

MINISTRY OF SOCIAL DEVELOPMENT AND POVERTY
REDUCTION

WorkBC Employment Services

Research & Innovation (R&I)

Applicant Guide

Employment and Labour Market Services

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Table of Contents

Introduction.....	3
Purpose.....	3
Overview.....	3
Who Can Apply	3
Incrementality	4
Eligible Costs	4
Indigenous-Focused Projects	5
Community Support and Partnerships.....	5
Principles of Research and Innovation Projects	6
Types of Research and Innovation Projects	6
Research Activities	6
Ineligible Uses of an R&I	7
Project Participants.....	7
WorkSafeBC Coverage.....	8
Project Evaluation	8
Reporting & Accountability: What You Need to Know	9
How to Apply	10
Appendix 1: Proposal Description	10
Appendix 2: Research Principles and Methodologies	11

Community & Employer Partnerships acknowledges the territories of First Nations around B.C. and is grateful to carry out our work on these lands. We recognize the rights, interests, priorities, and concerns of all Indigenous Peoples (First Nations, Metis, and Inuit), respecting their distinct cultures, histories, rights, laws, and governments.

Introduction

The Community and Employer Partnerships (CEP) program provides funding for community projects that offer training and work experience opportunities. These projects help create jobs, support local economies, and make a positive difference in communities.

CEP is committed to fostering equity, inclusion, and reconciliation. We work with Indigenous partners and communities in ways that respects their individual rights, interests and concerns, acknowledging their unique cultures, histories, rights, laws, and governance. We also support programs, services and initiatives that help reduce barriers and improve access to employment for under-represented groups in the labour market.

Purpose

This guide helps applicants understand the program, who is eligible to apply, and the application requirements.

Overview

Research & Innovation (R&I) funds projects that test new ways to address labour market challenges, with the goal of supporting unemployed individuals in entering the workforce. These projects aim to improve understanding of labour market gaps, explore innovative solutions, and generate evidence to inform future policies and practices.

- **Short-term impact:** R&I projects aim to increase knowledge about what works and test new approaches to employment challenges.
- **Long-term impact:** Findings from these projects may lead to improvements in policies, programs, and industry practices that better respond to changing employment needs.

Results will be shared broadly to support strategies that help people prepare for, return to, or keep a job, and participate more fully in the labour market.

Who Can Apply

- Non-profit organizations

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- Crown corporations
- Municipalities or agencies
- Indigenous organizations
- Public health and educational institutions
- Businesses (must support fair access to opportunities and not provide a competitive edge or generate profit)

Incrementality

CEP funding supports incremental activities, meaning activities that are separate and distinct from an organization's regular day-to-day operations. Funded projects support new activities and/or enhancements to existing work that would not happen without additional funding or resources.

Duration

R&I project durations can vary but are dependent on available funding. Applicants can propose up to three years but may be asked to provide scaled down options.

Eligible Costs

Projects should include only the costs needed to carry out proposed activities and achieve project goals.

Applicants are expected to contribute to project costs where possible. Financial support from other organizations is encouraged but not required.

All costs must be clearly connected to the project's success. For budgeting support and to see which costs may be eligible, applicants should refer to the **CEP Fund Budget Guidelines tab** in the Budget Negotiation Template.

Examples of eligible R&I costs include:

- Costs related to research participants, such as counselling, mentoring, skills testing and needs assessments, pre-employment training, post-secondary training, apprenticeship training, technical training, onsite training, literacy or essential skills training.
- Stipends for research participants taking part in a pilot project.
- Costs for researchers, project evaluation, or ethical review boards.

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- Financial incentives for participants, such as gift cards for completing a survey or taking part in a panel discussion.

Specific ineligible costs include international travel expenses.

Indigenous-Focused Projects

For projects focused on supporting Indigenous communities, applicants must meet the standard eligibility requirements. CEP will also assess whether the project:

- Includes Indigenous partnerships, such as agreements with local First Nations, Métis, Inuit communities, or ISET service providers.
- Provides clear and meaningful benefits to Indigenous communities.
- Demonstrates cultural competence, showing the applicant can engage in a culturally relevant and safe manner.

Community Support and Partnerships

CEP projects should be developed with community support, including local employers, WorkBC Service Providers, and the Indigenous Skills and Employment Training (ISET) Providers where applicable. Applicants must demonstrate community partnerships and active involvement from partner organizations, agencies, and community members through cash or in-kind contributions (e.g., mentoring, expertise) in their application. Support may be demonstrated in different ways, including verbal or written support or through advisors involved in project design. If these connections do not exist, applicants must describe how they will build them to ensure project success. CEP will also work with community partners to help ensure community support is in place. The level of partnerships and community support will be considered during assessment.

Requirements:

- List all partner organizations and describe their roles in project design, delivery, and evaluation.
- Provide a description of community support for the project, including connections to related programs and services.
- Include contact names and phone numbers.
- Attach letters confirming funding or support, if applicable.

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Principles of Research and Innovation Projects

- Address identified needs or gaps in communities, the labour market, or among participants
- Show evidence of success in achieving outcomes
- Have the potential to be applied more broadly
- Help inform future program and/or policy development
- Include a clear and well-designed evaluation model

Types of Research and Innovation Projects

R&I funding supports two types of projects:

- **Research studies** focus on collecting and analyzing information to draw conclusions. Participants may benefit indirectly from the research. Modest participation incentives, such as gift cards for surveys or panel discussions, are permitted, including for control groups.
- **Pilot projects** test new and innovative approaches, particularly for delivering employment-related skills. They may include research participants in control or comparison groups to measure program impact. Participants may be eligible for supports, such as weekly stipends, coverage of incidental costs, and/or training costs.

Projects may combine both research and pilot elements. Priority is given to pilot projects that show strong potential to improve employment outcomes or demonstrate social innovation.

Participant eligibility requirements will vary depending on the proposal.

Research Activities

Research projects typically include:

- **Clear steps for reporting and checking results** – so it is clear how progress will be measured.
- **A clear purpose and background** – explain why the project is needed and include references to similar work.

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- **New ideas, not repeats** – make sure the project doesn't copy existing research.
- **If similar work exists, explain the difference** – show how your project adds something new or valuable.
- **Testing something innovative** – for example, a pilot or demo project to try out a research idea.
- **A plan for what happens after the project ends** – like an exit strategy or how it will continue.
- **A way to share results widely** – so others can learn from the findings.
- **Clear research questions and how you'll measure success** – describe your hypotheses and evaluation methods.
- **Follow guidelines for research involving Indigenous Peoples** – refer to the official [Research and Innovation Methodology Guidelines](#) for research involving Indigenous Peoples

Ineligible Uses of an R&I

- **No long-term funding dependency** – the project should not create ongoing financial reliance.
- **No funding for work already started** – the project must be new and not an activity that has already been tried.
- **Not for providing services to the Province** – the results of the projects must not be primarily for the Province's use, but for the use of the funding recipients or others.
- **Not for provincial evaluations** – you cannot use funds to do evaluations for government purposes.
- **Not a “catch-all” program** – activities must fit the R&I program's goals and cannot replace other funding programs.
- **Cannot fund other ministries** – funding is only for your project, not for government departments.

Project Participants

What to Include About Participants:

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- **Explain who can take part and how you'll find them** – include eligibility criteria, how you'll screen and recruit participants, your estimated sample size, and whether you'll use a comparison or control group (if applicable).
- **Show that participants are available** – participants are chosen after the project is approved, but you need to demonstrate that eligible people can be recruited.
- **Attach supporting documents** – such as consultation reports, previous research, or labour market information that supports your project.

Participant Support

- In pilot projects, participants **may receive a weekly stipend, help with incidental costs, and/or training costs** – but only if this is necessary for the research to properly test your hypothesis.

Important for Participants on BCEA or EI:

- If participants receive **BC Employment Assistance (BCEA)** or **Employment Insurance (EI)**, they must know that joining the project **could affect their benefits**.
- Participants are responsible for managing their benefits and should **talk to their agency and the Project Holder before joining**.

WorkSafeBC Coverage

Participants are considered employees of the Crown and are covered under the Province's WorkSafeBC account.

Project Evaluation

Planning Your Project Evaluation

Evaluation is about checking how well your project meets its goals and learning what works and what doesn't. It's not just something you do at the end—plan it from the start and use it throughout the project to make improvements.

Your evaluation should include:

- **Process evaluation** – looks at how the project is designed and delivered while it's running, so adjustments can be made if needed.

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- **Summative evaluation** – measures the overall results and impact after the project ends.

Both types together make up your evaluation approach.

Match your evaluation to your project:

- **For larger or longer projects:** Include both process and summative evaluations.
- **For smaller or short-term projects:** Choose an evaluation approach that fits your timeline, scope, and budget.

Ways to Evaluate

You can use methods like:

- Collecting data at the start, end, and follow-up stages (e.g., surveys on age, work history, earnings, and attitudes).
- Reviewing administrative data (such as client tracking).
- Interviews, surveys, or focus groups.
- Using comparison or control groups.
- Post-program surveys to assess how participation affected employment.

Reporting & Accountability: What You Need to Know

Keeping the Ministry updated is an important part of your project. Here's what's expected:

Regular Reporting

- **Reports** – After your project is approved, you'll need to submit monthly updates on finances and activities. Reporting frequency can vary.
- These reports help track progress and show how the project meets its goals.

Public Access

- All reports funded by R&I are public – they can't be copyrighted or owned by one organization.
- Reports must acknowledge public funding and remain available for public use indefinitely.

Accountability

- Your project should demonstrate good financial management and clearly report on outcomes.

How to Apply

Step 1: Email the CEP team at CEPTEAM@gov.bc.ca to discuss your project idea.

Step 2: After discussing your idea, complete the online application and attach the following:

- Letters of support
- [Budget template](#)

Step 3: The CEP team will contact you once your application has been reviewed. We will contact applicants as soon as possible with funding decisions.

Note: Lead Applicants are solely responsible for ensuring that all information submitted in their Application is true and correct. The Ministry reserves the right to reject any Application due to unsatisfactory letters of support, unsatisfactory past performance under contracts with the Ministry, or any material error, omission, or misrepresentation in the Application. If the Ministry obtains evidence of false declarations or misrepresentations with respect to any material provided as part of an Application, the Ministry also reserves the right to exclude the Lead Applicant or any proposed subcontractor or partner from participation in the Application process, or if the evidence is discovered after the Lead Applicant enters an Agreement, to exercise any rights available under the Agreement, including termination.

Appendix 1: Proposal Description

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

Project Title Clearly state the title of your project.

Project Objectives In 1-2 sentences, describe the project's objectives (not your organization's). Explain how the project contributes to understanding the labour

Research & Innovation

market and explore and/or find better ways of delivering employment programming.

Provide an analysis of your literature and program review showing that the project is new, likely to succeed, and builds on current best practices and research.

Key Project Activities and Proposed Timelines

List the key activities from the start to the end of the project.

Describe each activity in detail: what will be done, how and why, and how long it will take.

Expected Results

Describe the outcomes the project will achieve.

- Link results to project activities
- Present results in qualitative (descriptive) and/or quantitative (numerical) terms

Appendix 2: Research Principles and Methodologies

Research Principles

To ensure research integrity, projects must follow these principles:

Validity – determines the research measures what it is intended to measure. The Ministry may assess whether the research questions, tools, sample, and population are appropriate.

Reliability – refers to whether the research results may be reproduced under a similar methodology and whether the results accurately represent the total population studied.

Privacy and Protection of Personal Information – refers to how data is owned, used, stored, and disposed of, and how researchers protect participant anonymity, rights, responsibilities, and personal information, including any compensation provided.

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Objectivity – ensures that researcher bias does not influence results to personal views or the interests of any organization, including ELMSD.

Independent Evaluation – research and evaluation must be conducted by an organization separate from the funding body. Proposals must use current, accepted research methods, include multiple sources of evidence, and involve external peer review.

Examples of Types of Research

The following is a non-exhaustive list of research methods that may be used in Research and Innovation projects. Projects may use one or a combination of these methods. Research tools such as surveys, focus groups, interviews, panels, and literature reviews may be used within these approaches.

Random Assignment Methods

Experimental research is a quantitative method that tests how changing one factor affects outcomes. This method requires random assignment of participants to a control group and a treatment (experimental) group.

Non-Experimental Methods

When random assignment is not possible, non-experimental methods may be used to evaluate labour market projects. These methods usually use a comparison group to estimate what would have happened without the program.

Some non-experimental methods control observable differences between groups, for example, adjusted comparisons using Ordinary Least Squares (OLS). These methods are easier to use but may be less reliable because they do not account for differences that cannot be observed. Matching methods can be more effective because they create stronger comparison groups.

More complex methods that account for unobservable differences include difference-in-difference and instrumental variable methods. Their accuracy depends on data quality, assumptions, and model strength.

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Case Studies

A case study is a research approach that examines a real-world issue or situation using multiple sources of evidence.

A key feature of case studies is that each case is examined on its own, rather than as part of a larger sample. Case studies use multiple research methods, such as surveys, interviews, administrative data analysis, and key informant interviews.

A major advantage of case studies is their flexibility. Unlike experiments and surveys, they can be adapted as new information or circumstances arise.

An example of an R&I case study could examine how employers in a specific labour market (for example, a remote community or community with a high Indigenous population) build workforce skills. Findings could be summarized as best practices and shared with employers in similar labour markets.