



## 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](mailto: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](mailto:targetedcall@fsc-ccf.ca). We would be happy to answer any questions.

# PART 1 - GENERAL INFORMATION

## 1. Lead organization

Name of lead organization

NorQuest College

Name of project lead

Alison Reaves

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

alison.reaves@norquest.ca

## 2. Proposed project

Project title

Career Moves

Project start and end dates

March 1, 2022 to September 30, 2023

Projects must end no later than September 30, 2023.

Amount requested from FSC (total)

\$2,335,410.56

Project partners and their location

During the pilot project, 113 partners supported targeted recruitment of equity-seeking groups, created opportunities for participants to complete WIL and micro-WIL to prepare for new careers, provided advice and networking opportunities through events, and generated employment opportunities. This project will leverage existing and new partnerships to support participant skill development, WIL, and long-term success.

# PART 2 - PROJECT SUMMARY

## 1. Proposed project “one-liner”

How would you describe your new project in one sentence?

Professional development program for under- and un-employed mid-career Albertans to develop lifelong employability skills and connect to further employment and education to future-proof their careers.

(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 program provides participants with individualized, professional development opportunities that can be completed in up to eight months - on their own schedule and at their own pace - to develop lifelong employability skills and connect participants to employment and careers based on their goals. The three program phases: Professional Exploration, Professional Development, and Professional Reflection, include one-to-one coaching, skill development workshops, Work-Integrated Learning (WIL), tuition credits, and more to connect participants to future careers.

Based on research on the current employment landscape and learnings from the pilot, the program will target members of racialized communities, women, and other equity-seeking groups - all of which have been impacted by the economic downturn caused by COVID-19. The program has been adjusted to better address and remove barriers to employment by providing support for childcare and transportation to create opportunities for un-employed or financially insecure participants to participate in WIL and gain work experience.

Based on learnings from the pilot, the project will increase access to the program through a simpler application process; include a greater focus on confidence building; create smaller, more achievable milestones in a shortened timeframe to increase engagement and accountability; and, create more opportunities for connection with monthly events. This new project will collect longer term data and research on participant outcomes and barriers. Long term outcomes from the pilot program have not yet been measured. This project will include further data collection from previous participants and information on continued barriers and keys to success for current participants.

(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.

The new project will include several changes in scope based on research, previous learnings, and new learning questions.

This program will recruit populations impacted by the COVID-19 economic downturn, including women, racialized communities, and other equity-seeking groups by targeting recruitment and adjusting the application process.

The project will include additional supports for participants who need it most to remove barriers to education and employment, including subsidies to cover childcare, transportation to work, and the cost of necessary technology equipment.

The skill development workshops will include a greater focus on confidence building. The program timelines will be shortened to increase accountability and participant engagement.

Career coaches will receive training in Equity, Diversity and Inclusion to increase understanding of how to best support participants from equity-seeking groups.

Project research will expand to include the pilot and further data collection regarding skills, the impact of removing barriers through additional supports, confidence, and outcomes.

(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?**

Women, racialized and/or immigrant people have been disproportionately impacted by the pandemic for many reasons, including disproportionate representation in sectors hardest hit

by the pandemic (Saba et al. 2021; Statistics Canada 2021). Candidates in equity-seeking groups have experienced negative impacts of the pandemic more strongly, with women confronting a “she-cession” (Saba et al. 2021). Training in employability skills and further education provides vital intervention to create sustainable, equitable outcomes, and future-proof their careers.

The new participant subsidies target the barriers that impact the most vulnerable populations.

The enhanced research component will further inform skill development and career development programming, particularly for marginalized populations. The additional research will track outcomes for previous program participants; further focus on skill development research, particularly regarding employer expectations and career development best practices; and, better understand the impact of additional supports to remove barriers to employment and education for marginalized populations.

(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 Career Moves program provides flexible and accessible professional development opportunities for up to 200 mid-career workers considering or requiring a career change. This program is based on the pilot model that was developed in 2019 and will incorporate changes based on learnings from the pilot program. The pilot project supported 125 participants with a 96% satisfaction rate. Forty-nine participants in the pilot started new careers, 39 participants completed WIL or micro-WIL opportunities, and 65 participants accessed further training. Some participants completed all three. Based on the pilot’s success and learnings, the new project increases opportunities specifically for equity-seeking groups, researches the impacts of removing barriers to education and employment through childcare and

transportation subsidies, and continues to support skill development through workshops and practice throughout the program to build participant skills and confidence. The new project continues to focus on supporting participants to develop and articulate their skills, changing the landscape of career and employment supports to incorporate skill development into programming.

Career transitions, whether chosen or forced, may cause individuals to feel frustration and/or uncertainty about the options available to them and the next steps they should take. Mid-career workers may feel that stigma is attached to traditional career transition programs, demonstrate a lack of confidence to return to school or find new employment, or do not have a realistic sense of their skill sets or how to see their skills as transferable. Understanding what their transferable skills are and how to articulate them to employers is important for labour market attachment. Furthermore, the COVID-19 pandemic has significantly changed the landscape for some of the most vulnerable populations in the country. This program will provide individuals with accessible training that specifically targets some of the most significant barriers experienced by mid-career workers when trying to find sustainable employment.

The project recognizes that career transitions may be intimidating and embarrassing. This approach helps support mid-career individuals' transitions to new careers through a re-framed professional development program that prepares participants with the knowledge and tools required to action their success. This holistic membership program allows participants to explore career and educational opportunities with the support of individualized coaching, while providing opportunities for people experiencing similar circumstances to come together, all in a way that supports varied schedules.

This program will provide participants with professional development opportunities that can be completed in four to eight months, on their own schedule, at their own pace, with numerous options for career pathways and individualized coaching support throughout the program. This program is divided up into three phases –Professional Exploration, Professional Development, and Professional Reflection – and includes activities such as one-to-one coaching, comprehensive personal assessments, skill development workshops, and tuition credits and other subsidies to remove barriers to employment. The program also includes Work-Integrated Learning (WIL) and micro-WIL, an individualized action plan, mentoring, and an online peer support and resource/information sharing portal to guide participants as they make informed decisions about their future careers.

This program is fully accessible online and allows participants to work at a pace suitable to each participant's unique context. Based on learnings from the initial pilot as well as research on the current employment landscape, this program will include a more targeted approach to supporting members of racialized communities, women and individuals who have unequal access to training because of their location and region. These individuals have been hit the hardest in the economic downturn caused by COVID-19. As such, the project will build in

additional supports for these learners in order to mitigate for unequal access to education and training and other systemic barriers. All main skill development workshops, resources, assessments, and the portal were built in the initial pilot; these resources will be updated based on feedback, learnings, and program evaluation, and will be ready to quickly launch for a new version of the program.

Additionally, this project will provide an opportunity to continue collecting data and research on participant outcomes following their completion of the pilot program to understand employment outcomes, confidence, and transferable skill development and understanding. Long-term outcomes from the pilot program have not yet been measured. The new project will allow continued data collection from previous participants as well as include a greater research focus on continued barriers, employer expectations, the impact of childcare and transportation subsidies on long-term success, and keys to success for current and new participants.

This project focuses on the development of employability skills for mid-career workers by helping them make informed decisions about their own potential or required career transitions. This project provides mid-career professionals with training to develop and apply these skills, while connecting them to potential upskilling opportunities by increasing access to education. The new project will build on the success of the pilot; 84% of the participants in the pilot indicated that the program was either extremely useful (57%) or very useful (27%) in increasing employability skills.

Studies have emphasized the importance of providing counselling support for mid-career and life transitions, and that career guidance has the potential to “foster and facilitate the process of self-reflexivity provided it is in response to the particular requirements of individuals in their mid-career” (Bimrose, Barabasch, Brown & Mulvey, 2015, p. 257). By providing career coaching and the development of employability skills customized to individual needs, the program can better support people in their career transitions and ensure that they have the skills necessary to transition to other careers. While career development programs often focus on articulating transferable skills, they rarely focus on skill development and skill practice and application. This project’s innovation focuses on developing - not just articulating - skills for future employment.

This program incorporates a participant-centered assessment tool - FutureWorx’s Employability Skills Assessment Tool - that is individualized to participants’ needs and includes input from Career Coaches and WIL supervisors. This project will allow NorQuest College and the Future Skills Centre to continue to measure the success and impact of this assessment tool. This could potentially lead to a standard pan-Canadian tool that can be transferred across provinces and industries. From a participant perspective, use of ESAT provides participants with a way to monitor and track their progress toward their upskilling goals.

NorQuest College has direct experience with this need, and communities most affected. Though based in downtown Edmonton, NorQuest serves a region from Wetaskiwin to Whitecourt and Drayton Valley to Fort Saskatchewan, encompassing communities that have all been impacted significantly by the downturn in the oil and gas economy, specifically Drayton Valley, Whitecourt, and the industrial parks of Leduc/Nisku and Acheson. Through this project, we will be able to work with those communities to support mid-career employment transitions and provide access to this project through our networks in those communities. In addition, the pilot program developed relationships with Alberta Works offices, Alberta Chambers of Commerce, and other non-profits to promote the program to participants with barriers to employment. These existing relationships will support the targeted recruitment of equity-seeking groups.

Providing participant-centered programming that is flexible and convenient is also important to attracting a diversity of people that do not fit within the traditional worker model. Many of these are women, immigrants, youth, and Indigenous peoples. This program is designed to meet people where they are at in their career and their life. According to census data, Alberta has the third highest unemployment rate for landed immigrants and women (Government of Alberta, 2019). This program targets and works with those populations to provide them with an accessible program that will facilitate their transitions towards new employment and educational opportunities. In addition, this program will target those that have been most impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic and will provide access to personalized supports that will reduce barriers for those individuals when trying to access training and employment.

In order to create greater accessibility to training for women and racialized communities, the new program includes built-in additional supports that include EDI training for career coaches and access to resources and financial support that will alleviate the cost of things like childcare, transportation, and the purchasing of technological equipment for participants experiencing barriers to employment.

Throughout the program, participants interact and engage with others in the program to share experiences, learn about new and emerging careers, enrich their skills and abilities, create tools for their long-term success, and develop their networks. Participants also receive access to college services in order to support success. Participants must complete all aspects of each phase to move on to the next; the career coaches motivate participants to move through the phases and adapt their transition plans as necessary to action their success.

Participants complete three phases of the program:

**Phase I Professional Exploration:** Participants assess and reflect on their strengths, experiences, interests and abilities. They are introduced to employability skill and future skill demands as well as potential options for short skill retraining, returning to education,



Entrepreneurial streams, or being attached to new work experiences to develop transferable skills.

Assessments: Participants complete standardized, formal, and self-assessments to determine career interests and employability skill capabilities to inform their transition plan and build confidence.

Skill development workshops: Participants self-select from a variety of workshops to learn about transferable skills necessary for lifelong employability, including inclusivity and intercultural competency, industries of the future, resilience, problem-solving, and more.

Coaching: Participants work with a career coach for multiple one-on-one coaching sessions to develop employability tools and an actionable transition plan for success in Phase II, Phase III, and the future.

**Phase II Professional Development:** Participants develop their skills and build capacity to take advantage of new opportunities by working through their transition plan pathways and seeing immediate success.

Retraining: Participants access up to \$3000 in tuition credits to use toward credit and non-credit courses, which could include short term certificate courses, diploma programs, degree programs, or continuing education at NorQuest or other institutions across the country. It could also include any necessary technology or tools to access the training. Participants entering longer term certificate or diploma programs will need to identify additional funding sources as part of their action plan. Experience has shown that one successful semester gives students the confidence to continue in their program of choice.

Interaction with employers: Participants attend monthly events to build connections within the program and their communities, meet potential employers, and gain confidence.

Work Integrated Learning: Participants access various work-place learning opportunities that may lead directly into employment, including traditional work placements and micro-WIL such as job shadowing or informational interviews.

Additional support: Based on learnings from the pilot project, this program includes up to \$2,600 in additional participant support. This can include necessary technology or tools, childcare, or transportation supports to access education or employment. Childcare and transportation supports will only be available to un-employed or financially insecure participants to remove barriers related to finding and sustaining employment. Career Coaches will work with participants to develop a long-term plan to address these barriers to ensure participants can continue to access sustainable careers without barriers to employment after completing the program.

**Phase III Professional Reflection:** Participants reflect on their growth and development to better understand and articulate their skills and value to a prospective employer.

Personal reflection: Participants reflect on their development to think critically about their transition and make decisions about their short-term plans and lifelong employability, building confidence, creating stories to share with new members, and developing critical thinking skills necessary for career success.

This project addresses systemic challenges by taking a new lens to future skills and their impact on Canada's growth and post-pandemic recovery. Before the pandemic, a narrow approach to future skills excluded soft-skills and upskilling, and this approach dominated discussions of innovation and growth (Cukier et al. 2021: xi). This narrow approach ignored the competencies, adaptation, and combinations of skills that are critical to innovation and growth in small and medium enterprises, and may involve soft-skills and upskilling (Cukier et al. 2021; Saba et al. 2021). Small and medium enterprises (SMEs) employ "almost 90% of all Canadians who work in the private sector" (Saba et al. 2021: ix), and as such, their soft skills and upskilling-related needs warrant attention.

However, soft skills and upskilling-related skills need to be considered with equity in view. By providing skills training to under- and un-employed mid-career workers, particularly in equity-seeking groups, this project helps to bridge a gap in sustainable employment outcomes. For instance, a 2021 survey of almost 300 SMEs showcased strong interest in attracting candidates who are women and/or have diverse heritage (Saba et al. 2021: 25). Despite such interest, most organizations had taken limited steps to attract such candidates, and instead invested time hiring people with records of job-related training and skills (Saba et al. 2021).

NorQuest has designed and run numerous projects serving the needs of newcomers, women and other equity seeking groups. As an institute committed to an anti-racist and inclusive education, this project aligns with the projects and programs already running at NorQuest.

NorQuest has spearheaded numerous projects that support a diverse population of learners in finding employment and attaining credentials. Examples of projects related to supporting employment and training newcomers include the Improving Workplace Readiness: Essential Skills Embedded in the National LINC Program project (LINCWorks), which is currently funded by ESDC - integrates Essential Skills (ES), entry-level certifications, and facilitated work placements into language training classes in urban and rural settings. There is a specific focus on ensuring suitability and alignment with the LINC program. This program is ongoing, but results from data collected so far indicate significant achievements. Based on the most recent data, the majority of program participants indicate that this program has improved their essential skills. In addition, both program participants and employers who participated in the work placement program reported that the employment modules are interesting and beneficial. All employer respondents indicated that they are satisfied with the

students' work readiness. The vast majority of employers also indicated that after hosting a work experience student they are now more likely to hire newcomers with limited formal education and literacy.

This program also aims to enhance employability by enabling students to complete entry-level certifications. Results indicate that, pilot participants have achieved 294 entry-level certifications in First Aid, WHMIS, and Food Safety. This program has supported learners in increasing their employment confidence, knowledge of essential skills, and improved their language proficiency.

Autism CanTech! is a nation-wide, three-year project funded by ESDC and is designed to remove barriers to employment in the digital economy for people with disabilities within Canada. Through the combination of supportive programming for learners, assistive technology, career coaches, and workplace culture interventions with employers, the program will enable Autistic youth to gain and maintain meaningful employment in the digital economy. With four months of coursework, two months of paid work experience, and access to a range of additional supports, autistic youth develop the employability and technical skills that they need to succeed in the workforce. Throughout the program, they are further supported by innovative assistive technology and one-to-one career coaching. Employers, in turn, receive tailored training and support in the use of assistive technology, employment practices, and Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI), as well as career coach support during the student's placement. In total, 260 youth and up to 250 businesses across 3 different regions will have taken part in the program by the conclusion of the 3 years. By working with both autistic youth and employers, the Autism CanTech! program will support the development of inclusive and accessible workplaces, and remove barriers for an underrepresented, underemployed population. Moreover, by the end of the grant, the project will be sustainable and applicable across other business sectors and across the disability community.

NorQuest College and Supply Chain Canada have partnered to develop and pilot a unique program that provides English Language Learners (ELLs) and newcomers with a pathway to a career in Supply Chain. The program includes the technical skills, the intercultural competency development, the language skills, and a work placement. Students in this program improve their language proficiency, while working towards acquiring a diploma in Supply Management Training. This project is in its second iteration having secured a second grant based on the success of the first pilot of the program.

These previous projects and the success of the Career Moves pilot demonstrate NorQuest College's ability to support equity-seeking groups through professional development and include learnings from the pilot to enhance and research skill development and employment support practices.

(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](mailto:targetedcall@fsc-ccf.ca).
4. You may use the space below to provide comments to accompany your work plan and/or budget.

The budget includes 12% overhead costs based on the overall budget as per the pilot program 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**

Patti Hergott, Dean FSFL

**Date**

11/01/21