



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

Food Processing Skills Canada (FPSC)

Name of project lead

Jennefer Griffith

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

jgriffith@fp-sc-ctac.com | 613-237-7988

2. Proposed project

Project title

Skills Training Across Canada (STAC)

Project start and end dates

April 1, 2022 - September 30, 2023

Projects must end no later than September 30, 2023.

Amount requested from FSC (total)

\$1,870,625.00

Project partners and their location

Food Processing Skills Canada
3030 Conroy Road, Suite 201, Ottawa, Ontario K1G 6C2, Canada

PART 2 - PROJECT SUMMARY

1. Proposed project “one-liner”

How would you describe your new project in one sentence?

Skills Training Across Canada provides an innovative learning platform for 20 Food & Beverage Manufacturers to upskill 300 supervisors with a balanced curriculum of social emotional and technical learning.

(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.

This new project (extension) will place additional focus upskilling the Supervisor qualifications, along with some limited expansion into the Manager level areas, by continuing to further develop FPSC's first in Canada, evidence-based Learning & Recognition Framework (LRF) and test the delivery of micro-credential-based training within the demanding work environment of food manufacturing. Expanding training to additional sites, sectors and regions, such as Ontario and Alberta, will increase the diversity of employers participating beyond the Atlantic Canada food processing micro-climate.

Interviews with participating employers are indicating that the approach used with the current Skills Training Atlantic Canada project is exactly what they have been looking for but have not been able to find from other sources that tend to focus on a boardroom/corporate setting verses a more recognizable, active, manufacturing environment.

Within this proposal you will find 7 key areas defined for learnings we will pursue such as: the strong demand from employers, training gaps, and seasonal considerations. All of these learnings, along with data collected, have guided us in the development of the new project questions and driven pilot improvements such as; one on one coaching sessions; lunch and learn seminars (asynchronous vs synchronous); as well as an app to explore social learning – broadening community, diversity & inclusion (eg. language), and how they might translate with a more diverse and broader lens in other regions and sectors.

We have aligned anticipated outcomes with each of the new activities, and our budget aligns with anticipated outcomes.

(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 approach for the new project is to build on what already exists for the current project. This includes maintaining the same team (plus additional support), the same infrastructure, and same leadership. Extending reach to other sites, sectors, and regions in Canada (diversity), will require rebranding and technical modifications to accommodate regional enhancements. Increasing cohort length (reducing deadline related stress in an already overworked environment) will not only provide breathing room for participants but will offer opportunity to evaluate impact of upskilling (eg. are employees implementing new skills and strategies based on learnings?).

Additionally, STAC will add more content for supervisors & managers as well as a Speaker Series to support employers, managers & supervisors on topics such as *Acting with Integrity*; *Communication Strategy*; *Retention with Generations*; *Coaching Performance*; *Communicating Expectations*; *Covid Testing in the Workplace*; *Positive Employee Relations*; *Team Dynamics & Synergy*; *Onboarding & Orientation*; and *Effective Feedback*.

(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?

The level of interest in the current project has been high and, as a result, we have been able to exceed original targets but also have had requests from partners to increase the number of cohorts due short staffing and seasonality not lining up. Of particular interest is the level of demand for training supervisors and managers which we had not initially anticipated. From interviews with participating employers, they are indicating that the approach used with the project has been valuable and timely (eg. the application of social emotional learning skills to aide Covid-19 response) but have not been able to find from other sources.

Development of additional courses and webinars related to social-emotional learning and leadership targeted at supervisors and managers will enhance and further expand the testing of the LRF components, and work towards filling the identified training gaps in this area for the sector.

(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.

The new project aligns most closely with FSC's Strategic Priority #2 (responsive career pathways) and Strategic Priority #3 (agile labour market responses). The new project continues our work by expanding the testing of the FPSC Learning Recognition Framework (LRF) further into both the supervisor and management levels of the framework. The current project has focused on the Workplace Essentials and Foundational Skills for new hires, seasonal and front-line workers along with a selected few Supervisor areas for the supervisor cohorts. The new project will place additional focus on the Supervisor qualification areas along with some limited expansion into the Manager level areas. This aligns with Strategic Priority #2 by supporting a forward-looking, accessible career path for various levels of workers in the Canadian food and beverage processing industry. We have heard clearly from the 50 participating employers and our partners in this project that there is significant gap in skill development opportunities for supervisors and managers in the areas of social-emotional learning (which we call Acahkos) as it applies to their roles in the workplace, particularly within the pandemic context, and that often career paths for individuals in the industry are abbreviated without relevant, tailored training in skill areas such as building respectful workplaces, and leadership in areas such as supporting organizational change, managing internal communication, and task delegation.

The new project aligns with Strategic Priority #3 by continuing to further develop and test the delivery of micro-credential-based training within the high-pressure, demanding work environment of food manufacturing. The new project will expand the training to additional sites and regions to increase the diversity of employers participating beyond the Atlantic Canada food processing context. The current project has focused on the micro-environment of Atlantic Canada which has proved particularly useful for this initial stage of the LRF testing but is home to a workforce with less diversity and likely more commonality in challenges/barriers compared with other regions of Canada. As well, the food industry in Atlantic Canada operates within a relatively uniform small-town, rural environment. By including additional regions in the new project such as Ontario and Alberta along with potentially additional partners from sectors such as food retail or other manufacturing industries the new project will add additional evidence on the effectiveness and agility of the training approach and use of the LRF with a wider, more diverse workforce and group of partners.

The new project focuses on addressing three recognized systemic challenges for future skills in Canada: 1) unequal access to training opportunities based on income, geography, and background; 2) uneven access to workplace-based skills training; and 3) increasing reliance on immigrants and older workers to fill labour market gaps. The new project addresses unequal access to training opportunities by further expanding the training model with additional industry partners in regions outside of Atlantic Canada. Employers' requirements for entry-level occupations in the food and beverage processing industry are minimal compared with many other industries resulting in an industry workforce that attracts higher proportions of workers with labour market barriers (e.g., new immigrants, no post-secondary education, language challenges). Many of the current workers in the industry have experienced unequal access to training and educational opportunities prior to their arrival in the industry, and also limited training opportunities once they arrive in the industry given the industry's structure of predominantly small-medium businesses with continual challenges regarding productivity and capacity (time and resources) to invest in training for employees. The new project is testing an approach that addresses various levels of learner backgrounds (separate streams for those who have not completed high school), and is accessible regardless of geography, particularly with making Chromebooks available to learners. Similarly, the new project by expanding to include new partners and additional settings will address the uneven access to workplace-based skills training by further testing the approach among diverse SME's that are particularly challenged when attempting to provide access to workplace-based skills training for their employees. Finally, the new project will address the increased reliance on immigrants to fill labour gaps. While the current Atlantic project has been able to focus on older workers given the demographics of the local workforce, we anticipate that with expansion into additional regions we will be working with partners with significant proportions of their workforces comprised of recent immigrants. Our recent labour market information studies have found that the food and beverage processing industry attracts recent immigrants as new entrants, many of whom then stay with the industry throughout their careers. The project directly addresses the challenge of ensuring that recent immigrants have training opportunities that will assist them in developing a successful career path within the industry, and within workplaces that are respectful and supportive of diversity.

We have been surprised by the high level of interest in the current project and, as a result, we have been able to meet the original targets quite quickly and have requests from partners to increase the number of cohorts. Of particular interest is the level of demand for training supervisors which we had not initially anticipated. We are getting additional requests now to offer similar types of training for managers which we will attempt to do in a more limited way with the new project. From interviews with participating employers, they are indicating that the approach used with the project is exactly what they have been looking for (eg. the value of social emotional learning skills to aide Covid-19 response) but have not been able to find from other sources. In a few instances, employers have doubled the number of participants enrolled once they have gone through the detailed content of the program with the project staff. The combined emphasis on both technical skills and social-emotional learning skills is highlighted as important for the front-line workers, with employers emphasizing the need for greater focus on the social-emotional learning areas for supervisors (which will be included in the new project). In interviews, employers note that much of the training available for their supervisors and managers in the areas of leadership and social-emotional learning seems to be focused on the large, corporate boardroom setting managing office workers. The attraction to this approach seems to be the grounding of the skills and practice in situations and settings that are recognizable to the participants (an active manufacturing setting with teams and very high productivity demands) and applicable to an SME setting. Employers understand the need to support their supervisors and managers as they work to structure and develop a workplace that in turn supports a workforce that is increasingly diverse and coming with different training requirements for an increasingly wide array of skills needed in the current food manufacturing environment. This new project is testing one approach to addressing this expressed need among industry employers.

The current project is testing the implementation of a Learning Recognition Framework (LRF) for the food and beverage processing industry. The LRF itself is innovative in that it provides an overall structure of qualifications for the industry workforce according to various levels ranging from workplace

essentials through to high-level management areas. The LRF is a first for the industry and is innovative within the Canadian context. It has been developed with industry over a period of five years, and guides work in areas such as career ladders, accreditation, curriculum development and the development of national occupational standards for the industry. FPSC receives requests on an ongoing basis from other sectors and internationally for information regarding the LRF approach to understanding skills and qualifications at an industry-wide level. The LRF is an evidence-based framework. Research and validation were undertaken in iterative stages of its development with the work funded by the Sectorial Initiatives Program of Employment and Social Development Canada.

We will continue to generate evidence through ongoing data collection methods that we have developed and refined for our current project. We will adjust the project logic model to include the new activities and then align the measurement instruments accordingly to collect information on selected indicators that support the ongoing evaluation by Blueprint, as well as our own research questions. This will include baseline, and post-training surveys with learners, baseline and post-training surveys with employers, and a series of semi-structured interviews with employers and learners at various points in the project. In addition, we collect in-training data from learners through semester-based surveys and via feedback mechanisms during live webinars. One specific area that we are planning to further explore with the new project are developing and testing outcome measures for social-emotional learning that are adaptable for the manufacturing workplace environment. In addition to the new knowledge regarding the testing of the LRF, we will be able to provide insights on the lessons learned regarding integration of micro-credential training in a busy manufacturing environment, digital considerations with training learners from varied educational and among older workers, learners' reactions to social-emotional learning content according to different cultural backgrounds, and better understanding of diverse workers' needs in adjusting to structured learning opportunities.

At this relatively early stage, we have learned a lot and are still learning. Some of the key findings to date have included:

- The strong demand from employers for relevant training in social-emotional learning areas - 98% found the specific course "*Introduction to Emotional Intelligence*" interesting;
- The significant training gaps for supervisors and managers;
- The seasonal considerations required for effective implementation of training programs for the sector (may be particularly important for Atlantic Canada industry);
- Relatively simple supports such as provision of Chromebooks for learners to work on training courses are viewed not only as a convenience by learners but also as a confidence booster and investment in their training in a supportive environment. Preliminary findings from the initial cohort are that 44% of participants are working on courses at home outside of work hours. Another 25% are working on the courses both at work and at home, but outside of work hours. Many of the food processing work settings are not necessarily conducive to working on courses on-line (e.g., plant settings, limited office space, limited computers available for training purposes);
- The low level of digital skills and lack of comfort with technology can impede access to the training opportunities for some potential learners;
- The majority of learners in the project indicate that their preferred learning style is "by actively doing things" with a minority preferring to read and listen. This has presented some challenges and considerations in presenting the on-line curriculum in a manner that is engaging and active rather than more passive. Places more importance on the need for active webinars and interaction where possible;
- Scheduling webinars and interacting directly with learners is challenging within the manufacturing context of shifts, long work weeks (50 hours+), and busy seasons – creative, flexible approaches seem to work best but to be studied further;
- 86% find the courses interesting;
- 86% report enjoying participating in the program;
- 94% are looking forward to the next phases of the program;
- 89% find that there is new content for them in the courses;

- 94% indicate that course content can be applied to their current jobs.

All of these learnings have guided us in the development of the new project. In particular, we are planning to develop, integrate and test more components for supervisors and managers. As well, we will pilot and test a few different approaches to complementing the on-line courses with more interactive on-line offerings to engage those who learn by actively doing (e.g., webinars, 1-on-1 coaching sessions).

The additional learning questions we intend to address with the new project include:

- How effective is the training approach with more diverse groups of learners?
- Do the issues of seasonality and “busy times” impact the delivery of training in the same manner in other regions?
- How can webinars and interactive learning opportunities be better scheduled/structured to meet the demands of workplace learning within a manufacturing environment?
- What additional learning supports (besides Chromebooks) have an impact on learners’ confidence and perceptions of learning-supportive environments? Do these differ according to level and learner characteristics?
- Do managers engage with the training opportunities offered (eg. one on one coaching sessions)?
- What are some potential approaches to measuring social-emotional learning outcomes in a manufacturing workplace setting?

Extensive data collection is undertaken at various points throughout the project with all participants including learners and employers. Each participant has multiple points during and after their participation when they are asked to share their perspectives and feedback on the approach design, implementation and effectiveness. Demographic data is collected from all learners to identify those who belong to groups that have traditionally faced labour market barriers. Data collected from participants regarding their perceptions and feedback on design, implementation and outcomes are analysed with a diversity, equity and inclusion lens to determine if there are systemic issues with the approach that can be identified and addressed.

According to recent labour market information studies conducted by FPSC, the food and beverage processing workforce is highly diverse (31% immigrants vs 23% Canadian workforce), but ongoing work is urgently required to address issues of equity and inclusion in the workplace. Some practices and activities that directly support principles of equity, diversity and inclusion for this project include:

- Required courses in the curriculum that focus directly on diversity, equity and inclusion learning (e.g., Canadian Workplace Cultures);
- Strong emphasis on supporting diversity, equity and inclusion in many of the social-emotional learning courses and webinars;
- Expanding the project into additional regions to increase the diversity levels of the project participants overall;
- Analysis of all design, implementation and outcome data with a diversity, equity and inclusion lens.

We believe this project will support further equity, diversity and inclusion within the Canadian food and beverage processing sector. This will be facilitated through having trained over 480 workers at multiple levels in 50 companies in various aspects of equity, diversity and inclusion through multiple courses, webinars and coaching. In addition, we will have generated evidence on equity, diversity, and inclusion considerations for the overall approach and LRF testing by ensuring that all relevant data is analysed using an EDI lens where appropriate.

FPSC has assembled a highly experienced, quality team of project managers, industry liaisons, communications, curriculum developers, IT systems, and researchers for the current project. Together they have effectively worked with 50 partner organizations to design, implement and monitor the

current project in exceedingly challenging times during the pandemic. Overall, this team has succeeded on keeping the project on time, on budget and producing quality outcomes. This same team and leadership will be in place to develop and implement the new project with new team members (industry liaisons) and partner organizations being added to cover the new regions. Given the track record and recent past performance of the project team, we feel that all elements are available for the successful execution of the new project as an extension of current areas of focus.

We believe we have a good track record to date with FSC with our current project. We enjoy working with the FSC and Blueprint and have appreciated their ongoing support and interest in the current project. The main challenges we have faced to date regarding the current project have been related to implementation within the pandemic context. With guidance from FSC, we were able to quickly adapt the in-person design to an on-line combination of interactive sessions and courses. The reallocation of resources to support Chromebook purchases was key to this success given that many companies lack technical resources and extra tablets or laptops for personnel that are normally working front-line or sharing computer resources. Similarly, Blueprint has played an essential role in providing feedback and guidance on the development of data collection instruments to ensure that we are able to effectively collect and analyse data to produce quality evidence. As we explored ways to improve outcome measures, Blueprint and FSC were instrumental in linking us with other projects and resources to help further explore options.

The main activities for the new project include:

- Expansion of the approach to two additional regions (such as Ontario and Alberta) with different course configurations and testing which will allow us to include more diverse participants ensuring that our data includes a sufficient amount of diversity to accurately test our approach using a EDI lens, and provide larger sample sizes overall for the project. We anticipate including an additional 300 learners and 20 partner employers.
- Extension of program completion time on case by case basis will add flexibility to accommodate overworked employees due to seasonality of food & beverage industries.
- Expansion of the approach to include employers from the retail sector and other sectors which will enable us to provide additional evidence regarding the potential adaptability of the LRF approach to skill development to other sectors.
- Development of additional courses and webinars related to social-emotional learning and leadership targeted at supervisors and managers. This would assist us in expanding the testing of the LRF components, and work towards filling the identified training gaps in this area for the sector.
- Small exploratory pilot studies for up to four approaches for effective delivery of social-emotional learning and leadership for supervisors and managers. The delivery of workplace on-line learning (asynchronous and synchronous) within the manufacturing environment presents various challenges as we have learned with the current project. Now we are more aware of these challenges, the new project would give us the opportunity to test out in a more informed manner potential approaches with these learners in these environments. Pilot areas proposed include:
 - 1-on-1 coaching sessions
 - Small group interactive coaching
 - Lunch and learn seminars (asynchronous vs. synchronous)
 - Social learning and usage of an app for knowledge mobilization (provides a space for users to communicate in language of their choice using translation features)

Our approach for the new project is to build on what already exists for the current project to make it both economical and effective. This includes maintaining the same team, the same infrastructure, and same leadership. For the expansion into new regions, we will be using existing networks and partnerships to recruit employers. Similarly, we will be using the same developed courses and adding to these through new configurations. The development of new courses will be aligned directly with what we learned were the main gaps identified through the current project. We have aligned anticipated

outcomes with each of the new activities, so our budget aligns with anticipated outcomes and not just activity for the sake of activity.

(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

Jennefer Griffith

Name of signing authority

Jennefer Griffith

Date

November 2, 2021