



Targeted call for FSC Project Partners

Instructions to complete the application form

Please refer to the Future Skills Centre's (FSC) **Targeted Call for FSC Project Partners Guidelines** document when preparing your application.

This application form is structured to help you address the selection criteria for this call and give reviewers easy access to your project information. This form is divided into the following sections:

- Part 1 - General information
- Part 2 - Project summary
- Part 3 - Project details
- Part 4 - Project work plan and budget
- Part 5 - Declaration

If you would like to request accommodations or other types of support, please contact Maysa Mourad by email at targetedcall@fsc-ccf.ca or by phone at 437-331-0613.

If you have any questions while compiling your application, you may contact our team at targetedcall@fsc-ccf.ca. We would be happy to answer any questions.

PART 1 - GENERAL INFORMATION

1. Lead organization

Name of lead organization

ID Fusion Software

Name of project lead

Joel Dandeneau

Project lead's preferred method of contact (email address and/or phone number)

joel@idfusion.com or (204) 992-9502

2. Proposed project

Project title

Building IT Capacity in First Nations

Project start and end dates

February 1, 2022, to September 30, 2023

Projects must end no later than September 30, 2023.

Amount requested from FSC (total)

\$858,437.43

Project partners and their location

ID Fusion Software is an Indigenous organization located in Winnipeg, MB serving both urban and rural clients.

Southeast Resource Development Council Corp. (SERDC) is an organization supporting 8 First Nation communities with a head office in Scanterbury, MB & Winnipeg, MB.

PART 2 - PROJECT SUMMARY

1. Proposed project “one-liner”

How would you describe your new project in one sentence?

This project aims to take an outcome-based approach to skill development focused on providing practical project-based IT training and work experience on-reserve for First Nations peoples and stakeholders.

(30 words maximum)

2. Proposed project summary

How would you describe your new project and how it builds on the testing and learning of your current project to date?

We suggest that this summary covers the main information about how your new project addresses all selection criteria of this targeted call.

Our previous project was successful in training and preparing our urban participants to gain employment in the IT field. This same success was not realized in our rural participant group. Leveraging the lessons learned from our previous project, we will engage with 3 First Nation communities where we will recruit 2 individuals per community to commit to an 18 month employment where they will be provided on-reserve training and work mentorship. 2 of the communities will require our trainers/mentors to spend a week at a time living and working in community training our participants. When not in community, our trainers will be supporting participants with their training and project work remotely. We will work with FSC / Blueprint to identify a curriculum that will lay out a learning pathway for a Help Desk / IT Support Services professional. ID Fusion and SERDC is committing to an 18 month employment commitment which will take the project beyond September 30th, 2023, cover by the project partners but is viewed as necessary for the success of the project.

(250 words maximum)

3. Additional scope

How does your new project go beyond the scope of your current FSC-funded project?

The additional scope may include expanding or extending a project model, its principles and/or components. For example, it may include expanding the project to new regions or jurisdictions, including new or larger target populations, and testing different delivery formats to understand what works to address demands. This would assume the potential for bringing additional partners to deliver the project at a broader scale. The additional scope must be grounded in new concrete learning questions to contribute to your work and of others in the skills ecosystem.

Our original model was focussed on online classroom learning combined with practical work experience. This model was more successful in our urban participant group than our rural group. One of the gaps identified in our first project was the readiness of the rural work experience stakeholders to support practical work experience. With the support of our project partner SERDC, we will create IT projects for our stakeholders that will provide our participants with the experience needed to meet the program curriculum requirements. The IT investments made by the stakeholders will need to be supported going forward, creating lasting IT support positions within the community. Our trainers / mentors will be going into community to support, train and mentor our participants. This approach follows a more Indigenous style of learning that we believe will create the foundation to support future IT investments leading to more IT positions to support those investments.

(150 words maximum)

4. Importance of the additional scope

Why is the additional scope of your project important to your organization, sector and target populations? Why is it timely?

Making the commitment to build IT capacity on-reserve is critical to support the adoption of technology on First Nations. Community members with IT skills are needed to support these technology investments. First Nations are already behind many rural and remote communities in terms of technology investments. Technology will be a key factor in supporting future social and economic developments on-reserve. Indigenous people going into IT are underrepresented and needed for these investments. This is timely in that high-speed connectivity has been identified as a priority for First Nation communities. Our project partner SERDC is working with partners to improve connectivity in their communities. As connectivity increases, so will the needs for IT investments and the people to support those investments. These trained individuals will be the ones to guide the communities through future IT investments and will be leveraged to mentor other individuals in the community.

(150 words maximum)

PART 3 - PROJECT DETAILS

In this section, please provide information about how your new project supports each of the selection criteria of this targeted call.

We provide prompting questions to help you address all criteria in the application guidelines. You may prepare this section following the prompting questions in sequence or using your own sections and narrative.

Although you have flexibility regarding the format for this section, please make sure that you address all criteria according to the prompting questions. Reviewers will assess your application by scoring each criterion individually.

This section should not exceed **seven** pages. We anticipate that most proposals will present this section in **five** pages.

A. Relevance:

a) How does your new project align with FSC's Strategic Priorities?

This project supports some of the key trends impacting Canada's skills development ecosystem as outlined by FSC.

Magnification of existing inequities within the labour market

Indigenous people are underrepresented in the IT labour market. An outcome of our project is to build capacity and skills in Indigenous people to be able to choose IT as a career.

Unequal access to training opportunities based on income, geography and background

First Nations peoples experience income inequality and uneven access to jobs and technology. This project will create the skills that will lead to employment in the community. This project will bring training right to First Nations communities building a foundation for future IT investment and growth. As outlined by FSC, postsecondary education in IT is out of reach for many.

Labour market change driven by technological developments

The world is being driven by technological advancements, but rural and remote First Nation communities are being left behind due to location, connectivity and a lack of digital literacy in the community. This project will train the next generation of IT Support leaders to support the community in technology adoption.

Uneven access to workplace-based skills training

FSC's mandate is to look at new approaches to upskill and reskill their workers. Indigenous peoples across Canada and particularly in rural and remote First Nations are faced with multiple systemic barriers to skills training including a lack of investment specifically of quality on-reserve education. We will bring the training and mentorship on reserve, creating projects with an outcome-based approach that will provide the foundation for future IT investments on-reserve.

- b) How does your new project address recognize systemic challenges about future skills in Canada?

According to a report by New Ryerson and Canadian Council of Aboriginal Business;

<https://www.ryerson.ca/news-events/news/2020/07/indigenous-skills-training-and-employment-face-systemic-barriers/>

“Indigenous skills training and employment face systemic barriers, systemic barriers such as chronic under-funding of quality on-reserve education, the challenge of acquiring reliable internet in remote conditions and the corollary effects of growing up in households disproportionately impacted by poverty and the residential school system.

“Studies have shown that the likelihood of success increases when training is culturally appropriate, engages in land-based training and includes wrap-around supports.”

Our experience in the last project identified that there is a lack of technology mentors and trainers in First Nation communities in addition to limitations with stable internet connectivity for online learning/training. We've identified a need to take an outcome-based approach combining training and work experience and bringing this experience on-reserve to First Nation communities. There is a need to train local participants to support their home community, creating a positive experience where they are making impactful IT investments and contributions for their community. Traditionally First Nations people have had to leave their communities for quality IT training and work experience. We intend to bring the training on-reserve working on projects that will advance each communities IT investment.

The report goes on to state that “earlier intervention and pre-employment training; culturally appropriate programming to upgrade essential skills as well as wrap-around services such as transportation support and affordable, accessible childcare, rates of employment and success can be significantly improved.”

Our project is focussed on taking an Indigenous learning approach by bringing trainers and mentors to the community and providing training and practical work experience benefitting the participants home communities. By addressing some of the barriers identified in the report and in our previous project, we intend on piloting an in-community outcome-based model to building the future IT leaders in smaller First Nation communities.

- c) Explain how your proposed project fulfills the demand for your service. Who is demanding this and how do you know? Why is it timely?

Our partner organization SERDC, provides health, economic and social services to 8 rural and remote First Nation communities. SERDC has recognized that IT investments in their communities to support their businesses and organizations is a key to socio and economic progress going forward. SERDC has identified a gap in IT skills capacity in community.

In our last project, we identified in The Pas (northern community) that despite being a larger northern community with reasonable high-speed connectivity, there was a lack of IT work experience opportunities and little to no IT positions. This is an even greater gap in smaller First Nation communities. These First Nation communities are forced to leverage resources brought in from outside the communities (Winnipeg) at significant costs which becomes a major barrier to technology adoption at the community level. This project is timely in that the communities targeted within the SERDC communities (our project partner) are in the process of upgrading their internet connectivity. The communities need to start to train and develop individuals in their communities to support technology adoption that will follow these investments in connectivity.

B. Innovation and evidence

- a) In what way is your project innovative by pursuing a new way of doing things? If applicable, how is your project model informed by evidence?

We are proposing to bring trainers / mentors to stay and work in the communities alongside the participants for a week at a time taking an indigenous learning approach which would include more up-front observation, collaborative hands-on learning, practical and outcome-based projects, storytelling elements with visual cues and mentorship with immediate feedback. When the trainers are not in community, participants will be supported remotely with dedicated trainers / mentors that will

support them in their training and continue local project work while trainers / mentors are not in community. This approach is unique in that we will be piloting an outcome-based IT learning model where we will be creating a curriculum that matches to industry needs and working with First Nation communities to create projects that build the skills in participants in each community. Over the work experience we would assess and evaluate the learners progress involving the community stakeholders and adjusting the training to meet the community stakeholders needs. We would commit to an 18 month employment that will start as part of the FSC project (15 months' work experience) but will be extended by ID Fusion and SERDC (additional 3 months' work experience) as additional investment in the individuals training. This longer-term commitment is required to ensure that learning is done at a pace that will work in community and to ensure that participants make the required commitment. We anticipate that at the end of 18 months of experience, participants will have the core foundational experience to continue to serve the community without the need for outside assistance.

- a) How do you plan to generate evidence and insights during your project? What new knowledge will it generate and what are the potential implications of your approach for the broader skills ecosystem?

Throughout the program, we would work with FSC and Blueprint to create the curriculum and capture the evidence and insights throughout the program so that our learning can be shared with others looking to make on-reserve IT investments in people.

Our goal is to generate evidence and insights that will lead to the following outcomes:

- a) Proven curriculum for on-reserve IT training and mentorship
- b) Validation of a practical outcome-based project approach to IT skills development on-reserve
- c) Validation that participants are able to gain the skills and experience without having to leave their home community
- d) First Nation communities see the value in IT investments for socio and economic growth in their communities. Program leads to permanent IT positions in community.
- e) Participants are able to leverage their skills and experience that leads to an Industry accredited pathway (ex. CompTIA A+) or leads to additional skills upgrading and upskilling
- f) FSC investment is continued by project partners, ID Fusion and SERDC leading to the potential of expanding and revising the program to serve more remote fly-in communities within the SERDC region.

C. Learning

a) What learning has your current project with FSC generated and how has this learning informed the scope of your new project?

Some of the lessons learned from our previous project that are most applicable are as follows:

- Remote classroom eLearning a challenge in rural settings due to connectivity issues – We intend to bring an outcome-based learning approach as work related experience to the rural communities creating IT Projects with the communities and organizations that will help
- Training needs to follow more of an Indigenous learning style. Pace of learning was too quick, and more flexibility was needed. – We have designed this program to follow an outcome-based approach using community projects that will allow us to control the pace of learning based on the capacity of the community and the participant. We intend to lengthen the training period (an extra 3 months) extending it beyond the scope of FSC funding availability.
- Industry and organizations in a rural setting had trouble supporting IT work experience lacking IT structure, best practices and mentors. - We will design project-based approaches with community stakeholders, taking the lead on creating project-based work experiences.
- Need to gain the trust and secure on-reserve businesses and organization participation earlier. – SERDC will be the bridge to quickly building these relationships
- In the past project, classroom training didn't align well with practical work experience as IT support is often reactive not pro-active. – Taking an outcome-based project approach, we would control online learning combined with work experience in real time, ensuring each participant gains the skills for the curriculum identified for a Help Desk / IS Support Services role.
- Not enough mentorship on the job. Participants felt uncomfortable without a mentor alongside them. – Project would employ 2 full time mentors that would work alongside the participants onsite and remotely.
- Identified the need for more collaborative learning and experiential learning. Participants were more engaged on practical application of work skills learned. – We will be engaging participants on practical learning alongside mentors on impactful community projects where we believe there will be more engagement.
- The IT industry and IT needs of community organizations and business are agile where training requirements are constantly changing. – Our model will allow for flexibility on when the defined curriculum is met based on the priorities of each individual community stakeholder.

b) What are additional learning questions that your new project will address?

We intend to prove that a practical outcome-based project model is an effective pathway to building IT investments in First Nation communities supported by locally trained IT professionals.

D. Equity, diversity and inclusion

- a) Does your project incorporate in its design and execution the perspectives of end-users and other stakeholders, particularly groups facing barriers? If so, how? If not, why not?

Our project is focussed on First Nations participants living on-reserve with a passion for IT that are looking to remain and work in community. Youth and Women would be given preference during the recruitment process as both groups are underrepresented in IT. SERDC, our project partner, is committed to connecting us to communities and community leaders, organizations and businesses and will continue to support this project beyond the Future Skills deadline of September 30th, 2023, for this project iteration.

IT investment in First Nation communities faces numerous barriers and challenges. Our goal is to support program participants in these communities to be able to remain and train on-reserve becoming the mentors of tomorrow. Often First Nation peoples are forced to leave their communities to gain the employment skills needed and often do not return to the community. We intend to bring the training and practical outcome-based training and work experience to them.

- b) What are the practices and activities of your project that directly support and are grounded in principles of equity, diversity and inclusion?

Our project is designed to follow an Indigenous approach to learning bringing an outcome-based approach that allows us to train, empower and enable First Nations people to gain the skills and experience required to support their community organizations and businesses.

- c) Will your project further equity, diversity and inclusion in the field or sector of your project? If so, how? If not, why not?

Testing the approach of our model will provide the roadmap for the creation of IT professionals within Indigenous communities. This approach will develop Indigenous IT professionals which are underrepresented in the IT industry and specifically creating IT employment on-reserve which often doesn't exist.

E. Capacity

- a) What are the skills, experience and resources available within the lead organization (and partners, if applicable)? How will these elements support the successful execution of the project?

ID Fusion is a Winnipeg based company that has been developing custom software solutions since 1999. ID Fusion's FSC project, the Indigenous ICT Development Center, successfully created IT employment for urban Indigenous participants. We are excited to take the lessons learned to replicate this outcome for rural on-reserve participants.

Our project partner, SERDC, has been providing program guidance and supports to their 8 First Nation members for over 40 years. Their connection to community will be invaluable in connecting with the stakeholders that will create the work experience to build IT skills in community to serve the community.

- b) Does your current project with FSC hold a good track record? Have you faced any challenges? If yes, how have you addressed them?

We believe that significant learning came out of our last project that will be applied to this project. As reported to FSC and by Blueprint, we faced significant challenges in our last project around training and work experience approaches. Our program was split between an urban and rural group with most of our urban participants going on to IT employment or further post-secondary training. We didn't see the same success in the rural group. Our goal is to use the lessons learned on that project and apply them to create lasting employment outcomes in our targeted First Nations communities.

F. Coherence

- a) What are the main project activities that will enable you to meet the project objectives?

The main project activities that will enable our project to meet the objectives are as follows:

1. Connect with First Nations Communities, businesses and organizations to identify IT project opportunities that will provide the valuable training and work experience opportunities for our participants. This would be done with the support of our project partner SERDC.
2. Develop and identify an outcome-based project curriculum with the support of FSC and Blueprint and plan these projects in community to have all participants gain the experience needed to become IT service professionals.
3. Recruit and assess individuals within the communities and offer them longer term employment (18 months) to training and develop their skills. FSC would

provide the initial 15 months with SERDC and ID Fusion providing an additional 3 months of employment beyond the end of FSC's commitment to September 30th, 2023.

4. Train and mentor participants on a rotating schedule of one week in community by the trainers/mentors followed by 2 weeks of remote project support. Projects will be shorter iterations to meet the outcome-based curriculum.
5. Use community IT projects to build the foundation for IT best practices leading to permanent IT support positions in community with less reliance on outside contractors.

- b) Explain how your project presents good value for money. How is your budget reasonable, appropriate and aligned with your work plan?

The impact of building this initial capacity comes at a greater cost than traditional models. There are greater costs to hire dedicated full time trainers/mentors that will support participants at a 3 to 1 ratio in community. 2 of 3 communities targeted will require additional costs for lodging, meals and travel expenses to deliver the practical training and work experience in the community.

By creating the foundation for additional IT investments and adoption in the community, we anticipate that the Indigenous participants in this program will become the mentors for others in the community and over time, this will lead to exponential investment and employment in First Nation's communities. We believe that this investment will create a model that could be leveraged in First Nation communities across Canada. We also expect that the economic spin off from this initiative will be significant over time. Lodging and meals in community as part of supporting this project will benefit the local economy. In addition, the trained participants are anticipated to be able to support other First Nation communities in the region.

(3,500 words maximum)

PART 4 - PROJECT WORK PLAN AND BUDGET

1. Please submit a **one-page work plan** with key milestones and their timeline. **Do not** include detailed activities at this time. If your proposal is selected, we will work with you to develop a detailed work plan.
2. Please complete the project budget template provided to you as part of the application material.
 - a. Include only **new funding** associated with your new project and its additional scope. Please do not include the existing funding that is already part of your current funding agreement with FSC.

- b. If applicable, identify new funding pending or confirmed for this project from other sources. **This funding should be included as in-kind contributions.** (Please note that funding from other federal sources cannot be counted towards in-kind contributions)
3. Please submit your work plan and budget by sending these files, along with this completed form, to targetedcall@fsc-ccf.ca.
4. You may use the space below to provide comments to accompany your work plan and/or budget.

(100 words maximum)

PART 5 - DECLARATION

By submitting an application, the lead organization and its partners agree to the requirements of the following sections, detailed in the guidelines outlined for this funding call, and they affirm that they comply with and/or commit to the following:

- Organization eligibility.
- Active support for co-creating and carrying out an evaluation with an FSC-approved evaluator, if FSC decides an evaluation is appropriate for this project.
- Active engagement in knowledge mobilization activities related to the project.
- Compliance with the Tri-Council Policy Statement on the Ethical Conduct of Research Involving Humans.
- Confidential due diligence inquiries from Future Skills Centre into the applicant.

Signature



Name of signing authority

Joel Dandeneau

Date

November 2, 2021