First Nations Micro-Credential Initiative

Applicant Guide

BRITISH COLUMBIA

Ministry of
Post-Secondary Education
and Future Skills

Applicant Guide

Purpose

The Ministry of Post-Secondary Education and Future Skills ("the Ministry") is inviting applications from First Nations and First Nations-mandated post-secondary institutes, in partnership with employers and industry sectors, community, and/or public post-secondary institutions (PSIs) to develop and deliver micro-credentials ("the Initiative").

This *Applicant Guide* provides the information to apply for funding under the Initiative, including the requirements for a proposal. The following appendices are included:

- Appendix 1 – Evaluation Criteria
- Appendix 2 – Application Form (including Project Budget Template)

For more information or any questions, please contact:

> Strategic Policy and Initiatives Branch
> Ministry of Post-Secondary Education and Future Skills
> psfs.microcredentials@gov.bc.ca

Initiative Overview

Micro-credentials recognize stand-alone short duration learning experiences that are competency-based; align with First Nations, employer and/or industry needs; and can be assessed and recognized for employment or learning purposes. They complement current offerings and pathways in B.C.'s post-secondary system and enhance access to education for learners and employees.

Micro-credentials play an important role in supporting individuals to upskill and reskill in an ever-evolving economy. They provide another option for post-secondary institutions to prepare learners for high-opportunity occupations and address community needs and labour market demands.

Examples of existing micro-credentials offered across BC by public post-secondary institutions are available on Education Planner BC.

It is essential that proponents clearly demonstrate how First Nation(s), employers and industry have been engaged in the identification of the need for the micro-credential - including their level of input into curriculum development and their role in assessment and recognition of the micro- credential once complete.

First Nation(s) can determine if they would like to include tuition subsidies in their proposals, including the amount, based on considerations for other potential funding for learners/employers, ongoing fiscal sustainability of the micro-credential, and other factors.

Credit-bearing micro-credentials will be subject to the Tuition Limit Policy (TLP). The tuition and mandatory fee amounts captured under the TLP will be based on the full tuition and fees of the micro-credential, not any reduced amount that may be covered by subsidy for initial offerings.

Initiative funding is intended to support a range of diverse micro-credential offerings. The submitting institutions and communities may be contacted and advised of similar proposals and provided the opportunity to collaborate.

All micro-credential proposals should focus on high-demand sectors and align with First Nation and provincial government priorities.

Key Elements of Projects

Micro-credentials funded through the Initiative must be implemented as outlined in the funding letter, including meeting established reporting requirements. Reporting on these micro-credentials will need to be provided for the pilot year. First Nations and First Nations-mandated post-secondary institutes will be encouraged to report on any subsequent offerings beyond the pilot year. Generally, micro-credentials funded under the Initiative will:

- help individuals develop additional skills and competencies to upskill and reskill in order to meet the needs of their communities to access good jobs and the changing First Nations economic needs and priorities, and evolving workforce.
- provide additional innovative pathways to access post-secondary education and promote lifelong learning.

Specifically, successful micro-credential proposals will:

- Respond to the needs and priorities identified by First Nations(s)

- Align with First Nation government, provincial government priorities, and /or high-demand sectors,[1] labour market needs

- demonstrate alignment with the Framework's guiding principles and components;
- have clear learner pathways, outcomes, and benefits. Learner pathways include:
    - credit-based micro-credentials,
    - non-credit micro-credentials with a clear path to credit credentials; or
    - micro-credentials recognized by employers/industry to access employment or improve employment prospects.
- include meaningful community, employer, and/or industry engagement and collaboration;
- identify the competency or competencies a learner will acquire and describe how competencies will be assessed;
- provide a method to validate projected outcomes and learner benefits post-credential;
- demonstrate that tuition and fees correlate with learner benefits and outcomes;
- have clear micro-credential development and delivery timelines; and
- include details of how the micro-credential will be financially sustained over the long-term to support additional offerings if desired by institute.

In addition, this Initiative may give preference to micro-credentials that:

- demonstrate response and alignment with First Nation government priorities.
- leverage additional funding sources and/or matching funding from other partner or non-partner organizations as a component of the proposal.

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[1] Please refer to the Labour Market Outlook or similar Labour Market reports and government priorities.

One-time funding received through this Initiative can be used for micro-credential development and delivery. Activities may include:

- Curriculum design and development
- Industry and subject matter expert engagement
- Marketing
- Course instructor/facilitator and support staff, such as teaching assistant
- Evaluation
- One-time administrative costs, such as project management, program assistant, etc.
- Media and technology development, such as video/graphic production, learning management system design and support, web content development etc.
- Tuition subsidies as determined by First Nation(s)

Funding received through this Initiative cannot be used for the following:

- activities, initiatives or other undertakings not related to the development, implementation and deliverables of the specific micro-credential proposed;
- direct subsidies, specific incentives or rewards to employers;
- capital-related costs, equipment or digital infrastructure;
- administrative costs for ongoing administrative support (ie. project management, program assistant, etc.). However, one-time administrative costs for pilot development and delivery are eligible.
- costs not outlined and approved in the initial application;
- micro-credentials that are not developed by the applicant such as acting as a delivery agent for private sector micro-credentials (e.g., Microsoft Certification); or
- micro-credentials specifically targeted to trades occupations.

Eligible Applicants

The lead applicant must be First Nations and First Nations-mandated post-secondary institutes in British Columbia.

- First Nations communities must partner with public post-secondary institutions or First Nations mandated institutes for micro-credential delivery.

- Eligible applicants can also submit proposals in conjunction with employers, industry, Indigenous organizations, or public post-secondary institutions.
- Applicants may consider applying in partnership with another First Nations in cases where multiple institutions have interest in developing a similar micro- credential.

If an application is submitted by a First Nations-mandated post-secondary institute, the First Nations-mandated post-secondary institute must provide documentation that it has been designated to submit applications on behalf of First Nation(s). Documentation could include a letter from the Chief of the First Nation Band Council(s) or a Band Council Resolution(s) that designates the First Nations-mandated post-secondary institute to

submit applications for funding. If the application is being submitted on behalf of multiple First Nation Bands, documentation from each First Nation Band Council must be provided.

Application Process

First Nations and First Nations-mandated institutes are invited to respond to this Open Call for Proposals by submitting a completed **Application Form** (see Appendix 2) of **no more than 6 pages** that includes:

- Contact information for the lead applicant, including name, title and e-mail.
- Summary of the micro-credential, including:
    - details of competency/competencies gained by learners through the micro-credential;
    - details of learner credit and learner pathways;
    - details of initial and ongoing tuition and other fees and costs for learners; and
    - details of the employer/industry/community partnership.
- Micro-credential project work plan, timelines and milestones.
- Details of how the micro-credential will be financially sustained over the long-term if desired by institutes.
- Anticipated micro-credential outcomes, including learner outcomes and benefits, as well as method of evaluation.
- A completed Budget Template.

Institutions are not limited in the number of proposals they may submit; however, each micro-credential being proposed will require a separate **Application Form**. The Ministry will be striving to distribute funding equitably between types of institutions and geographic areas.

Proposals will be accepted until January 15, 2024 at 3:00 PM PST and should be submitted by e-mail to psfs.microcredentials@gov.bc.ca.

Successful applicants will receive additional information detailing reporting requirements for the funding received under the Micro-credential Initiative.

Ministry staff are available to provide guidance and to respond to any questions that arise during the application process.

For more information or any questions, please contact:

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Appendix 1 - Evaluation Criteria

Proposals will be evaluated based on the criteria outlined below, with a strong emphasis on the applicant's focus on key elements and outcomes of the micro-credential. Several key components are required for all micro-credentials; only proposed micro-credentials meeting these key requirements will be considered.

To ensure a balanced selection of micro-credentials, proposals may be categorized by sector/community, target learner, level of micro-credential (e.g., entry level, mid-career level, etc. regional distribution, differing learner pathways, etc.).

An evaluation committee, including representatives from the First Nations Education Steering Committee and Indigenous Adult and Higher Learning Association, will review all proposals to determine their alignment with the evaluation criteria and to provide funding recommendations.

Evaluation Criteria	Detailed Description	Criteria Weight
Necessary components	• Aligns with Framework ☐ • Clearly outlines outcomes and learner benefit☐ • Demonstrates meaningful collaboration with employers/industry/community ☐ • Demonstrates First Nations determined or labour market need ☐ • Demonstrates learning and employment pathways☐	Has necessary components ☐ Does not have all necessary components ☐
1. **Project Summary**	• Demonstrates well-considered project with First Nations need and/or priority alignment • Clearly outlines Framework alignment • Details on topics covered and breakdown of hours and/or modules	/5
2. **Improving Access and Lowering Barriers**	• Explains how the proposed micro-credential helps to improve access and/or lower barriers to post-secondary education or high-opportunity employment. • Appropriate intersectional analysis (e.g., Gender Based Analysis+) of micro-credential impacts has been Provided to demonstrate evidence of equity, diversity, and inclusion support	/10

3. **Employer/Industry/ Community Collaboration and Evidence of Need**	• Employer/Industry/Community Collaboration need is clear, and can be addressed with the micro-credential • Micro-credential addresses First Nation-determined need, high- demand sector/labour market/community need and/or government priority • Meaningful collaboration with Employer/Industry/Community partners as appropriate throughout development and delivery of micro-credential	/25
4. **Competency and Assessment**	• Competency is clearly articulated and is tied to evidence of need • Assessment of competency will support employer/industry/community trust that learner has achieved competency	/15
5. **Learner Outcomes/Benefits & Validation**	• Clearly describes pathways, outcomes, and benefits for learners • Strength of relation between learner benefits and evidence of employer/industry/community need • Clear and effective evaluation strategy, data, and indicators to evaluate project's success	/20
6. **Tuition and non-Tuition Fees**	• Learner cost is reasonable given level of micro-credential, learner outcomes and benefits, and other considerations • Learner cost is reasonable after initial micro-credential • Any tuition subsidy request is justified	/10
7. **Sustainability**	• Describes anticipated future need of MC. • If relevant, outlines strategies and sources for future funding.	/10

8. **Project Workplan, Timeline & Milestones**	• Workplan clear and well-thought out • Attainable timelines and milestones • Aligns with rest of application	/5
9. **Risks and Mitigations**	• Reasonable consideration of micro-credential risks, mitigations proposed that result in likely micro-credential success • Reasonable assessment of risks has been completed, and mitigations are sufficient to address risk likelihood and/or severity	/5
10. **Project Budget**	• Itemized and reasonably detailed description of project costs • Indication of funds requested from the Initiative, and contributions from in-kind or other sources	/10
TOTAL		/115

Appendix 2 – Application Form

Select word document icon to open the First Nations MC Initiative - Application Form template:

MC Application
Template.docx

Note: Proposals will be evaluated based on the information included in the Application Form of no more than 6 pages.

*Institutions are not limited in the number of proposals they may submit; however, each micro-credential being proposed will require a separate **Application Form.***