Review Committee Member: Austin Hracs - Lead Org: Northern Centre for Advanced Technology (NORCAT)

Assessment Form: Targeted Call 2021

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Project Name: Accelerating and Expanding the Adoption of Tech-enabled Blended Learning Programs

Lead Organization: Northern Centre for Advanced Technology (NORCAT)

Link to reviewer packet: Northern Centre for Advanced Technology (NORCAT) Reviewer Packet

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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

| | | | 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.

This is a strong project and strong proposal. This aligns well with FSC's core goals and mission to invest and learn from innovative approaches to skills development / training. The technology component (virtual reality) aspect of this project is compelling. The industry is in need of more inclusive recruitment and training pathways, especially in the North.

The value for money of this project is questionable. The core success metrics are rather weak. The project promises to enrol an additional 125 students with a project cost of $1.8M, this is ~$15,000 per student enrolled, not even completed. I would recommend increasing the expected participant goal to at least 250, with firm commitments to diverse participation, especially for Women and Indigenous People.

The project's learning plan is also relatively weak for this budget threshold. The proposal's statements seem to suggest this is a completely novel approach. Perhaps in Canada, but this is not completely leading edge internationally. I want to see how we are benchmarking learning outcomes against traditional methods and how this approach is better.

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

The demonstrated capacity of this group is impressive and the workplan is well thought out to execute on the stated goals. The innovative training approach is attractive along with the geography and sectors being supported. They have engaged another partner to presumably increase enrolment potential. From a proof of concept perspective, this is a strong project.

Where do you think the project has gaps or challenges?

The learning plan is weak. The value for money is a challenge given the number of participants. The specific course selection to built out is useful, but more core health and safety than something specific for mining or construction. This is a double edge sword because it will have broad application, but will be difficult to pin point specific learning improvement in applied settings. The workplan doesn't give much detail on the participant recruitment strategy. There is so much investment on the technology, but very limited on the rollout and learning components of the project. I struggle to understand how this approach can be scaled given everything is being built in a bespoke way. The cost to develop just one learning module for proper use of a fire extinguisher in a confined space will likely be prohibitive beyond this project, if funded.

Comments

This project deserves some back and forth with the FSC team to improve it and potentially increase some of the core outcomes to improve value for money. The engagement strategy and commitment to specific equity groups needs to be stronger.

Please share any other comments.