Review Committee Member: Anthony D'Ambrosio - Lead Org; Bow Valley College

Assessment Form: Targeted Call 2021

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Project Name: Developing a Flexible Learning Platform (FLP) for Reskilling and Upskilling - Bridging the Gap 2.0

Lead Organization: Bow Valley College

Link to reviewer packet: [Bow Valley Reviewer Packet](#)

Conflict of Interest Verification

Conflict of Interest Verification : I have acknowledged and agreed to follow FSC-CCF's Confidentiality and Conflict of Interest Policy and I have no Conflict with this grant application.

A. Relevance

Project aligns with FSC's priorities, addresses recognized systemic challenges about future skills in Canada, and demonstrates demand for service.

A1: Alignment with FSC's strategic priorities

○ Displays little or no alignment with FSC's Strategic Priorities.

○ Pursues FSC's Strategic Priorities, but alignment lacks clarity.

⊙ Adequately aligns with FSC's Strategic Priorities.

○ Presents outstanding alignment with FSC's Strategic Priorities in a way that demonstrates that FSC should not miss the opportunity to partner with this project.

A2: Addressing systemic challenges

○ Shows little or no scope to address recognized systemic challenges about future skills in Canada.

○ Presents general but limited scope to address recognized systemic challenges about future skills in Canada.

⊙ Presents clear and relevant scope to address recognized systemic challenges about future skills in Canada.

○ Demonstrates outstanding potential to address recognized systemic challenges about future skills in Canada with a strong and well-defined scope that sets this project aside from other initiatives.

A3: Demand for service

○ Demonstration of the demand for this service is irrelevant or poorly articulated.

⊙ Demonstrates that there is some demand for this service but explanation lacks clarity.

○ Clearly demonstrates that there are high levels of demand for this service and explains how the project adequately fulfills this demand.

○ Articulates a deep understanding of the high levels of demand for this service and makes a strong case for how providing this service is timely.

B. Innovation and Evidence

Project pursues a new way of doing things that can advance knowledge and/or is an evidence-informed model.

B1: Innovative nature

○ It is not innovative, seeks funding for business as usual and, if applicable, is not informed by evidence.

⊙ While it is a departure from business as usual, interventions proposed are not particularly novel and, if applicable, are only vaguely informed by evidence.

○ Proposes clearly innovative solutions and, if applicable, articulates how the novel interventions are adequately informed by evidence.

○ Proposes solutions that are without a doubt one of a kind and highly innovative and, if applicable, makes a strong case for how the interventions are grounded on evidence that is relevant and applied in a novel way.

B2: Evidence generation and new knowledge

○ Presents unclear or no plan to generate insights or to advance knowledge.

⊙ Demonstrates intent to generate insights and advance knowledge that can benefit the skills ecosystem but the plan lacks clarity.

○ Presents a clear and adequate plan to generate insights and advance knowledge that will clearly benefit the skills ecosystem at large.

○ There are strong and well-designed strategies in place to generate insights and advance knowledge in a way that sets this project aside from other initiatives.

C. Learning

Project has already generated learning that informed the additional scope and identifies concrete problem statements and learning questions to address in the next phase.

C1: Application of learnings from current project

○ Does not demonstrate how learning generated from the current project informed additional scope.	⊙ Presents general but limited connection between learning generated from the current project and additional scope.	○ Presents a clear and relevant connection between learning generated from the current project and additional scope.	○ Makes an outstanding case for how the additional scope is grounded on learning generated from the current project and expertly demonstrates ability to continue to pursue learning.

C2: Problem statements and additional learning questions

○ Presents vague or no concrete additional learning questions.	○ Somewhat defines concrete and additional learning questions but the connection between questions and the problem statements lacks clarity.	⊙ Clearly identifies additional learning questions that are concrete and relevant to address the problem statements.	○ Articulates well-defined and concrete learning questions that will without a doubt contribute to addressing the problem statements within and beyond the scope of the project.

D. Equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI)

Project incorporates the perspectives of end-users and other stakeholders, particularly groups facing barriers, in the design and execution of the project, presents practices grounded in EDI principles, and shows potential to further EDI.

D1: Incorporation of the perspectives of end-users and other stakeholders

⊙ Does not incorporate the perspectives of end-users and other stakeholders in the design and execution of the project.	○ Shows that end-users and other stakeholders are somewhat involved in the design and execution of the project, but lacks clarity around the effective incorporation of their perspectives.	○ Presents clear evidence that end-users and other stakeholders are involved in the design and execution of the project in effective and relevant ways.	○ There are strong and well-designed strategies in place to involve end-users and other stakeholders, demonstrating an outstanding commitment to incorporating their perspectives at every stage of the project.

D2: EDI practices & activities

○ Project practices and activities do not directly support and are not explicitly grounded in EDI	⊙ Project practices and activities somewhat support but are only loosely grounded in EDI	○ Project is clearly grounded in EDI policies, practices or activities.	○ Project is clearly grounded in EDI policies, practices or activities and clearly demonstrates commitment to EDI and

principles. | principles. | | potential to be a leader in promoting EDI in the skills ecosystem.

D3: Impact on furthering EDI

○ Anticipated impact on furthering EDI under the project scope is irrelevant or vague.

○ Demonstrates intent to further EDI under the project scope, but rationale lacks clarity.

⊙ Anticipated impact on furthering EDI under the project scope is clear and relevant.

○ Presents promising and strong strategies to further EDI in the field or sector with potential to impact the skills ecosystem at large.

E. Capacity

The lead organization (and partners if applicable) have the skills, experience and resources to execute the project successfully and hold a good track record with FSC.

E1: Skills, experience & resources

○ Project team lacks skills, experience and resources needed to execute the project.

○ Project team has some of the skills, experience and resources needed to execute the project.

⊙ Project team clearly demonstrates adequate skills, experience and resources to execute the project.

○ Project team demonstrates strong skills, experience and resources to succeed in the project and to be a leader who influences the skills ecosystem.

E2: FSC track record

○ Presents little or no evidence of a good track record with FSC and of addressing challenges faced during the current project, indicating that the organization may struggle to manage the new project effectively and responsibly.

⊙ Presents somewhat adequate evidence of a good track record with FSC and of addressing challenges faced during the current project, indicating that the organization may have limited capacity to manage the new project effectively and responsibly.

○ Presents adequate evidence of a good track record with FSC and of addressing challenges faced during the current project, indicating that the organization will manage the new project effectively and responsibly.

○ Shows clear evidence of an impeccable track record with FSC and has expertly addressed challenges faced during the current project, indicating that the organization has strong project and risk management systems in place to take on the new project.

F. Coherence

Project displays a logical connection between proposed activities and project objectives with a work plan and a budget that are reasonable, appropriate and aligned.

F1: Connection between activities & objectives

○ Lacks logical

○ Activities and objectives

⊙ Presents a clear and

○ Activities and objectives

| connection between activities and objectives. | are somewhat connected, but the link lacks clarity. | logical connection between activities and objectives. | are without a doubt strongly connected in a thoughtful way. |

F2: Budget

| ○ Budget is not reasonable, appropriate or aligned with workplan. | ⊙ Budget is somewhat reasonable and appropriate, but is only loosely aligned with workplan. | ○ Budget is clearly reasonable, appropriate and aligned with workplan. | ○ Presents an outstanding value for money and strong alignment with workplan. |

Reviewer overall recommendation

Considering the proposal as a whole, do you think FSC should fund this project as a worthwhile contribution to the skills ecosystem?

Overall Recommendation:

○ I recommend this project for funding

○ I recommend this project for funding conditional on changes and/or more information

⊙ I do not recommend this project for funding

Explain your reasoning for this recommendation.

The proposal acknowledges that the project is a "speculative research venture" and they are approaching it with "a clear idea of the problem to be addressed, but no pre-conceived notions around what solutions will work." As such, it seems that this project is less about expanding the scope (no now regions, target populations, etc), and is more of an attempt to fix what did not work in the first iteration of the project. The team explained fairly well what did not work the first time, but provided minimal evidence to explain how this new approach will work better. It is difficult to recommend additional funding to a project that faced many challenges and did not yet reach the stage of delivering its intervention to users in its first iteration.

What do you think are the strongest aspects of this project?

The strongest aspect of the project are its pan-Canadian scope, potential to serve equity-seeking groups, emphasis on technology, and convening of academic, public and private partners. If executed, the project aligns strongly with FSC's strategic priorities and has the chance to generate important learning about what jobs and skills are most sought by Canadian businesses. The creation of a job-seeking and recruitment platform based on competencies rather than traditional metrics would be extremely valuable to the skill development ecosystem. The project team seems to have strong internal capacity, and the fact that they were able to admit what did not work well the first time is a good sign of their research integrity.

Where do you think the project has gaps or challenges?

A competency-based approach to recruitment and job-seeking seems innovative, but the proposal does not establish whether similar platforms exist or what makes it unique compared to other micro-credentialing interventions. It is also unclear how the project model is informed by evidence. The first attempt at the Flexible Learning Platform did not reach the implementation stage yet, so there has been no data generated about whether it was actually useful. The team states that in their current iteration of the project they have faced challenges and learned what did not work, but also acknowledge that this proposed second iteration is largely exploratory and they do not yet know what specific approaches will work. Furthermore, while it does seem likely that the project will largely benefit equity-seeking groups who don't have the traditional credentials or experience, the project does not seem intentional in incorporating the perspectives of these groups in their design and execution. In fact, the proposal acknowledges the limitation that "in that starting with industry first we may learn that opportunities are not fully focused on underserved populations but those looking to upskill and reskill i.e., those already employed." The proposal would be stronger by providing evidence on how conventional methods (such as years of experience and education level) disproportionately makes it harder for equity-seeking individuals to get jobs, and why competency-based hiring should be better.

Comments

Please share any other comments.