

CFP Title	RIES call for proposals: skills, education, and skills development
Honorarium:	\$7,000
Issue Date of CFP:	Tuesday, October 9 th 2018
Deadline for Questions or Clarifications of CFP:	Wednesday, October 31, 2018 12:00 PM EST
Proposal Submission Deadline/Time:	Friday, November 9 th 2018, 4:00 PM EST
Mowat Contact for Enquiries Regarding CFP:	b.seward@mowatcentre.ca
Title of Proposed Project:	<i>To be completed by applicant</i>
Description of Proposed Project	<i>To be completed by applicant</i>

Section A: Assignment Description

A.1 About the Partners

The Mowat Centre is an independent public policy think tank located at the Munk School of Global Affairs & Public Policy at the University of Toronto and is Ontario's non-partisan, evidence-based voice on public policy. The Mowat Centre undertakes collaborative applied policy research, proposes innovative research-driven recommendations, and engages in public dialogue and knowledge translation on Canada's most important national issues. It specializes in bridging academic research and public policy development and making policy-relevant research and data accessible to a wider public audience.

The Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario (HEQCO) is an independent agency of the Government of Ontario that conducts research and provides objective advice to government to improve the accessibility, quality and accountability of Ontario's public colleges and universities. HEQCO employs a multifaceted research approach to inform the implementation of meaningful policies that improve postsecondary education in Ontario, Canada and around the world. As a government agency, HEQCO strives to support research that will impact discussions of Ontario's policy priorities or business/educational practices within a range of different communities, including policy makers, academia and the public.

A.2 Description of Assignment

It is widely accepted that in a knowledge-intensive economy, a country's ability to sustain economic growth and enhance quality of life is driven by the skills of its workforce and citizens. While Canada has an enviable rate of secondary school completion and postsecondary education attainment, less is known about the skills of its employees and citizens. Part of this uncertainty is driven by the fast pace of technological change that is reshaping the Canadian economy. The ongoing elimination of low-skilled jobs, alongside the growing demand for the skills needed to manage an information-intensive digital environment, mean that the landscape of skilled workers in Canada is changing. There are also concerns regarding the state of skills development in Canada that are the result of uncertainties about the link between education and required skills—that is, between the knowledge gained through formal secondary and postsecondary education and the skills now required by employers.

To address these knowledge gaps, the Mowat Centre and HEQCO are leading an innovative and collaborative policy research initiative, the *Research Initiative on Education and Skills* (RIES).

At its core, RIES is designed to make Statistics Canada data accessible to a wide range of researchers and increase the return on investments already made in data collection. The objective of RIES is to access, analyze and mobilize data relating to the education, skills and labour market outcomes of Canadians and to disseminate the findings to inform policy development. The lasting goal of the initiative is to build a knowledge infrastructure and research capacity to continually support evidence-informed and impactful policy making.

As part of the initiative, The Mowat Centre and HEQCO are seeking to build a community of researchers who are interested in producing policy-relevant research while working with skills-related datasets provided by Statistics Canada.

Background

Uncertainties regarding Canadians' skills are typically driven by several limitations with previously available data.

- Researchers have had to rely on respondents' self-reported assessments of their skills, preventing an objective understanding of the relationship between workers' abilities and their labour market experiences.

- At the same time, surveys are typically limited in scope and pertain only to the specific survey frames that generate questionnaire items. This restricted scope prevents researchers' more nuanced analyses to pursue topics that are tangential to the original scope of research.
- Lastly, it is often difficult to determine the lasting effects of training in the absence of data which measure the returns to skills over time.

To address these limitations, this initiative intends to make use of the following interconnected sets of Statistics Canada data:

The Program for the International Assessment of Adult Competencies (PIAAC), a direct assessment of the competencies of adult Canadians between the ages of 16 and 65.

The Longitudinal and International Survey of Adults (LISA), a longitudinal survey that includes a subsample of PIAAC respondents and that collects information on employment, education, training, health and family.

LISA linkages to administrative data - linking LISA data to historical tax data from the T1 Family File (T1FF) and from employers' files (T4), as well as other administrative data relating to employment, income and immigration status.

RIES benefits from the Mowat Centre's affiliation with the University of Toronto to access the PIAAC-LISA data through the university's Research Data Centre (RDC). Normally, access to data through RDCs is arranged for each individual researcher on a project-by-project basis. Given the scope of RIES, a special arrangement with Statistics Canada has been negotiated. Under this arrangement, RIES technical analysts are located at the University of Toronto RDC and will access the data on behalf of the researchers of successful proposals, with access costs incurred by RIES. This ensures that access to and use of the data conforms with Statistics Canada's requirements, notably those relating to the protection of the privacy of respondents.

RIES technical analysts will use the methodology proposed by successful applicants and will send the output to those researchers so that they may conduct the corresponding analysis and product writing. Carrying out data analysis in this way allows applicants to access PIAAC/LISA data (and the associated administrative linkages) without requiring either the lengthy data application process, or the advanced statistical backgrounds needed to work with these data.

Research Task

RIES aims to produce research on specific topics regarding the state of skills and skills development in Canada. These topics have been chosen with the help of a research advisory committee comprised of academics, policy stakeholders, and members of the federal and Ontario provincial governments to generate themes which reflect important policy issues in the areas of education and the labour market. Specifically, RIES stakeholders seek researchers to produce policy-minded reports analyzing skills in Canada along three broad themes:

Equity

When understanding the different working experiences of Canadians, the important questions are: who is benefiting from skill development in Canada? Where are there gaps in skills between Canadians? Who is accessing education and training opportunities, and how influential are these opportunities on their labour market outcomes? This theme is concerned with sociodemographic differences in labour market outcomes, sociodemographic differences in skills attainment, retention, and degradation, and socioeconomic mobility for Canadians from diverse backgrounds. Researchers are encouraged to explore the intersection of individuals' characteristics on their pathways in education and the wider Canadian economy.

Future of work

When attempting to understand the future of employment, we ask: how is the supply of labour in Canada changing? What are the career pathways of Canadians, and how are Canadians accessing training for their careers? Is employment becoming more precarious? This theme addresses changing employment trends within the Canadian labour market and what these trends mean for the future of the Canadian economy.

What skills matter?

As the Canadian economy moves towards a knowledge-based digital age, what skills matter for successful entry into the labour market? Do credentials matter, or are skills the key determinant of labour market security? How is training acquired and how, and to what extent, are skills used on the job? How do skills change over time and circumstances? This theme explores the importance of hard and soft skills in Canada.

The research reports generated from this competition are expected to make fresh contributions to policy research as it pertains to the development of skills, training, and education among Canadians.

A.3 Deliverables

Successful applicants will be required to submit a final research report that is based upon the proposal submitted to RIES. These reports should be geared towards a policy-oriented audience with a page count expectation of 15-20 pages. In addition to this report, applicants are also expected to deliver on a number of milestones during the life of the project:

Milestones for successful proposals:

- Researcher to send a plan of study, or similar product describing the scope and methodology of the analysis to RIES technical analysts.
- Researcher to attend (either in person or via teleconference) a preliminary discussion of findings with RIES stakeholders.
- Researcher to submit an early draft of the research report presenting preliminary findings.
- Complete draft of research report (15-20 pages), expected no later than **April 2019**.

All reports produced under this initiative will be released publicly by the Mowat Centre under the RIES branding. The RIES team will provide research support as outlined above, and RIES will incur the costs of accessing the RDC. In addition, The Mowat Centre will also design, disseminate and communicate reports produced under this initiative.

A.4 Benefits for Collaborators

Applicants with successful proposals will receive an honorarium of \$7,000, to be paid upon submission of the final research report.

In addition, while participation in the RIES requires that collaborators submit a final research report, analyses produced for the project may also be used in collaborators' independent work for scholarly or academic publication once the report has been published through RIES.

Section B: Proposal Submission Requirements

Applicants are asked to submit one (1) electronic copy of a two-page proposal of their suggested research project that relates to one of the thematic pillars outlined above. The scope of the research project should be detailed enough to demonstrate the feasibility of the research, as well as clearly demonstrate the project's ability to produce a 15-20 page policy-oriented report on the subject. Proposals should be submitted in PDF format with a maximum page count of two single-spaced pages (not including the required works cited page).

Successful proposals will have the following:

- A clearly defined research question which aligns with one of the themes identified in the Research Task section above (applicants may submit more than one proposal should they have multiple project ideas).
- A firm grounding in the relevant literature related to the scope of the proposed research.
- Contain a clearly defined methodology that demonstrates a familiarity with one or more of the survey datasets outlined above.
- Provide a novel or significant contribution to the study of skills and skills development with relevance to a policy-oriented audience.

Successful applicants must also provide:

- A description of the research experience of the applicant(s) (maximum one page, not included within the two-page proposal page limit) that details prior experience researching and analyzing data and topics related to the focal research interests outlined above.
- An accompanying curriculum vitae or resume.

Other Requirements

Successful proponents need to be available for a possible presentation of report at a capstone dissemination conference at the close of the initiative (Winter 2020). Proponents must also be willing to peer review at least one report from another RIES contributor during the life of the contract. Proponents may be asked to participate in briefings to government officials pertaining to their research projects.



Deadline and Submission Procedure

Completed proposals should be submitted via email by November 9th, 2018.

The deadline for questions regarding the proposal is October 31st 2018. The answers will be posted on the RIES website no later than November 2nd.

Interested proponents should direct submissions and all communications to Brad Seward, b.seward@mowatcentre.ca.

Proposal Evaluation

Proposal will be evaluated by members of the research advisory committee who will select successful bidders based on both the fit and feasibility of the research project to the goals outlined in the Call for Proposal announcement. Applicants will be notified of the committee's decision no later than November 27th, 2018.