Ideas for Innovation – Question and Answers

Q - Is there a memorandum of understanding with the Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development for those that deliver Employment Ontario (EO) programs (i.e., ability to use existing LBS or ES resources or clients outside of existing program guidelines)?

A – We are currently working closely with the Ministry of Advanced Education and Skills Development (MAESD) to develop some guidelines and a memorandum of understanding, which will clearly articulate the reporting requirements and exceptions that will be approved for Employment Ontario (EO) providers who partner with OCWI on research projects.

Q – What do we mean by “demand led”?

A – We mean that the project should respond to needs that have been identified by employers or other stakeholders who focus on hiring.

Q – Who can be a proponent?

A – We have deliberately left this wide open. Anyone can be a proponent, including researchers, service providers, employers, and government.

Q - The “sandbox idea” for the contextualized skills sounds interesting. Can you provide an example of what this might look like?

A – A good example is a project that is currently in development with the City of Kingston. Within the next few years, an overseas baby formula company will be opening a state-of-the-art production facility that will create approximately 250 jobs. These jobs will range from clerical to engineering to farming and everything in between. Many of these jobs will require specialized training that doesn’t currently exist in the province. This particular project will focus on how we work creatively with key stakeholders to meet
the hiring needs of this new company. This is a new challenge for Kingston and we can test new ways of developing essential skills on the job in consultation with employers, stakeholders and training institutions/organizations. By connecting with as many interested parties as possible, we have the opportunity to find new solutions for this unique situation.

Q - Are you funding the development of an innovative concept or the implementation of that developed product?

A – Since these particular OCWI research projects are really tailor-made, this really depends on the nature and scope of the idea. For example, if the idea and research question are already well-developed, the scope of the approved project would likely focus more on the implementation, as well as testing and evaluation. However, other ideas may require more resources and support in the development stage in order to be developed into a rigorous research project, and therefore we would allocate the proper resources and support for this.

Q - Could a project from another province be considered a new pilot project in Ontario?

A – This would really depend on the specifics of the project itself. If the project is more of a direct implementation of an approach used in another province, it would fit more within the scope of an OCWI demonstration project. If, however, it has been inspired by an approach, but includes unique or innovative aspect, it may fit within the scope of these exploration projects.

Q - Is there a budget cap for each project? Are there funding categories (e.g., staffing and training for clients/employers)?

A – With our process, we are really focussed on developing the idea and then helping to create the research project from that. Therefore, each project will be assessed on its own merit.

Q - What if, for example, an organization is already working with an established demand-led career pathways model (80% employment outcome at exit for new and incumbent), as well as a very strong contextualized essential skills model and assessment package? Would the funding support established programming through scaling and expansion?
A - In specific cases such as this, we would advocate for a one-to-one meeting and additional follow-up in order to help determine the most suitable research opportunity within our portfolio. Without knowing specific details, it sounds as though a project such as this may fit well within our guidelines for the development of a case study.

Q - Could you add a bit of detail on what happens during the “workshopping the idea” process?

A – The overall purpose of the workshop process is to develop the idea into a research question that can be turned into a rigorous research project. As such, the workshop process involves several phases. The first phase is really focused on developing the idea. This phase involves interviews, brainstorming, and identifying potential partners/collaborators. The next phase is a two-day workshop. Working in collaboration with OCWI research staff as well as other experts from the sector, the first day of the workshop aims to develop the idea into a strong research question. The second day of the workshop is focused on development of the research project based on the question. During this phase, we will focus on research methods, timelines, metrics, and funding recommendations. Throughout all phases, you will receive support from OCWI.

Q – How are proposals assessed?

A - OCWI has created evaluation criteria for each of its research opportunities, which are available on our website [here](#). Additionally, every proposal received by OCWI is reviewed by a peer review panel that includes researchers, community practitioners and workforce development professionals. OCWI regional coordinators are available as resources to prospective proponents, but are not involved in assessing proposals once submitted. To find out who your OCWI regional coordinator is and how to contact them, visit the staff section of our website [here](#).

Q - What needs to be done by August 31st, 2018 (the deadline for all exploration projects)?

A – The deliverables of each approved research project will be specific for that project. Through our submission and workshop process, we will work with you to determine timelines and deliverables.

Q – What ideas won’t work or be approved?

A – Our mandate at OCWI is to add value to the sector by putting forward ideas and opportunities that haven’t been tried or tested before. Therefore, projects that focus on retaining existing talent or capacity,
or that have previously been submitted for funding from other sources are likely not going to be approved by us. That said, each project is assessed and evaluated on its merits.

Q - What is the status on the youth transitional jobs demonstration projects?

A – We are still working with the MAESD on a memorandum of understanding and expect to have it finalized by October 2, 2017.

Q - If I have an idea, but no employer partner yet, is it worth submitting a proposal?

A – Yes, it is still worth submitting a proposal. We really want to know that you are open to and thinking about collaboration. Part of the submission process includes a section where we ask you to identify potential partners from across the sector. We will use this information during the workshop phase to help you identify and connect with potential partners, including employers. Our regional coordinators are also a great source of support in identifying potential partners.