnership and consultation and, where appropriate, providing opportunities for the active participation of people from equity deserving groups - including Indigenous peoples, Black and other racialized people, women, persons with disabilities, neurodiverse people, as well as youth, newcomers and immigrants, 2SLGBTQ+ people, , veterans, and people living in rural, remote, and Northern communities - in shaping the design, implementation and evaluation of projects

Finally, all applicants should consider the requirement to obtain [Research Ethics approval](#) by an appropriate body, either through the applicant(s)' institution or through another appropriate body. The ethics review must be incorporated into the project timeline, and all projects must be completed in full by September 30, 2025 (see our [FAQs](#) for further details).





## ELIGIBILITY

The Future Skills Centre is committed to embracing a diverse range of organizations from across Canada, representing various communities and groups within the skills ecosystem. Whether you are an educational institution, community or sector organization, service deliverer, employer or labour union, if you have a compelling idea to enhance skills development in Canada, we want to hear from you.

**Skills Research**, is an open call for proposals available to organizations based in Canada. Applications may be submitted by a sole organization or a partnership/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. Indigenous organizations that are a legal entity
6. Municipalities or district social services administration boards
7. Trade unions and relevant colleges of trades
8. For-profit organizations (provided the project is undertaken at cost, with no mark-ups or profit incorporated).

For applications with multiple partners, one organization must be identified as the lead applicant for the purpose of submitting the funding proposal, signing the funding agreement, receiving and managing the funds, ensuring coordination of project parties and activities, and communicating with the Centre regarding the status of the project. 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.

Organizations that have received or are currently receiving funding from the Future Skills Centre are eligible, provided that the proposal clearly outlines a scope not



previously funded by the Future Skills Centre. Federal, provincial and territorial government ministries and agencies are not eligible to apply.

## **FUNDING GUIDELINES**

As a general guideline, the Future Skills Centre is interested in considering proposals with budgets ranging from **\$50,000 to \$250,000** for this Call. All proposals and budgets are expected to be strongly aligned with the Selection Criteria (see next section). Partners' capacity to implement the proposed research within the prescribed timelines is of paramount importance and will be considered as part of the proposal review process.

Given the range of questions proposed in the Focus Areas, we particularly encourage cross-disciplinary and cross-organizational collaboration, where it makes sense to do so.<sup>1</sup> We will also welcome proposals that are jointly submitted by multiple partners (see above); partners should be able to point to positive prior collaboration and/or clear identification of roles, responsibilities and governance for the project so as not to delay implementation. Proposals for projects that would be jointly supported by the Future Skills Centre and one or more other funding organizations are welcome.

Proposals will be assessed on the criteria outlined in the guidelines detailed below. The Future Skills Centre may contact proponents during the application process to discuss adjustments to original proposals.

**We expect to announce funding decisions by mid-February 2024. Projects are expected to begin April 1, 2025 and must end no later than September 30, 2025. Please note that this timeline must include allowance for Research Ethics approval (see below).**

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<sup>1</sup> For example, a research project on employers incentives may include not only economics or sociologist researcher(s), but also an employer association.





## SELECTION CRITERIA

The following criteria will apply to all proposals received through this open call and will be assigned equal weight during review:

**Relevance.** The proposed research is aligned with one or more of the Future Skills Centre's Focus Areas and one or more of the Strategic Questions, and/or; seeks to develop evidence and insights on significant new or emerging issues or concepts.

**Equity, Diversity, Inclusion & Reconciliation.** The project lead(s) has taken EDI&R into consideration in areas such as leadership and governance of the project, the design of the research and framing of the research questions, methods, data collection and analysis, and the composition of the research team. The organization submitting a proposal has formal commitments and strategies to advance EDI&R.

**Feasibility.** The lead researcher or organization (and partners, if applicable) has the necessary expertise, experience and resources to execute the project successfully within the established timelines and must also have the needed experience and capacity to manage the project and reporting requirements.

**Methods & Implementation.** The proposed research framework and the methods or approach are appropriate to the research question(s). The identified approach is likely to generate timely information that will advance knowledge and/or solutions on the proposed research question(s).

**Deliverables & Impact.** In addition to meeting the *Relevance* criteria (above), the proposed research demonstrates an understanding of the information/knowledge needs of key decision makers and actors in the skills ecosystem relative to the identified gaps, issues and challenges; the project plan includes final deliverable(s) that will distill that knowledge for key audiences.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Please note that the Future Skills Centre does not expect a full suite of knowledge mobilization products and plans in the proposal given the time constraints. Further extension of the Future Skills Centre's mandate and funding may include opportunities for support of further knowledge mobilization of the research findings.



## Prompting Questions

These Prompting Questions are intended as an aid to help partners think about how their projects align with the Selection Criteria (above). Answers to these questions will also help applicants prepare the information they will need to fill in the proposal application form.

### Relevance

- a. Which Focus Area(s) and Strategic Question(s) will your research project address? What new knowledge or insight is your project expected to yield about the issue(s) it addresses?

*Note: The quantity of Focus Areas and Strategic Questions that a project proposes to address has no influence on adjudication scores. How well a project addresses any given Focus Area and Strategic Question is a more important consideration.*

### OR

Which *emerging* labour market or skills development issue(s) will your project investigate? How will the proposed research provide new knowledge or insight about the issue(s) it addresses?

- b. Why is this research project timely? Why is it important to answer the question(s) and who are the key audience(s) for this information?
- c. What are the specific research question(s) that this project will investigate?

### Equity, Diversity, Inclusion & Reconciliation

- d. How have Equity, Diversity, Inclusion & Reconciliation considerations been integrated into the design of this research project? What steps have you taken to do this, and how is this reflected in the research design, team, and/or plan?
- e. What commitments to EDI&R does your organization have and how are these being achieved?
- f. If the project is examining skills issues in relation to one or more equity deserving groups or involves members of these groups as respondents or partners, how are these communities engaged in defining the research questions and the scope of the research project? To what extent does the project provide valuable or





useful information to people from these communities and organizations that serve their needs?

g. How might the results of this research help address or solve EDI&R related challenges in the labour market and the skills ecosystem?

### **Feasibility**

h. What expertise and experience do the research lead and team members bring to the project and how relevant are these to the project's main research questions or objectives?

i. How will the project be managed? If the project involves more than one organization, how are roles and responsibilities allocated amongst the partners?

j. What are the potential risks that might delay successful completion of the project, and how will these be mitigated?

### **Methods & Implementation**

k. How does the project intend to answer the research question(s) outlined above? Please describe the research approach and methods.

Note: The Future Skills Centre welcomes diverse research methods, and is most intent on ensuring that selected methods respond to the given question(s) and context(s).

l. Please describe the organization's experience (if any) with Research Ethics review of similar projects and/or methods. What challenges are anticipated (if any) with research ethics board clearance?

### **Deliverables & Impact**

m. How will the project findings be communicated, i.e. what are the specific deliverables? How will these product(s) engage the target audience(s) identified previously?

*Please note that all Future Skills Centre-supported research projects are expected, at a minimum, to produce a research report for publication on the Future Skills Centre's website.*







- n. What knowledge mobilization measures or activities would ideally be undertaken with key target audiences? What do you envision doing within the project period (if any) and what future knowledge mobilization opportunities might this research engender if further time/resources are available?

## **Application process and timelines**

Applications will be accepted starting **October 30, 2024**. The application deadline is **December 13, 2024** at 5 p.m. ET.

Applicants should submit their proposals by completing and submitting the application form in Cognito ([click here to access the form](#)), along with the Excel budget template provided and a one-page work plan, both provided in the Cognito form.

A worksheet ([available here in Word.docx format](#)) is provided to collect your answers prior to submitting the proposal in its entirety. We created the worksheet so that you can work on your proposal before uploading the information into the Cognito application form.

To support you in the application process, we have created a [Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQ\) page](#). We will update it occasionally as applicants send in questions.

If you would like to request accommodations or other types of support, please contact [opencall@fsc-ccf.ca](mailto:opencall@fsc-ccf.ca).

Any further information requests may also be sent to [opencall@fsc-ccf.ca](mailto:opencall@fsc-ccf.ca).

Recommendations for funding will be based on independent assessments by internal and external reviewers.

We expect to communicate funding decisions starting **mid-February 2025**.

## **Research ethics approval process**

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 TCPS 2 and must be approved by an accredited research ethics board if required by those guidelines.

Please see the [FAQs](#) for further explanation of the research ethics review process.



Our team is happy to help you determine what is needed in terms of research ethics compliance and approvals for your project. Should you have questions regarding research ethics as you prepare your proposal, please contact [natalie.waldbrook@fsc-ccf.ca](mailto:natalie.waldbrook@fsc-ccf.ca).

## **Due diligence**

Future Skills Centre reserves the right to conduct thorough due diligence on organizations who submit a proposal.

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 Future Skills Centre may also conduct reference checks and may reach out to provincial/territorial governments in those jurisdictions where activities would be undertaken to provide them with advance notice of the proposed projects to ensure they address local needs and complement existing initiatives.

It is the responsibility of any potential recipient of Future Skills Centre funds that proposes to conduct activities in Quebec, including with a partner organization in Quebec, to determine whether 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 Centre will abide by the determination of the recipients whether they require an M-30 and will allow a reasonable amount of time for the proponent and partners to obtain authorization from the Government of Québec, should it be required.

The Future Skills Centre will work with successful proponents to establish project agreements. As the host organization for the Centre, all contractual agreements will be made with Toronto Metropolitan University.

## **Confidentiality**

Hosted by Toronto Metropolitan 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 Toronto Metropolitan 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 harm. 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 the Centre concerning disclosure in accordance with FIPPA. The Future Skills Centre is funded by the Government of Canada's Future Skills Program.

