



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

University College of the North

Name of project lead

Rob Penner

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

E: rpenner@ucn.ca T: 204-627-8623

2. Proposed project

Project title

Bridging the gap through targeted WIL; northern employers and northern students co-creating learning communities for workforce development

Project start and end dates

April 1, 2022, to Sept. 1, 2023

Projects must end no later than September 30, 2023.

Amount requested from FSC (total)

\$1,097,200.00

Project partners and their location

University College of the North (northern Manitoba, The Pas Campus, Thompson Campus)
Indigenous Education and Training units (miscellaneous but including Opaskwayak Cree Nation, MKO, and Manitoba Metis Federation)
Manitoba Economic Development and Jobs (northern Manitoba)
Auto dealers of northern Manitoba
Northern Manitoba Sector Council
Computers 4 Schools (Thompson and The Pas)

PART 2 - PROJECT SUMMARY

1. Proposed project “one-liner”

How would you describe your new project in one sentence?

Work-integrated-learning intensive training shows promise for bridging the gap bringing NEET (Not in Employment, Education, or Training) individuals into the world of work in northern Manitoba.

(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.

In a region of Canada still struggling with “jobs without people and people without jobs”, work-integrated-learning intensive training shows promise for bridging the gap bringing NEET (not in employment, education, or training) individuals into the world of work in northern Manitoba.

Building on the lessons learned within the current FSC-funded project, we propose to improve the InTeRN (Information Technology Readiness North) model of WIL-intensive education with just-in-time training (developed in the current FSC-funded project) and replicate it in another site with a different demographic group of students and in sectors other than IT.

This project will focus on 2 areas: (a) optimizing the InTeRN model of training for repetition and (b) replicating the InTeRN model to expand its impact. We are proposing to repeat the InTeRN project at a new site with a new demographic cohort and, secondly, replicate the InTeRN model in northern Manitoba employment sectors that differ from IT.

(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 proposed project builds on the successes realized in the current FSC-funded project. We will be repeating the InTeRN program but will optimize some of the learning from the current project to better serve the Indigenous women of northern Manitoba. Secondly, we will respond to the many requests that we have received regarding expanding the InTeRN model into other locations and sectors. This will provide us with a unique natural experiment to determine what criteria are critical for success in other sectors and locations.

(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?

Northern Manitoba continues to struggle to overcome workforce development issues. InTeRN is showing promise of addressing the need for IT professionals in the north, but other sectors are equally interested in developing local workforces. As a post-secondary institution serving a largely Indigenous student population in a northern location, we are anxious to (a) engage students in meaningful employment, (b) assist local businesses to, through workforce development, be successful in the north of Manitoba, and (c) demonstrate the role that education can play in sustaining and advancing communities in the north.

(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.

1. Introduction

Building on the successes of the current FSC-funded project, *Information Technology Readiness North; a young northern workforce enters the world of IT-related employment*, our response to the FSC targeted call is to address two focal areas identified through our current work, namely, (a) optimizing the InTeRN program to better serve the needs of northern Indigenous women entering the IT-sector, and (b) producing more rigorous evidence of the criteria for success in replicating the InTeRN program into other sectors, locations, and student groups.

2. Successes to date and suggestions for next steps

Creating a program to train northern Indigenous women as front-line information technology (IT) technicians to serve Manitoba-based IT industries has taught us a great deal about building success into a program and making work-integrated-learning (WIL) a key component of daily activity for the students. For more information on some of the successes to date, please see the CBC article released Oct. 25, 2021 (<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/ucn-intrn-it-train-indigenous-women-1.6223353>).

The current project has demonstrated the return on investment (ROI) that can be realized when individuals in the north succeed and tell others in their respective communities and families of the impacts that the experience is having on them. We see this work as a direct act of reconciliation as it specifically addresses several of the 94 Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission including 10 (ii) and 92(ii).

Interest in the InTeRN project has grown; through the last months, faculty members and academic partners have asked questions regarding our methods of instruction, the use of extensive WIL, and the processes that we have created or adapted. One of the most common questions, however, has been “Could we do the same thing for _____?” The blank has been filled in with ideas and disciplines such as pre-employment (entry level) trades, office administration, education, and others. Employers, likewise, have asked whether we could adapt the InTeRN program to address northern workforce gaps that they are experiencing (administrative personnel, supervisors, trades persons, communications and marketing, and others).

Our team has carefully contemplated these questions and, at this time, sees two inter-related yet distinctly different tasks that lie ahead of us: (a) optimizing the InTeRN model for more effective and efficient repetition at UCN, and (b) replicating the InTeRN model as a means of testing, learning, and distilling best practices that would make it applicable to a range of settings, disciplines, and demographics in northern locales.

3. *Optimizing the InTeRN model*

InTeRN has critical components and lessons that, we believe, have led to the successes noted to date.

- a) Starting the training at the appropriate level for each student. “Average” students don’t enter our programs; each student is unique.
- b) Extensive use of WIL and just-in-time training appears to be accelerating the learning for the students. At the end of September, 2021, the students are more advanced than we anticipated, which has surprised the instructors and the students.
- c) The team is all important. The case manager and instructors work as a team, and the students are mimicking this. Students are taking an active role in the management of the classroom; they are seeking ways of developing their space and making it their own learning community.
- d) Students are not familiar with this model of learning and are still “waiting for the training to start”. They don’t recognize the learning that has already taken place and they are still waiting for the ‘classroom’ and teacher to appear.
- e) Outcomes-based programming (OBP) works but not for taxation systems or college enrolment systems. When engaged in OBP, individuals may take more or less time to achieve mastery. For personal taxes and the issuing of T2202A forms for students, however, start and end dates need to be estimated. Furthermore, the existing enrolment system of UCN does not have the capacity to adopt an ‘open entry/open exit’ system of enrolment.
- f) Sponsors that fund students to attend post-secondary training are challenged by students being engaged in paid work experiences. In some cases, fully sponsored students are compensated with living allowances but income earned might reduce their living allowance thereby creating a disincentive for paid on-the-job training.
- g) Work with those that “get it”. We have chosen to work with certain employers and industry partners that see InTeRN and its students as a resource that they can draw on as well as give back to. Not all industry partners “get it”.
- h) Working at reconciliation takes longer but produces greater rewards. Developing the InTeRN program has taken longer than anticipated, but the input of students, industry representatives, Indigenous organizations, and others has been inspiring and enlightening.

From the learning gleaned within the current FSC-funded project, we recognize distinct actions that need to be taken to optimize the InTeRN program. It should be noted that this optimization is focused on not only making the InTeRN program more effective and efficient, but, importantly, these steps will aid us in the replication phase (outlined in section 4).

Optimization has multiple facets but, at a minimum, the following are included.

- a) Revamping the curriculum of InTeRN based on the lessons learned from the women that are currently participating in the program. We have already witnessed how some components that we considered critical and time consuming were captured relatively quickly while others, previously unanticipated by our team, are proving pivotal. An example of this is the current conversations that are echoing through the classroom as the women speak of the IT-related specializations that they wish to challenge themselves with. Some are interested in cyber-

security. Others like coding. Network architecture is for some. In our defense, we really anticipated that these conversations would not take place until late in the program. We are pleased to see the women asking these kinds of questions so soon. Our response is to adapt the curriculum to meet the changing needs.

- b) Growing our own instructors. We anticipated that some of the women would shine as natural teachers. And, we weren't wrong. We thought this might take longer, but we have students that wish to become trainers already. We endorse this sentiment especially as we want this program to assist in the important work of reconciliation by decolonizing the IT sector. Developing Indigenous women as instructors for InTeRN is an important step in this process of reconciliation as well as for the sustainability of the program.
- c) Streamline the student experience. From initial interest on the part of a potential student to application to registration to training and to employment, we want the student to understand and experience a seamless system which provides support and guidance through the entire process. Importantly, for our northern students, this process must be clear to the Indigenous education and training groups within northern communities so that project workers and funders understand and support the women appropriately. During this first go-around of InTeRN, we partnered with student sponsoring agencies that are familiar with UCN and our programming but the novelty of the InTeRN program challenged many. Being able to clearly show the pathway to students and their partners is critical.
- d) Establish WIL as a *bona fide* training system. WIL is a critical piece of the training and the speed of learning was, we believe, accelerated largely through the intense use of WIL and just-in-time training. Through our partnerships with employers, we were able to pay the students for the WIL components and this element (pay for work) cemented the concept, for the students, of learning as work and work as learning. It worked for the students; it worked much poorer, however, for (i) HR policies at UCN (the students were employed by UCN to ensure that they were paid on a regular basis), (ii) student sponsors that threatened to reduce, by the amount of their weekly income, the living allowances that the students were receiving as full time students (in essence, creating a dis-incentive for working while at school), and (iii) enrolment policies and practices at UCN (confusion regarding when the students were working and when they were at school and the impacts of that on their registration and taxation). While WIL worked for the students, we constantly were swimming upstream against the prevailing current of 'traditional' student employment and schooling. These need to be aligned so that more students can benefit from training that blurs the lines between school and work.

Our work plan for the FSC targeted call addresses these issues head on so that future iterations of the InTeRN project can be sustainable and effective at UCN and in Manitoba's north.

4. *Replicating the InTeRN model*

Interest in the InTeRN model has steadily grown. We are pleased as faculty in other disciplines within UCN have examined the model and wish to replicate it, other sectors have approached us to see whether this model need only apply to the IT sector, and other regions have requested a second InTeRN site. We consider these responses as an acknowledgement of the work that has gone into the FSC-funded project, and we are thrilled to learn of the FSC targeted call as we see the potential for a

natural experiment to take place through the replication of InTeRN. Specifically, we see the following opportunities that, combined, would provide us with a test of a number of factors to determine whether the InTeRN model can be adopted elsewhere including at another site, with different groups of students, and in differing sectors. These options are unpacked below.

- a) Repeat the InTeRN model at another site. UCN has two main campuses, The Pas and Thompson. The current InTeRN program is delivered at The Pas Campus, and is done in concert with Computers for 4 Schools (c4smb.ca), which provides a wealth of resources and experiences for the students at its electronics and computer recycling depot within the InTeRN classroom. C4S has now established a recycling depot at Thompson, and this provides us with a tremendous opportunity to repeat InTeRN at another location. In addition to testing the impact of site on success, this also provides an improved ROI of the funds which FSC committed to the original project. Discussions are already underway with C4S and its partners at Thompson, and this progression has a high degree of probability for the 2022-2023 academic year.
- b) Repeat InTeRN with a different demographic. The current program is populated entirely with Indigenous women. Men have been asking to enroll. We are cautious to simply change the student composition of the existing program as we see the importance of an all-women cohort for the development of a supportive learning community in the IT training. We are curious, however, of what might happen if we replicated the model but with a different student composition of northern students including Indigenous and non-Indigenous, male, female, LGBTQ2S. All would be welcomed. Given the probability of establishing a second site at Thompson, we could also open the doors to a diversity of students rather than restricting it to Indigenous females.
- c) Copy the InTeRN model into another academic discipline / employment sector. Besides IT businesses, other employers have been watching InTeRN and asking whether the model can be applied to their respective workforce needs. This is a diverse group that ranges from entry level administrative assistants for the northern health region to automotive technicians for the auto industry of northern Manitoba to power engineers for the heavy industries of the north. From this, two areas, in particular, have developed: Learning Technology Facilitators at UCN and Automotive Technicians for the H5 Company in the north of Manitoba. With respect to the Learning Technology Facilitators (LTFs), UCN engages faculty and students in distance teaching and learning. LTFs are UCN employees that are 1 part IT technician, 1 part teacher, and 2 parts trouble shooter. UCN employs upwards of 10 LTFs but has, through the covid pandemic, increased this number but found it impossible to hire enough. LTFs are critical for student success and UCN has approached us to see if the InTeRN model of WIL focused training can be applied to 'growing our own' LTFs. Similarly, the H5 Group of companies has struggled to fill positions both before and during the covid pandemic. Their HR department has had extensive discussions with us regarding the application of an InTeRN-styled training program for one critical position for them, namely, automotive technicians. Again, we see the potential to assist UCN and local businesses while testing the InTeRN model.

Taking on the expansions listed above would not only meet local workforce needs but would also permit us to participate in a natural experiment regarding WIL-intensive programs like InTeRN and its applicability to multiple sites, multiple demographics, and multiple sectors. We have an ideal situation

to capitalize on the investment made by FSC into the InTeRN program and increase FSC's ROI while meeting a workforce need in northern Manitoba.

5. Impacts and products of the FSC targeted call project

Work has already started in each of the areas outlined above. Partners are being attracted, students are being recruited, and people are asking "how can we get involved". We are humbled and grateful yet challenged by these requests. The FSC targeted call will enable us to respond in a positive manner to these requests.

Our attached work plan builds on these 2 primary areas of activity, (a) optimization of the current InTeRN program and (b) replication of the InTeRN model. Succinctly, this work will result in:

- a) A robust curriculum and learning model for InTeRN;
- b) Female Indigenous instructors to take control of the InTeRN training program in the north;
- c) A training model that is easy to understand for students and their academic partners;
- d) Advances in modernizing the systems at UCN and elsewhere so that post-secondary students can effectively engage in WIL-intensive training programs in the north;
- e) Replication of the InTeRN program at another site and with a different student demographic; and
- f) Application of the InTeRN WIL-based education model to sectors other than IT.

We are pleased to submit this work plan as we are confident that it will:

- a) Continue the critical work of addressing the conundrum of "jobs without people and people without jobs" that plagues northern Manitoba;
- b) Continue to develop an innovative model of engaging northern people in education that blurs that lines between training and employment and further tests the model;
- c) Build upon the learning generated in the current FSC-funded project and improve the ROI for FSC by testing the applicability of the InTeRN model in differing sites and sectors and with differing student groups; and
- d) As an act of reconciliation, assist UCN in decolonizing some of its programming and methods of training.

Please note that the accompanying work plan incorporates all components listed above. Recognizing that FSC will need to scrupulously allocate its resources within this targeted call, we are willing to forgo some components of this work plan, and could plan for that in consultation with the FSC team.

(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.

The accompanying work plan is encapsulated within a Gantt chart but with the addition of an estimate of costs associated with each task line. This enables us, in collaboration with FSC, to consider which tasks to include in this targeted call and which to exclude.

(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

Rob Penner

Date

Nov. 2, 2021