

# Workplace Skills Initiative

## HUMAN RESOURCES AND SKILLS DEVELOPMENT CANADA GUIDELINES FOR WORKPLACE SKILLS INITIATIVE (WSI) PROPOSAL DEVELOPMENT

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

WSI is a three year pilot project initiative of the Workplace Skills Branch of Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC). Eligible recipients are required to submit complete proposals consistent with the requirements outlined in the Call for Proposals Package, which ends October 31, 2005. Proposals received after the closing date will not be considered.

HRSDC reserves the right to accept proposals from time to time separate from the CFP process.

Additional information about the WSI can be found in the Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) section. A separate Overview on HRSDC's Workplace Skills Strategy is attached to provide applicants with additional context.

*(web site—[www.hrsdc.gc.ca](http://www.hrsdc.gc.ca))*

## 2. SCOPE OF THE WSI AND CFP PROPOSAL OBJECTIVES

Pilot project proposals must be partnership-based, focussed on employers and employed Canadians and must address one or more of the following objectives:

1. Demonstrating new and innovative approaches to workplace skills development including essential skills and literacy; management, supervisory and leadership skills; technical skills (for example engineering skills, project management skills, automotive skills); as well as other non-technical or soft business skills;
2. Supporting the adoption and sharing of improved Human Resources (HR) practices and sharing of best practices relating to recruitment, development and retraining, and retention of employees—particularly for small and medium enterprises (SMEs);
3. Piloting new and/or innovative approaches to skills identification, recognition and utilization, e.g. Skills passports, talent portfolios, facilitating skills matching and inter-regional and inter-sector worker mobility;
4. Piloting new and/or innovative approaches to promote partnerships, networks and information flow within and across firms as well as cross-sectorally such as collaborative partnerships between the business and education sectors.

Training may be included in proposals but training is not an eligible cost for Government of Canada (GoC) funding—recipients or their workplace partners must bear responsibility for training-related costs.

Particular consideration will be given to proposals which:

- Build on current and leading edge trends in Human Resources (HR) which address skills gap impacts;
- Address specific skills development issues facing SMEs;
- Address issues concerning low-skilled, under-employed and older workers.

Applicants must provide a clear rationale outlining the importance, originality and significance of the proposed pilot project outcomes for their own organization and, more broadly, the Canadian workplace in general.

WSI is designed to act as a catalyst to support cultural shifts in private and public sectors and focusses on the development of new/improved human resources policies and practices to strengthen Canada's productivity. As appropriate, proposals should have the potential to be replicated on a national basis.

WSI will not duplicate programs that may exist in other jurisdictions.

### 3. ELIGIBILITY

Eligible recipients may include:

- Businesses and private sector organizations, including employers and training providers;
- Employer and labour associations;
- Unions;
- Sector councils;
- Band/tribal councils, AHRDA holders (Aboriginal Human Resources Development Agreements);
- Public health and educational institutions;
- Not-for-profit sector;
- Municipalities, their corporations or agencies.

Provincial and territorial governments are not eligible to receive funding under this initiative but may be partners.

Applicants are encouraged to build upon or create new partnerships to secure expertise and financial support to develop and strengthen their proposals. Projects must be partnership-based to be eligible for funding.

### 4. MAXIMUM FEDERAL CONTRIBUTION UNDER WSI

Maximum federal contribution to a pilot project is set at 75% of the total value of eligible project costs (defined below).

Recipients must contribute to eligible project costs through cash contribution and/or well documented in-kind contributions based on fair market value. This is a mandatory requirement. For more information, please see FAQ # (2,4,6).

#### PILOT PROJECT FUNDING LEVELS

When applying for WSI funding, applicants should carefully consider the scope and duration of their pilot projects. Government and recipient contributions are linked: the higher the government contribution the higher the recipient contribution, regardless of whether the recipient contribution is cash or in-kind. All project costs must be directly related to the project. Larger scope pilot projects will require additional evaluation and documentation. Funding levels have maximum contribution amounts and there are options for duration of the pilot project.

#### FUNDING LEVEL 1

Federal funding up to a maximum of \$500,000 is available for short term pilot projects of up to one year. Recipient cash or in-kind contribution is set at a minimum of 25% of the total eligible project costs (e.g. \$125,000 for the maximum funding level).

#### FUNDING LEVEL 2

Federal funding for longer term pilot projects will range from \$500,000 up to a maximum funding level of \$3m per year for a total of \$9m over three years for exceptional projects. Recipient's 25% cash or in-kind contribution will mirror this range (e.g. \$2.25m for the maximum funding level over 3 years).

## 5. ELIGIBLE COST CATEGORIES

### DIRECT PROGRAM COSTS

- Equipment, including tools;
- Materials and supplies directly related to the project;
- Costs associated with printing, translation and dissemination of project reports;
- Communications activities and material including promotional material, through print, web-based and other media;
- Program assistance costs such as counselling, skills testing and needs evaluation
- Costs associated with developing and testing workplace skills models and HR tools and practices such as internships, mentoring, coop, articling, laddering, upskilling;
- Travel within Canada that is directly related to the project activities (allowances must comply with Treasury Board Guidelines).

### ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS

- Program administration/overhead costs such as wages and benefits, rental of office space, telephones, etc. that are directly related to the project;
- Financial assistance may be provided to employers and coordinators to cover the costs of wages and the employer's share of employment-related costs for participants;
- Both small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and not-for-profit organizations are eligible to receive contributions for capital assets such as the purchase of computers and other office equipment, furniture and other assets necessary to the project, which can not exceed \$10,000;
- Professional fees related to evaluation, financial audit, or for expertise not available through the organization or partners (individuals receiving a salary from the recipient or partner organizations are not eligible to be paid as consultants);
- Legal fees related to the pilot project.

## 6. MAJOR INELIGIBLE COSTS

Recipients may incur certain costs as part of the pilot project that are not eligible under Government of Canada contribution agreements. These include but are not limited to:

- The creation of stand-alone web sites, portals or databases outside the context of the pilot project;
- Developing and/or delivering accredited primary, secondary or post secondary curricula;
- Purchase of in-classroom training from any organization/trainer;
- Capital improvements, such as the construction or renovation of buildings;
- Regular ongoing operational activities of an organization;
- Administrative overhead not directly related to the administration of the project;
- International travel.

Ineligible costs will not be included in calculations when determining the total value of project costs and ensuing recipient contribution amounts (cash or in-kind).

## **7. PROPOSAL COMPLIANCE SCREENING AND ASSESSMENT**

WSI officials will screen your application package to ensure that it meets all eligibility criteria and that all required materials have been submitted. It is the sole responsibility of applicants to ensure their proposals are consistent with CFP instruction requirements. Incomplete applications will not be accepted.

Following receipt of your completed application package, a letter of acknowledgement will be mailed to the contact person identified on the application form. Applicants whose proposals do not meet eligibility criteria or mandatory requirements will be notified within 30 working days after the closing date of October 31, 2005.

The WSI reserves the right to limit the number of projects from any one applicant, affiliated network or group of applicants. It also reserves the right not to fund all eligible proposals subject to annual availability of funds as well as sound funding principles taking into account lessons learned and future needs.

Eligible proposals are assessed and recommendations are made based on the selection criteria (see below). The review committee is composed of government and non-government experts. Provincial/territorial and federal Department officials will be consulted where appropriate. In the case of proposals from municipalities, home provinces will be consulted.

Recipients will be advised of funding decisions by March 1, 2006.

### **PROPOSAL DEVELOPMENT**

A Proposal Template is included with the Application form and instructions.

### **PROPOSAL ASSESSMENT**

Proposals are assessed on their degree of fulfillment of the following criteria:

- Is relevant to the WSI and CFP scope ;
- Is methodologically sound;
- Demonstrates the applicant's organizational capacity to undertake and complete the project;
- Provides a clear rationale outlining the importance, originality and significance of the proposed pilot project outcomes for the recipient organization and, more broadly, the Canadian workplace;
- Documents partner's and applicant's financial and other in-kind investments in the project;
- Includes a complete budget and narrative justification that is relevant to the proposed activities;
- Provides a Communication Plan and Dissemination Plan
- Identifies measurable results;
- Includes Letters of Support for the project (from experts in the field, reputable organizations, stakeholders);
- Does not duplicate other approved proposals.

## **8. APPROVAL OF PROPOSALS: NEXT STEPS**

Following proposal assessment but prior to recommendation for approval, the applicant may be contacted by a WSI project officer to resolve outstanding issues.

Successful applicants must be able to enter into agreements with the Government of Canada under the terms of the applicable laws of the province or territory in which they operate. In Quebec, certain entities, as defined in the meaning of the Revised Statutes of Quebec chapter M-30, under sections 3.11 and 3.12, (hereafter referred to as the Act), such municipal body, school body or public agency, must obtain an authorization, as prescribed by the Act, before signing any

agreement with the Government of Canada, its departments or agencies, or a federal public agency. Consequently, any entity that is subject to the Act is responsible for obtaining such authorization. Please review the relevant provisions of the Act and make sure that your project proposal timeframe provides for such a requirement as appropriate.

Supporting documentation for claims and contributions from other sources may be required by WSI, at any time, as part of the regular monitoring of the project. Reporting documentation templates will be provided at start up of the project.

## **9. HOW AND WHERE TO SUBMIT YOUR PILOT PROJECT PROPOSAL**

All forms needed to complete an application are available on our Web site at:  
[www.HRSDC.gc.ca](http://www.HRSDC.gc.ca)

**Your application package will contain:**

- **Three (3) completed paper copies of the application form, including completed partnership forms, with original signatures; and**
- **One (1) electronic copy of the completed application form on CD-ROM or diskette.**

Incomplete applications will not be considered. Please do not bind the paper copies or use cerlox bindings or duo-tangs. The electronic version of the completed application form must be submitted as one file, in Microsoft Word format, on either diskette or CD-ROM. The applicant is solely responsible to ensure that the sealed envelope containing their application package is delivered on or before October 31, 2005 to the following address.

Please send your documents to:

**Workplace Skills Initiative (WSI)  
Call For Proposals 2005  
Human Resources and Skills Development Canada  
112 Kent Street  
Place de Ville, Tower B, 21<sup>st</sup> floor  
Ottawa, Ontario  
K1A 0J9**

## **10. FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

### **1. WHY IS WSI TARGETED TO EMPLOYERS AND THE EMPLOYED IN THE WORKPLACE?**

A comprehensive pan Canadian consultation involving employers, unions, provinces and territories was carried out by HRSDC officials in 2004. The main focus was the state of workplace skills in Canada. This consultation was in line with global trends whereby many countries were sounding alarm bells about emerging skills gaps, the relative lack of innovation and inadequate productivity in many workplaces, and possibly worrisome demographic trends. Countries like Norway, Ireland, Australia, the U.K., and New Zealand moved quickly to put national strategies into place to deal with these issues, and inform public policy by engaging in partnerships and collaboration with all sectors in their respective societies.

Canada is no different: the same issues were raised during the aforementioned consultations and this has motivated the Government to adopt a Workplace Skills Strategy (WSS) of which the WSI is a key component. The WSI is designed to provide funding to promote awareness of these issues and to help mobilize employers and the employed to transform workplaces so that they become more competitive, productive, and more highly skilled on an ongoing basis.

## 2. WHAT TYPE OF GOVERNMENT FUNDING IS AVAILABLE FOR THE WSI?

The federal contribution will be made according to the terms and conditions of section 6 of the *Department of Human Resources Development Act*.

Approved projects will receive funding by means of a formal contribution agreement between the recipient and Canada.

The WSI is a federal government contribution initiative. Contributions are conditional transfer payments for a specific purpose and are subject to accountability review and audit. Financial support is provided on a cost-shared basis. The WSI provides up to 75% of the total value of a project's eligible costs. The recipient organization and its partners must contribute at least 25% of the eligible project costs, in the form of cash or in-kind contributions. Total Federal funding, including WSI, must not exceed 75% of the project's eligible costs.

As funds are limited, it is not possible to fund all projects that meet the eligibility criteria. Projects that demonstrate that they can best meet the objectives of the WSI will be given priority consideration.

While projects may be approved for up to three years, funding is subject to year-to-year budget considerations of HRSDC and to appropriation of funds by Parliament. In addition, funding is subject to satisfactory review by HRSDC of the project's progress in meeting its objectives, and, where appropriate, evaluation and financial audit reports.

## 3. WHAT IS A PROJECT RECIPIENT?

The organization that signs a contribution agreement with HRSDC. The recipient is responsible for implementing the project and for discharging the contractual obligations under the contribution agreement, including the management of funds. If the proposal is approved for funding, the applicant becomes the project recipient.

## 4. HOW MUCH MUST PROJECT RECIPIENTS CONTRIBUTE TO THE PROJECT?

WSI funding is contingent on all recipients contributing a minimum of 25% of eligible project costs. Proposals must provide evidence of the applicant's commitment and capacity to assume 25% or more of project eligible costs and include rationale and calculations in support of in-kind contributions.

## 5. WHAT IS A PARTNER?

Partners are organizations or individuals who share the costs of the project through cash or in-kind contributions, enhance diversity, broaden expertise, maximize the potential impact of the project across groups and enhance its capacity to address sector-wide needs. Individuals or organizations that receive compensation for services related to the project cannot be considered to be partners. All WSI pilot projects must be partnership-based to be considered for funding.

## 6. WHAT ARE THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN IN-KIND AND CASH CONTRIBUTIONS?

Expertise, services, facilities, or products are some examples of **in-kind** contributions. You or your partners may offer secretarial services, meeting facilities, or access to computers or machines such as photocopiers and faxes. You or your partners may also lend staff to work on the project while remaining on your and/or their payroll. If no money is exchanged for the service or resource, it is an in-kind contribution.

Your organization or a partner's organization may make **cash** contributions to cover project eligible costs. For example, you or your partners may pay a project worker's salary or a consultant's fee. If actual dollars are paid for the service or resource, it is a cash contribution.



## **7. WHAT IS PROJECT SUSTAINABILITY?**

Sustainability is the capacity of the project to continue after WSI project funding ends. Project recipients are expected to safeguard the processes, activities, and accomplishments of WSI projects as outlined in the contribution agreement.

## **8. WHAT ARE ESSENTIAL SKILLS?**

Essential Skills are the enabling skills people use to perform the tasks required by their occupation and other activities of daily life, provide a foundation to learn other skills and enhance the ability to adapt to workplace change. Essential skills include: oral communication, reading text, writing, numeracy, computer use, working with others, thinking skills, document use and continuous learning. For more information please see [www15.hrdc-drhc.gc.ca/English/general/default.asp](http://www15.hrdc-drhc.gc.ca/English/general/default.asp)