MINISTRY OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND POVERTY REDUCTION

WorkBC Employment Services

Research and Innovation

Applicant Guide

Employment and Labour Market Services

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More information is available on the WorkBC website: www.WorkBC.ca/CEP

Applicant Guide

Purpose

This applicant guide provides the information required to request funding for Research and Innovation (R&I) proposals.

It will provide an overview of R&I and outline the requirements for a proposal.
The following appendices will provide further information:

- Appendix 1 – Proposal Description
- Appendix 2 – R&I Budget Guidelines
- Appendix 3 – Research Principles and Methodologies

Program Overview

What is the Research and Innovation (R&I) component of the Community and Employer Partnership (CEP) Fund of the WorkBC Employment Services?

Research and Innovation (R&I) is administered by the Province of British Columbia to provide funding to community organizations and partners to explore, test or find new and innovative ways of delivering programming to help individuals keep, find or return to work. This can be done through research or the development and implementation of time-limited innovative pilot projects. The results gathered from R&I projects will identify better ways of helping unemployed British Columbians prepare for, return to, or keep employment and to become active participants in the labour market.

It is of fundamental importance to understand that the purpose of R&I is to fund projects that examine previously untried solutions to specific labour market issues or problems. R&I is a cost-effective way to test, in a very controlled manner, whether or not an idea could be successfully applied more broadly.

Anticipated short-term outcomes of R&I will include increased knowledge of measures to better address employment issues and test labour market solutions. In the longer-term, R&I would lead to policy, program and industry practice improvements to better respond to the persistent and changing needs related to employment.

What are the key elements of an R&I project?

Projects funded through R&I support the following principles:

- Fund research projects that build the capacity to inform innovation (may include piloting a training program, developing information resources based on community needs);
- Identify new and innovative approaches through research and best practices;
- Use technology as the way to engage employers, communities, providers, and clients in driving innovation and create communities of employment practices;
- Are compatible with the goals and objectives of the ELMSD and WorkBC Employment Services;
- Are responsive to community, labour market and/or client needs, as well as gaps in the labour market;
- Are programs/services best delivered with community involvement.

R&I ***cannot*** be used to:

- Create a funding dependency or need – either for the applicant organization or for a participant/research subject; and,
- Fund a research project that has already been initiated or tried previously.

Types of Research and Innovation Projects

There are two types of projects that can be funded under R&I: research studies and pilot projects or a combination of both. At this time, priority will be given to pilot projects that are well positioned to enhance participant employment outcomes and/or are socially innovative over projects that are strictly research focused.

A research study will involve information gathering, analyzing the information and drawing conclusions and may involve research participants. These participants may incidentally benefit from the research activities. This can include financial incentives for participation by control groups such as a gift card for completing a survey or participating in a panel discussion.

A pilot project is designed as a test, experiment or trial of a new and innovative idea or testing an innovative method of delivering needed employment skills. A pilot project may have research subjects. These research subjects must be part of a control/comparison group. The control and comparison groups make it possible for the project to assess the impact or change that the program had on participant's outcomes. When research subjects are part of a pilot they may be eligible to receive: weekly stipend, incidental costs and/or training costs.

The eligibility requirement of participants or research subjects will depend on the proposal.

How long can an R&I project operate?

Project duration is typically two years or less.

Who is eligible to apply for an R&I project?

Eligible Applicants

- Businesses
- Non-Profit Organizations
- Crown Corporations
- Municipalities or Agencies
- Band/Tribal Councils/First Nations Governments
- Public Health and Educational Institutions

Ineligible Uses of R&I

- May not be used to obtain a service to the Province. Consequently, the results of the demonstration projects and research must not be primarily for the Province's use, but for the use of the funding recipients or others. However, it is acceptable for the Province to obtain or make use of these results in an incidental way;
- Must not be used to fund evaluations for the Province's use;
- Is not a catch-all program. It is not a way to fund any activity that does not fit the other programs; and,
- Must not be used to fund other Ministries.

Monitoring

R&I will be monitored to:

- Determine if projects results are being met; such as increased knowledge of measures to address employment issues including longer term goals such as program or policy improvements;
- Ensure program expenditures are appropriate and within budget allocations; and,
- Ensure timely evaluation methods are in place to address concerns and issues in a timely manner.

Reporting

Reports are an essential way of communicating the status of the project to the Ministry. The Project Holder will provide reports on the status of the project on a regular schedule, agreed upon by the Ministry, reflecting the progress of the project, according to the expected results. These reports will include any relevant information about the project, including: information about research participants/research subjects, budget status, etc.

Project Evaluation

Evaluation is an essential element of project planning. It helps connect project objectives to achievements, shows what worked well and helps in the understanding of what did not work well. It is important to remember that evaluation is not research.

Evaluation is key to making sure the project is meeting goals but it does not replace the resulting research of the project.

An appropriate evaluation methodology must be present in project proposals.

Evaluation activities and costs should be appropriate to the scale of the project. Longer-term projects should utilize both process evaluation and summative evaluation. A process evaluation will identify project design and implementation issues as the project takes place, with a view to modifying, adjusting and/or terminating the project where appropriate. A summative evaluation will measure impacts and outcomes.

Shorter term and less complex projects that aim to yield quick findings should choose an approach to evaluation that is appropriate to the length, scope and overall costs of the projects.

Evaluation methods may include:

- Baseline, completion and follow-up data collection, such as surveys of client and comparison groups to collect information on age, work history, earnings, attitudes etc.;
- Analysis of administrative data, such as review of client and non-client tracking mechanisms;
- Interviews, surveys or focus groups; and,
- Comparison and/or control groups;
- Post program completion surveys to assess the impact of the program on participant employment.

Roles and Responsibilities

Ministry

The Ministry (ELMSD) is responsible for:

- Negotiating, writing and managing R&I agreements with eligible Applicants;
- Carrying out project monitoring to ensure the activities of the project are being undertaken and that costs are claimed in accordance with the organization's R&I funding agreement with the Ministry; and,
- Reviewing and reconciling invoices for payment, submitted by the Project Holder via the Service Provider Portal into the Contract and Financial Management System (CFMS).

R&I Project Agreement Holder

The R&I Project Agreement Holder is responsible for the following activities related to the Ministry**:**

- Managing the agreement as set out in the R&I Agreement;
- Recruiting sufficient research participants to obtain a valid sample size, in a timely manner;
- Collecting research data and making it accessible for the Ministry and general public;
- Carrying out the agreed to activities and managing the budget of the project with due diligence;
- Participating in monitoring activities and providing project progress and financial reports as required; and,
- Informing the Ministry contract manager of any contract issues.

Appendix 1: Proposal Description

This information is intended as a guide to assist you in the development of your project.

Project Title

The title of the project should be clearly stated.

Project Objectives

In one or two sentences, describe the objectives of the *project* (not the objectives of your organization). What is the main purpose of this R&I project?

The Objective should describe how the project will make a unique contribution to strengthen the understanding of the labour market and explore and/or find better ways of delivering employment programming.

The results gathered from R&I projects will identify better ways of helping unemployed Clients prepare for, return to, or keep employment and to become active participants in the labour market. These results will be disseminated for a wide audience.

Provide an analysis of your literature and program review that demonstrates that this project is untested, well poised to produce successful results and builds upon a current body of best practises and research.

Incremental Activities

Describe how the project activities are incremental and ***not*** part of your organization's day-to-day operations.

For the purposes of Research and Innovation projects, incremental activities are defined as:

- A activity that is distinct (separate) and not part of your organization's day-to-day operations;
- The project activities must be specific to a particular additional undertaking of the organization; and,
- The activity would not take place without the support of R&I (and/or other additional funding).

Key Project Activities and Proposed Timelines

Each proposal must include the list of the key activities that will happen from the beginning of the project to the end.

Clearly outline each key activity to be undertaken by the researchers and the timeline required to complete it. *This information should include what will be done, how it will be done, why it is being done, by whom, and how long it will take.*

Expected Results

Expected results define the outcomes to be achieved and must relate to the project objectives.

- Relate outcomes to the activities of the project.
- State results in qualitative and/or quantitative terms.

Project outcomes are expected to be disseminated to the general public once the project ends.

Research Subjects

Your application should include a description the research subjects eligibility criteria, the screen/recruitment process, the estimated sample size and the opportunity for using a comparison or control group (if applicable).

NOTE: Research subjects are selected by you after the project is approved. However, you must be able to demonstrate that there are research subjects available for your project.

Include any supporting documentation such as consultation reports, research reports, a list of sources of labour market information, etc.

Research subjects are eligible to receive a stipend if deemed appropriate to the research project.

Any research subjects, receiving British Columbia Employment Assistance (BCEA) or Employment Insurance (EI) must be informed that their participation could impact the receipt of these financial supports. Clients have certain obligations to maintain their eligibility for BCEA or EI and it is essential that any prospective research subjects are made aware that they need to discuss participation with the relevant agency and with the Project Holder.

In cases where BCEA Clients will be participating full time as a research subject the Service Delivery Division (SDD) must be informed about their participation. Steps must be followed to obtain SDD approval for BCEA clients participation, as well as to inform

research subjects on income reporting requirements. The steps to accomplish this will be made available once the project has been accepted for funding.

Applicant's Background, Mandate and Expertise

a) Explain the mandate of your organization.

b) Provide a brief history of your organization, including the length of time it has been active, the financial stability of your organization, the qualifications and experience of the individual(s) or company performing payroll and bookkeeping for the agreement.

c) Provide in detail the qualifications and roles and responsibilities of the individuals(s) who will manage the project and conduct the research for the project.

d) Please include responses to these questions in your application:
- Has your organization had previous CEP contracts and, if so, please list them, include the Contract/ agreement numbers and outcomes achieved.
- Include similar information on past projects funded by other organizations.
- Do you currently receive any other federal or provincial government funding? Provide the source and what the funding is provided for.
- Will the project activities have any environmental impact? If yes, please describe.

Partner Organizations

Stakeholder partnerships are a requirement for R&I projects.

For the purposes of R&I projects, partnership is defined as participation from the applicant and other agencies, organizations or other community members in the form of cash or in-kind contributions, i.e. mentoring or providing expertise.

Partnerships are important to the success of a R&I project overall. The level of support from businesses and organizations in the community will be considered during the assessment process.

List all partner organizations and describe the various roles of the partners involved with the design, delivery and evaluation of the project.

Contact names and telephone numbers or letters confirming funds from other sources must be attached to the proposal.

Community Support

Research and Innovation projects require support from the community.

Provide a description of the support this ***project*** (not your organization) has in the community. Of particular importance is the support for the project from other related programs and services in the community.

Please attach relevant letters of support or contact names and telephone numbers.

Appendix 2: R&I Budget Guidelines

General Guidelines

If you are requesting support for project costs, you must complete the CEP Budget Template. The template and budget guidelines can be found on the WorkBC website: www.WorkBC.ca/CEP

The CEP Budget Template must be completed in full with a detailed rationale to support all requested costs.

- **Project costs must be specific and necessary to the activities of the project.**
- Include in-kind and cash contributions to the project from the applicant or partner organizations in the appropriate budget line in the CEP Budget Template.
- In-kind contributions are noncash contributions such as space or equipment dedicated specifically to the project. In the CEP Budget Template, explain how the dollar value of the in-kind contribution was determined and what budget line it is attached to.
- If you anticipate a cash or in-kind contributions from an organization other than your own, please include a letter from the donor confirming the contribution.

Eligible project costs under R&I include:

- Project administration and overhead costs such as wages and benefits, rental of office space, telephones, etc. that are directly related to the administration or delivery of the project;

- Equipment rental (capital asset purchases may be allowed where it can be demonstrated to be more cost-effective over the life of the project) such as computers, office equipment, etc.;

- Materials and supplies directly related to the project;

- Cost associated with printing, translation and dissemination of project reports;

- Communications activities and material including promotional material and activities, through print, web-based and other media;

- Costs related to research subjects such as counselling, mentoring, skills testing and needs evaluation, pre-employment training, post-secondary training, apprenticeship training, technical training, onsite training, literacy, essential skills training;

- Stipend for research subjects in a pilot project;
- Costs related to researchers, research evaluation or ethical review boards;
- Incremental costs for research subjects such as transportation, dependent care, transportation and disability related costs essential to enable them to participate in the pilot project;
- Financial incentives for participants involved in a research study such as a gift card for completing a survey or participating in a panel discussion;
- Professional fees related to audit, evaluation and assessment, or for expertise not available through the organization or partners (individuals receiving a salary from the sponsoring or partner organizations are not eligible to be paid as consultants); and,
- Travel within Canada that is directly related to the project activities.

Ineligible project costs for R&I include:

- Capital improvements, such as the construction or renovation of buildings (other than repairs or renovations to support the participation of persons with disabilities);
- Regular ongoing activities of the organization; and,
- International travel.

All organizations applying for R&I project funding are expected to contribute, within their ability to do so, to the costs of the project. In most cases, where other organizations are involved in the project, stakeholders in the partnership are also expected to contribute either by providing direct funding or by providing an ‘in-kind’ contribution to the project costs.

Appendix 3: Research Principles and Methodologies

Research Principles

In order to assure research integrity, the project must adhere to a number of principles:

Validity – determines whether the research truly measures that which it was intended to measure. The appropriateness of the research questions, research instruments used, sample and population used could be questioned by the R&I Review Committee.

Reliability – refers to the extent to which the research results may be reproduced under a similar methodology -- are results an accurate representation of the total population under study?

Privacy and Protection of Personal Information – refers to the conditions that are set out for ownership of the data collected and how it is to be used and disposed of; and the relationship between the researcher and the respondents in terms of assurances of anonymity, respondent rights and responsibilities, protection of personal information, remuneration (where applicable), etc.

Objectivity – ensuring that possible bias on the part of the researcher will not influence research results in support its own views or objectives or those of other organizations, including ELMSD.

Independent Evaluation – the research and evaluation project must be conducted by an organisation other than the organisation funding the project. Research and evaluation proposals must use state of the art methodologies, should include multiple lines of evidence and include external peer review processes.

Examples of Types of Research

The following is a non-exhaustive list of the types of research which may be used in conducting Research and Innovation projects. Any one or a combination of these research methods may be used. Various research instruments such as surveys, focus groups, in-depth interviews, panels, literature reviews may be used within the following research approaches.

Random Assignment Methods

Experimentation is a form of quantitative research which allows the manipulation of a specific independent variable in order to determine what effect this has on other dependent variables. This type of research requires a random assignment of subjects to a control group and an experiment group.

Non-Experimental Methods

When random assignment is infeasible, a wide variety of non-experimental methods are available for evaluating labour market experiments. Most of these methods utilise some form of comparison group in the hope that those participating in the program (or experiment) would behave similarly to those not participating had they not been in the program (or experiment).

Non-experimental methods that control for observable differences, such as comparison of means adjusted by Ordinary Least Squares (OLS), are easy to implement but does not prove to be reliable tools to provide consistent impact estimates due to the fact they do not control for unobservable differences in the determinants of participation.
Matching methods, on the other hand, have the potential to be quite successful in generating useful comparison groups.

Non-experimental methods that control for unobservable differences, which requires complex modelling, includes difference-in-difference methods and instrumental variable methods. The validity of these estimates greatly depends on the quality of the data available, on the extent to which the assumptions about unobservable factors hold, and the robustness of the techniques.

Case Studies

As a formal research design, a case study is defined as a strategy for doing research which involves an empirical investigation of a particular contemporary phenomenon within its real life context using multiple sources of evidence.

One key feature of a case study design that sets it apart from other research approaches is that each case is considered in its own right, rather than as a sample from a population. A second key feature is that case studies use many different research methods, such as, for example, surveys, in-depth interviews, ad hoc surveys of populations affected, administrative data analysis, key informant interviews.

One of the great advantages of the case study as a research design is its flexibility. Unlike experiments and surveys, which must be carefully planned in advance and which cannot be easily modified in light of new circumstances, the case study method allows the researcher to alter and expand various parts of the study as circumstances dictate.

An example of an R&I case study might be to examine the approaches used by several employers in a labour market with specific characteristics (e.g. remote community, high Aboriginal population, low-skilled) in increasing the skills of the labour force. The results could be compiled into a summary of best practices and shared with employers across the country operating in labour markets with similar characteristics.