Ontario 🏛

Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development

Ontario Human Capital Research and Innovation Fund (OHCRIF)

Program Guidelines and Requirements
January 2020

Key Terms

Applicant: An organization (or consortium) that has applied to the Ontario Human Capital Research and Innovation Fund.

Advanced Manufacturing: The use of innovative technologies for improved competitiveness in manufacturing.

Driving Prosperity: The Government of Ontario's auto sector strategy that was announced in February 2019.

In-Demand Skills: Attributes that can be technical or transferable in nature, are desired by industry, and support labour market resiliency.

OHCRIF: Ontario Human Capital Research and Innovation Fund

Project: All activities that meet the criteria set out in these program guidelines and requirements.

Project Budget: A detailed breakdown of all expenses and funding contributions (cash and in-kind) required to carry out the Project.

Project Plan: A detailed breakdown of all key Project activities, timelines, and outcomes expected as a result of the Project.

Successful Applicant: An entity that has been awarded funding and is responsible for delivering the Project. The Successful Applicant is responsible for signing and fulfilling all requirements of the transfer payment agreement, including but not limited to: receiving and managing the funds, ensuring coordination of Project partners and activities, and communicating with MLTSD regarding the status of the Project on behalf of all partners.

Underutilized (Workers): A group of individuals that includes unemployed, underemployed, those waiting for employment, and discouraged searchers.

Context

Ontario's economy is rapidly evolving and so is the nature of work. Given the emerging role of new technologies in many industries, workforce development solutions must keep pace with the changing demands of the economy to ensure the people of Ontario have the skills they need to succeed today and tomorrow.

Research and innovation is key to supporting Ontario's talent needs and economic development. The Ministry of Labour, Training and Skills Development (MLTSD) is supporting research and innovation projects to assist workers and employers as part of the government's commitment to:

- Support workers in a changing economy, including laid-off, at-risk, and underutilized workers to develop the skills they need to get and keep good jobs; and;
- Help employers build the workforce they need to grow their businesses.

Objective

The primary goal of the Ontario Human Capital Research and Innovation Fund (OHCRIF) is to support research and innovation projects that identify better ways to help people prepare for, return to or keep employment and become productive participants in the labour force.

OHCRIF will fund research to enhance the evidence base for workforce development strategies, ideas and approaches to support the positive participation of Ontarians in the labour market to help them better plan for and respond to the needs of employers.

Eligible Organizations

Proposals may be submitted by the following types of organizations:

- Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology
- Employers, industry associations, unions, and workforce development partners
- First Nations governments
- Indigenous Institutes
- Not-for-profit organizations
- Ontario publicly assisted universities
- Ontario school boards
- Private career colleges

Proposals may be submitted by a single organization or as a partnership between organizations (i.e., a consortium). However, partnerships must identify a lead organization (intermediary) that will be accountable to the Ministry for Project activities

throughout the funding agreement period. The intermediary would be responsible for planning, coordinating, and managing all aspects of the Project.

Organizations are permitted to submit more than one proposal on their own, as well as part of a consortium.

Eligible Projects

All Projects must include a literature review, inter-jurisdictional review, and/or environmental scan to create a strong evidence base for the research development process.

Projects that meet the following criteria will be eligible:

- **Inquiry Projects:** An issue is identified, data is collected from multiple sources, and analysis is conducted:
    - o Projects can be case studies, data, discourse or document analysis, or evaluation studies. Projects are expected to include a primary qualitative or quantitative research using single, mixed, or multiple research methods.

- **Impact Projects:** A large-scale inquiry project that includes an assessment of workforce development and/or industry challenges, the development of an approach or solution, and an assessment of the potential impact with implementation on a provincial level:
    - o Projects can include cross-sectional and longitudinal studies, large data set analysis, or inter-disciplinary collaborative projects.

Eligible Research Themes

Projects must address at least one of the following eligible research themes:

1. **Overcoming barriers to support successful participation in the labour market for Ontario's current and future workforce:** Research and/or develop innovative approaches that address the challenges Ontarians face when preparing for, returning to, or maintaining employment and the strategies to overcoming these barriers.

    The following projects will be considered:

- Identifying better ways of supporting **at-risk or laid-off** workers to transition to new employment pathways and opportunities.

- Investigating labour market outcomes for **older workers** and identifying workforce development strategies to better support them.

- Examining the issue of **underutilized labour,** which could include examining individuals that are also underrepresented in the labour market such as women,

Indigenous peoples, Francophones, youth with higher support needs, newcomers and persons with disabilities.

- Assessing workplace support models to assist with **mental health** in the workplace for current workers and/or unemployed persons preparing for or returning to work.

2. **Supporting employer participation in workforce development strategies/programs and their role in building the workforce they need to grow their businesses:** Research and/or develop innovative approaches and solutions that address employers' ability to identify current and future skill needs and the role of employers in workforce development strategies/programs.

   The following projects will be considered:

   - Undertaking an assessment of employers' ability to navigate the **apprenticeship system** and/or methods to best support employers' participation in the system in terms of resources, time and training capacity.

   - Examining best practices of **industry-led training** models and or tools used by employers in specific sectors to address the skills and talent needs. Develop a model/framework or tool and test in a sector.

   - Developing a model/framework or tool that helps employers describe and communicate **transferable skills** within existing jobs, to support employee skill development, and inform career planning and career pathways research.

   - Enhancing **employer support models** with community benefits agreements. This research could align with the expansion of transit and infrastructure to ensure that community benefit agreements identify employees with the necessary skills for these projects.

Reasonable additional research themes and projects may be considered where the application provides a strong, demonstrated rationale for the theme that aligns with the objective of OHCRIF.

Open License

All research using funding from OHCRIF must abide by Creative Common's Attribution 4.0 International License/ (CC BY 4.0) https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/. Under this agreement, intellectual property remains with its creator, but others are free to copy, redistribute, transform, and/ or build upon the material for any purpose, even commercially. However, the ministry will consider requests for exempting projects from this requirement if applicants can provide a clear and compelling rationale to support such a request.

Funding Allocation and Distribution

The total available funding is $1.5 million.

MLTSD expects that Inquiry Projects will not require more than $100,000 total in funding and Impact Projects will not require more than $250,000 total in funding.

Reasonable upward adjustments may be negotiated where the application provides a strong, demonstrated rationale for additional funding based on the nature of the proposal.

The funding will be allocated based on eligible costs and through a competitive process based on the evaluation of the proposals.

MLTSD reserves the right to set limits on the amount of funding an Applicant will receive.

MLTSD is not bound to enter into an agreement with any Applicant. Funding will be distributed through Transfer Payment Agreements signed between MLTSD and Successful Applicants.

Eligible Expenditures

OHCRIF is designed to cover the following eligible expenditures:

- Research development; and activities related to direct project costs;

- Administrative costs related to Project (to a maximum of 10% of total budgeted costs). Projects funded at over $150,000 will require an auditor report, which can be claimed as an eligible expenditure;

- Partnership development (and other activities related to ensuring there are appropriate relationships in place between organizations). MLTSD may consider the relative proportion of partnership development costs compared to total program costs when evaluating proposals.

MLTSD reserves the right to determine whether other government initiatives or financial supports would better align with a proposal under consideration and refer projects to these initiatives or supports.

Should an application be successful, expenditures incurred between the start date and end date as specified in the transfer payment agreement are eligible.

Funding will be determined based on the total proposed budget submitted by the Applicant, as well as an evaluation of the application.

Costs must be clearly linked to the activities identified in the Project objectives and work plan section of the application.

The budget must include all costs directly related to delivering the Project, including any proposed cash or in-kind contributions from the Applicant and/or employers or other Project partners. The value of cash or in-kind contributions will not be eligible for reimbursement.

Important

Applicants should not take any action, or incur any costs related to their Projects, that is predicated on receiving funding from MLTSD until an application is successful and all parties have entered into a transfer payment agreement acceptable to MLTSD.

The Government of Ontario is not responsible for paying any cost incurred by an Applicant should the application not be successful or if an Applicant fails to enter into a funding agreement acceptable to MLTSD.

It is anticipated that funding will be allocated in installments according to a specific payment schedule and milestones. Disbursement of funding installments will be dependent on the Successful Applicant meeting all Project milestones and reporting requirements under the transfer payment agreement. MLTSD may withhold up to 20% of the grant amount until Project completion.

Ineligible Expenditures

Expenditures ineligible for funding include:

- Capital expenses, such as renovations;
- Overhead;
- Insurance;
- Costs related to the development of the proposal or application;
- Costs not directly associated with the delivery of the Project or not directly required to meet the deliverables of the Project;
- Executive or senior management salaries;
- Administrative salaries, except for Project management costs covered under administrative expenses related to Project delivery;
- Out-of-province travel costs for Project staff or clients;
- Annual membership fees to associations;
- Costs for any materials, tools, techniques, approaches, developments or salaries used in training, or other Project components that have already been reimbursed by government funding to the Applicant under any other funding agreement;

- Reimbursement for airfare purchased with personal frequent flyer points programs;
- Fines and penalties;
- Interest charges;
- Losses on other Projects or contracts;
- Any costs, including taxes, for which the recipient has received, will receive or is eligible to receive a rebate, credit or refund
- Annual general meetings, budget deficits, membership fees, fundraising activities, committee and political meetings, or religious activities;
- Costs covered by other funding;
- Contingency or unexplained miscellaneous costs; and
- Harmonized Sales Tax (HST) is not eligible for tax exempted organizations.

Additional Funding Information

Funding is time-limited and will not be provided on an ongoing basis.

Projects approved for funding must be completed by **March 31, 2021**.

Successful Applicants will be expected to contribute any funding needed beyond approved funding. In applications where there is a shortfall between budgeted expenses and expected approved funding, Applicants must be able to demonstrate that they are contributing to the Project through other resources.

Transfer Payment Agreement Requirements

A Successful Applicant will receive Project funding pursuant to entering a transfer payment agreement with MLTSD.

By entering into this agreement, a Successful Applicant will be required to meet certain legal responsibilities, including maintaining all necessary insurance, in order to receive any funding.

A Successful Applicant will be responsible for managing and executing the development and delivery of their Project, including resource management and satisfaction of performance and financial obligations established by MLTSD.

The transfer payment agreement with MLTSD will set out the terms and conditions governing the payment of the grant, and will include, but not be limited to:

- A Project Budget;
- Project management requirements, including a complete Project description, objectives, timeline and planned outcomes;
- Reporting obligations;

- Method and schedule of payment;
- Provisions for termination or corrective action in the event of default; and
- Other performance and accountability provisions identified by MLTSD and agreed upon with a Successful Applicant.

Successful Applicants will be expected to:

- Be accountable to MLTSD for all funds and Project components under the transfer payment agreement;

- Manage their Project Plan to meet financial and accountability reporting requirements and deliverables, as identified in the transfer payment agreement;

- Ensure coordination of Project partners and all activities;

- Be responsible for performance measurement under the fund, including ensuring data quality, establishing targets, and aggregating information collected from funding recipients;

- Be responsible for data privacy and ensure research ethics standards are adhered to;

- Submit regular reporting that will be used by MLTSD to assess the progress of implementation, as well as compliance with relevant directives and requirements under the transfer payment agreement;

- Put in effect and maintain for the duration of their program all necessary insurance for the initiative, including Commercial General Liability Insurance to an inclusive limit of not less than two million dollars ($2,000,000) per occurrence. If the proposed Project is approved for funding, Applicants must provide MLTSD with a copy of their Certificate of Insurance as a condition of funding. Coverage under two million dollars ($2,000,000) may be considered based on prior approval by Ontario;

- Agree to an independent audit of the Project if required, including program revenues and expenditures;

- Provide a copy of their latest financial statements (include audited financial statements if available) and those of significant partners in the program if requested before the transfer payment agreement is finalized; and

- Undergo a due diligence review at MLTSD's expense if required, before the transfer payment agreement is finalized.

Procurement, Travel and Hospitality Requirements

Under the Broader Public Sector Accountability Act, 2010, two directives regarding procurement practices and expenses are in effect namely: the Broader Public Sector Procurement Directive and the Broader Public Sector Expenses Directive. The onus is on each Applicant to comply with these directives.

Submission Process

The deadline for MLTSD to receive applications is **11:59pm on February 17, 2020.**

Applicants can download the application form on the Employment Ontario Partners' Gateway Website and any additional relevant information may be attached as appendices to the completed application, if required and submitted to OHCRIF@ontario.ca.

For questions regarding the submission process, please contact OHCRIF@ontario.ca.

Proposal Review and Evaluation Criteria

MLTSD will establish appropriate review processes and fairly evaluate proposals against the eligibility criteria outlined in the ELIGIBLE PROJECTS and ELIGIBLE RESEARCH THEMES sections of this document.

MLTSD wishes to support a broad range of Projects and proposals that will also be evaluated based on the extent to which they meet the following additional requirements.

1. **Viability and Strength of the Proposal (25%)**
   - Proposals must clearly define the scope and purpose of the Project and provide a clear understanding of the steps for implementation.
   - Particular attention will be paid to demonstrated organizational capacity and how research will be developed and enhanced.
   - A Project Plan that sets out a detailed breakdown of all key Project activities, timelines, and outcomes expected as a result of the Project.
   - Proposals must also demonstrate an effective use of resources to achieve objectives within the established timeframe for funded activities.

2. **Impact and Relevance (25%)**
   - Proposals address an Eligible Project and Eligible Research Theme and demonstrates how it supports workforce development in Ontario and how the results will help the people of Ontario acquire the skills they need to succeed

today and tomorrow and/or help employers build the workforce they need to grow their business with a clear link to government priorities.

3. **Evidence base (15%)**
   - Proposals must include a solid evidence base, articulating the conceptual approach, key findings from the literature, research gaps and how the proposal will fill an unmet need.

4. **Methodology (25%)**
   - Proposal clearly articulates whether an impact or inquiry project will be pursued, the research and issue are clearly identified.
   - Proposal clearly describes the research approach (quantitative, qualitative or mixed-method), sources of data, participants' recruitment strategies, sample size and key variables.
   - Strengths and limitations of the approach is articulated as well as steps required to complete the project are identified.

5. **Sustainability (10%)**
   - The Project clearly articulates a plan for communication and dissemination, so that the findings, tool and/or framework developed are made available to the public for their use.

Monitoring and Reporting

Reporting requirements for approved Projects include:

1. **Interim Report**
   An interim report to MLTSD on the progress achieved and expenditures incurred in comparison to the objectives, Project timelines, and budget in the transfer payment agreement.

   The interim report must include the number of Project clients, identify any challenges or anticipated delays in achieving the key steps or milestones outlined in the Project timelines, and outline any related mitigation strategies.

2. **Final Report**
   A final report outlining the achievement or progress towards fulfilling the objectives as articulated in the transfer payment agreement. The final report must report on actual incurred expenses against budgeted amounts in the transfer payment agreement. Unspent funding must be explained.

Additional performance metrics may be developed to monitor the progress of the project. Successful applicants must comply with reporting on these metrics if applicable.

Third-Party Evaluation MLTSD may engage a third party to research and evaluate approved Projects during and after their implementation. Successful Applicants and partner organizations shall agree to full co-operation with the third party at the time of signing a transfer payment agreement with MLTSD.

Notification

A decision regarding funding will be communicated to all Applicants by e-mail.

Confidentiality

Please note MLTSD is subject to the Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (the "Act"). The Act provides every person with a right of access to information in the custody or under the control of MLTSD, subject to a limited set of exemptions. Section 17 of the Act provides a limited exemption for third party information that reveals a trade secret or scientific, commercial, technical, financial or labour relations information supplied in confidence where disclosure of the information could reasonably be expected to result in certain harms.

Any trade secret or any scientific, technical, commercial, financial, or labour relations information submitted to MLTSD in confidence should be clearly marked. MLTSD will provide notice before granting access to a record that might contain information referred to in Section 17 of the Act so that the affected party may make representations to MLTSD concerning disclosure. Should MLTSD decide not to disclose certain records, the requester has the right to appeal that decision to the office of the Information and Privacy Commissioner, who will ultimately decide on the disclosure of the record.