

Skills Horizon

Call for proposals: Skills Solutions

The next generation of insights and solutions for a strong and inclusive labour market

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 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 insights and solutions to help prepare Canada for a prosperous and equitable future of work. We are strengthening our diverse network of partnerships to help bring successful initiatives to scale, to strengthen emerging solutions to tackle persisting issues, and to bring to life highly ambitious and innovative concepts.

CALL OVERVIEW

The **Future Skills Centre's Skills Horizon Funding Call** invites proposals that address the most critical challenges for the future of work in Canada and propose new ways forward. For this call, we are seeking proposals in two separate streams:

Stream 1 – Designing Solutions

This stream is aimed at project ideas and concepts that are still under development but that can demonstrate clear ambition and a strong team behind them. Partners funded in this stream participate in an intensive solution design process with the required support of a technical assistance partner assigned by the Future Skills Centre. Proponents should budget time to complete required co-design activities over six months, including:





- Two in-person workshops to network with participants and accelerate the design and development of the solution (2 full days each);
- Biweekly calls with technical assistance partner and Future Skills Centre staff to receive support and track progress (1 hour biweekly);
- Discussion forum to exchange information and learning with peers in an online support community (1 hour weekly); and
- Six assignments that will support the design and development of your solution (8-10 hours weekly).

We will adapt the required activities to accommodate participants' needs.

Stream 2 – Strengthening Outcomes

This funding stream will support initiatives that have already undergone thorough consultation and design. The work to date should demonstrate both promising results and capacity to carry the project forward in a short timeframe and achieve tangible outcomes. Projects funded in this stream will focus on strengthening the outcomes of projects based on evidence of what has worked. These initiatives will be further tested through implementation and with the required support of an evaluation and learning partner assigned by the Future Skills Centre.

For example, proposals in this stream can seek to test new approaches based on evidence and insights from previous initiatives, introduce significant improvements to existing programs with promising results, or take the first step in scaling a program with strong performance results.

Our five thematic [Focus Areas](#) will continue to guide this work, including the funding of new partnerships. We strongly encourage potential partners developing an application to review our **Focus Areas Brief** and think about how their proposals align with the Strategic Questions we have identified in each of these 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.

The Future Skills Centre expects all partners to integrate [Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Reconciliation \(EDI&R\)](#) into the design and delivery of 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, provide 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

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 a community or sector organization, service deliverer, educational institution, employer or labour union, if you have a compelling idea to enhance skills development in Canada, we want to hear from you.

The **Future Skills Centre's [Skills Horizon Calls for Proposals](#)** 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:

- Legally incorporated not-for-profit organizations, including not-for-profit social enterprises and registered charities;
- Publicly funded post-secondary institutions;
- Industry associations;
- Professional associations;
- Trade unions and relevant colleges of trades;
- Indigenous organizations that are 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).

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. Proposals consisting solely of research activities are not eligible for this call.

FUNDING GUIDELINES

As a forward-thinking organization, the Future Skills Centre is flexible regarding the specific scope and size of the proposals. We are looking for well-crafted proposals that are backed by a clear understanding of the issues, a compelling vision for change, and a team with the necessary experience and knowledge. Organizational capacity to carry out the proposed scope within the established timelines is of paramount importance.

You are invited to apply to one of the two funding streams:

Stream 1 – Designing Solutions

Stream 2 – Strengthening Outcomes

As a general guide, we expect most *Designing Solutions* proposals to fall between \$75,000 and \$95,000. For *Strengthening Outcomes*, we anticipate most proposals to fall between \$350,000 and \$500,000. For the latter, proposals that would be jointly supported by the Future Skills Centre and other funding partners are welcome.

Proposals will be assessed based on the Selection Criteria appearing below. We may contact proponents during the application process to discuss adjustments to original proposals.

Partners engaged in *Designing Solutions* will work closely with a designated technical assistance partner to both develop their concept and document learning. Partners in the *Strengthening Outcomes* stream will be assigned a third-party evaluation and learning partner to support the generation of insights from the project efforts. The evaluation and learning partners will be funded directly by the Future Skills Centre. Further details appear in the [Frequently Asked Questions \(FAQs\)](#) online resource.

Projects must end no later than September 30, 2025. We anticipate that most successful projects will begin by April 2025, depending on timelines for proposal review and project contracting.





SELECTION CRITERIA

We will evaluate each proposal we receive based on the Selection Criteria below. Please note that the Selection Criteria for the two streams differ, reflecting the different stages of development at which projects will start, as well as resource differences.

Selection Criteria for Stream 1 – Designing Solutions

- A. Relevance.** The proposal clearly describes the issue, problem or challenges it wants to address and can explain and demonstrate why it is important.
- B. Vision.** The proposal provides a clear account of the change it wants to bring about and how the project idea or concept it wants to develop could lead to positive results or impacts.
- C. Equity, Diversity, Inclusion and Reconciliation (EDI&R).** The proponent (and its partners, if applicable) demonstrates intent and capacity to adequately apply EDI&R principles and practices in the development of the concept.
- D. Added value and innovation.** The proposed idea or concept has the potential to create value over and above existing services, practices and/or knowledge by addressing an existing issue in a new way or introducing a new approach to an emerging issue.
- E. Team/Partnerships.** The proposed team includes relevant partner organizations and individuals with the skills, experience and knowledge needed to develop the project idea or concept.

Selection Criteria for Stream 2 – Strengthening Outcomes

Projects in this stream are expected to have thorough consultation and design work already completed, and will be assessed using the following criteria. For each criterion, guiding questions are included to assist with proposal preparation.

- 1. Relevance.** The lead organization clearly describes the issue it wants to address and can explain and demonstrate why it is important.

Guiding Questions

How does your new project align with one or more of [Future Skills Centre's Focus Areas](#) and which Strategic Question(s) will it seek to answer?¹

¹ The *number* of Focus Areas and Strategic Questions that a project proposes to address has no influence on adjudication scores. *How well* a proposal addresses any given Focus Area and Strategic Question is more important.



OR

What emerging issue do you propose to address and why should it be considered important?

- 2. Added Value/Innovation.** The lead organization can show how its idea or concept has the potential to create value over and above existing services, practices and/or knowledge by addressing an existing issue in a new way or introducing a new approach to an emerging issue.

Guiding Questions

How is the issue or problem you want to solve currently addressed by other organizations?

What is new or innovative about what you are proposing?

Why is it the best approach to address the issue or problem?

- 3. Learning & Evidence.** The lead organization can show that its proposal is informed by evidence, insights and learning.

Guiding Questions

What consultations, research, and/or design process has informed this initiative?

What evidence and/or learning are you building upon?

What has your organization's experience with implementing previous initiatives taught you about how to approach the problem you propose to address in your pilot project?

- 4. Equity, Diversity, Inclusion & Reconciliation.** The lead organization (and its partners, if applicable) demonstrates intent and capacity to adequately apply EDI&R in the design, execution and evaluation of the project.

Guiding Questions

How have EDI&R considerations been integrated into the design of this project?
How is this reflected in the project design, team, and/or plan?

What commitments to EDI&R does your organization have and how are these being achieved?

If the project is examining skills issues in relation to one or more equity deserving groups or involves members of these groups as participants, respondents or partners, how are these communities engaged in defining the project's desired outcomes and its scope? To what extent does the project provide valuable or useful information to people from these communities and organizations that serve





their needs?

How might the results of this project help to solve EDI&R related challenges in the labour market and the skills ecosystem?

- 5. Capacity.** The lead organization (and its partners, if applicable) has the skills and experience to execute the project successfully within the established timelines.

Guiding Questions

What skills, experience and resources does the lead organization (and its partners, if applicable) bring to this project?

Who will be the key team members involved in the project, and what are they expected to contribute to its success?

What experience does the lead organization (and its partners, if applicable) have managing and completing initiatives of a scope similar to the project being proposed?

What are the potential risks that might delay or prevent successful completion of the project, and how will these be managed?

- 6. Coherence.** The project displays a logical connection between proposed activities and project objectives with a work plan and budget that are reasonable, appropriate and aligned.

- 7. Impact.** The project presents a clear explanation about how results of the proposed activities will deliver impact by advancing new knowledge, generating and testing new insights and/or creating new approaches that improve skills solutions.

Guiding Questions

If successful, how will the results of your project help to bring about change? Beyond your organization, how will it help other organizations and decision makers to better respond to the problems or challenges you are tackling?

What new knowledge or insights do you expect your project to produce and why will they be important for the key audiences you identified in the “Target Audiences” section?

What plans would you have to communicate the lessons from this project to the key audiences for your project?



APPLICATION PROCESS & TIMELINES

Applications will be accepted starting **October 30, 2024**. The application deadline is **December 13, 2024**.

Applicants should submit their proposals by completing and submitting the application form in Cognito:

[Click here for the *Designing Solutions Application Form*](#) **OR**

[Click here for the *Strengthening Outcomes Application Form*](#)

Clicking through to either form will also take you to the Excel (.xlsx) budget template provided.

Worksheets ([available here for Designing Solutions](#) and [here for Strengthening Outcomes](#) in Word.docx format) are 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 \(FAQs\)](#) 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.

Any further information requests may also be sent to opencall@fsc-ccf.ca.

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

The target to communicate funding decisions is **mid-February 2024**.





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.

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 application, please contact natalie.waldbrook@fsc-ccf.ca.

DUE DILIGENCE

Future Skills Centre reserves the right to conduct thorough due diligence on projects invited to submit an application.

Due diligence will 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 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 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 Québec, 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 the 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 project 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.

