



# Virtual Learning Strategy FAQs

## Format

1. Is there a limit to the number of submissions that can be received from each post-secondary institution? If no, then will the process only approve one project per institution?

With the exception of the Digital Capacity - Targeted Supports EOI, there is no limit on submissions that can be received from a PSI, but each application must be signed by an individual with the authority to bind the institution in a contract. For this reason, many institutions are coordinating their efforts internally. Multiple projects per institution may be funded.

2. Does the 4-page maximum (per submission) refer to the entire submission?

The 4-page maximum is for the "core" of the proposal submission that is mapped against the evaluation criteria. The two to three pages for attestation and the project plan template do not count towards that total. The purpose is to reduce the labour on the part of the submitters and to ensure a smooth and efficient evaluation process. For more help on submission guidelines you can watch the information session recording from January 15 and download the slide deck on the VLS website: <https://vls.ecampusontario.ca/>

3. Is there a shortlisting process?

No, there is no shortlisting process. It is a single application and there is one opportunity to submit on February 3.

4. Is a portion of the overall budget associated with this initiative specifically aimed **at increasing institutions' Francophone offering and** capacity? If so, how much is allotted to each of the four categories mentioned?

Yes, absolutely, funding is available to support French in institutions. There is no specified amount, but applications designed to support activities and projects in French are strongly encouraged.



5. If we submit our project proposal in French, what will the terms and conditions be for evaluating it? Will a Francophone committee evaluate Francophone proposals or will proposals be translated and then evaluated in English? This question may seem trivial, but unfortunately, it is often critical to understanding the arguments developed in the proposals.

If a proposal is submitted in French, it will be evaluated in French by bilingual or Francophone evaluators.

6. Am I required to follow and submit the posted template?

Yes, submission templates are required and are aligned to the evaluation criteria. All submissions must be completed using the template format. The logo at the top of the template can be removed if needed. Please keep the table and associated headings for the purposes of evaluation.

7. Does the attestation count towards the 4-page limit?

No, the first 1-3 pages attestation do not count towards the 4-page count total.

8. Is a CV required for the main applicant or any other applicant?

No, CVs are not required. Please do not include any appendices in your application, for example, reference letters, CVs, letters of support, lists of publications etc.

9. Should the final PDF that is submitted include the MS Word document and the MS Excel spreadsheet?

Yes, the final PDF should include all of the completed templates, including the project plan template. All documents must be converted into machine-readable or Optical Character Recognition (OCR) PDF for online submission. No other document type is accepted. Please view the application process submission briefing for more details: <https://vls.ecampusontario.ca/>

10. Are references included in the 4 pages?

References do not count towards the 4-page limit.



**11. Does the same person / role signing the proposal need to be the same person / role signing off on the reporting required by eCampusOntario?**

The signature has to come from the authority that can bind the institution for the proposal attestation and, if the proposal is successful, then the reporting.

**12. Will a budget template be provided?**

A budget template will not be provided; you are free to use whatever format you deem best. Please ensure that you clearly outline all cost projections and that it is aligned to maximum budget amounts detailed in the EOI to which you are responding.

**13. The downloadable template is missing "Application includes a clear plan to develop or adjust learning outcomes." Is this removal purposeful or should it be included in the submission?**

Thank you! This was an error that has been corrected. The correct and complete Digital Content submission template is now available.

**14. Are there specific font guidelines / sizes we must adhere to?**

There are no specific guidelines regarding font size. Please maintain best practice for accessible documents.

**15. We are planning to bundle the development of two courses into one proposal. When completing the template, should I complete all sections for one course, and then all sections for another course, or should I alternate between the courses in each section?**

We recommend alternating between courses within each section, making it clear which course you are referring to as applicable. This will be much easier for the evaluator to follow. It also may mean that for some evaluation criteria, you will be able to speak to both courses and that will prevent unnecessary repetition.



## Collaboration

1. How are partnerships within a university (i.e., across faculty and departments) valued in comparison to collaborating with other universities?

In general terms, the VLS funding encourages cross-institutional collaboration. Details of how those collaborative relationships will be scored for each proposal can be found in the detailed evaluation rubric at the end of each EOI.

2. How many institutions can lead a proposal? Is the funding shared amongst collaborating institutions?

If a proposal is successful, eCampusOntario will sign a contract and flow funding to a single **eligible institution**. That is why we require that a **"lead institution"** be identified in the proposal. How the funding is divided and distributed to other partners is up to the institutions to determine.

3. Will single-institution submissions in the Digital Content EOI have, in effect, a 10 point deficit to collaborative submissions in the scoring and ranking process, or is the ranking more nuanced than that?

A single-institution submission in the Digital Content EOI will lose marks under the "collaboration" criteria. Please review the detailed criteria provided for more information.

4. Do collaborating institutions have to get attestation signed or just the lead?

Collaborating institutions do not need to sign the attestation form. Only the lead institution signature is required. Make sure that all appropriate permissions have been obtained from collaborating institutions before listing them on your proposal.

5. Will collaborators from other institutions - who are listed in the application form - be confirmed by eCampusOntario during the evaluation process or for successful applicants?

This confirmation will not be provided. It is the responsibility of the institutions to obtain the appropriate approvals to confirm collaborations.



## Licensing/Central Repository

### 1. Is there a standard license that is used for the VLS funded projects?

At a minimum, all products developed with VLS funding will be required to be shared within Ontario, among all post-secondary institutions. All copyright will be retained by the creator. What you are doing is allowing eCampusOntario to distribute that content freely throughout the Ontario PSE sector (colleges, indigenous institutes, universities). The VLS supports the Ontario PSE sector to work collaboratively together, and creating learning content that is shareable to all Ontario PSE will help all college, Indigenous institutes and universities deliver the best online education for Ontario students. You may choose to select an additional license (for example, Creative Commons) that allows for your work to be shared beyond Ontario.

### 2. What will the public see when they click on a course in the virtual library? Will it only include a description and a link to enroll? Will any of the content be available directly on the eCampusOntario library site?

We are currently in the process of designing the appropriate infrastructure upgrades to our central repository to house the outputs of the Virtual Learning Strategy. We will be reaching out to our members to solicit input into those features.

### 3. What is eCampusOntario's expectation related to IP ownership? Is an institution expected to develop its own agreement amongst its partners or is there a standard agreement that can be applied?

IP remains with the creator for all VLS funding and partners are free to develop their own agreements. The minimum requirement is that you provide eCampusOntario with the right to share the final product with the Ontario post-secondary sector (colleges, universities, and indigenous institutes). It is up to the institution to develop a partnership agreement. eCampusOntario will provide a contract template on January 22 that may be helpful for these conversations.



## Eligibility

### 1. Is there a separate EOI for funding for Indigenous institutes?

All Indigenous institutes are eligible to receive dedicated funding administered directly through the Ministry of Colleges and Universities. This funding is separate from the EOIs currently posted. Where noted in each EOI Indigenous Institutes are eligible to apply.

### 2. Can associations or organizations representing groups of eligible member institutions apply to the EOIs, in place of individual institutions?

Unfortunately, EOI eligibility does not allow for applications to be submitted by a representative association or organization. An institution listed as eligible under the Eligibility criteria must be the lead institution for the proposal, contract, reporting and deliverables.

### 3. Are not-for-profit organizations eligible to apply for VLS funding?

No. The Virtual Learning Strategy is designed to support Ontario post-secondary institutions. Eligible institutions are listed in the documentation posted here:  
<https://vls.ecampusontario.ca/eois/>

### 4. Can Professional Studies, or Continuing Education units on campus also apply into this funding?

Yes.



## Eligible Expenses

### 1. Is the purchase of educational lab equipment considered an eligible expense?

Double check the eligible expenses list in the EOI you are interested in. For example, the Digital Content EOI (p. 11) states that eligible expenses include reasonable costs for purchasing equipment. All equipment costs must be directly associated with the project proposed and justified appropriately in the budget.

### 2. Can institutional administration costs for managing contracts, finances, and payroll be included in the submission budget?

The EOIs do not specify an admin fee, so it is your decision what is reasonable to include. Whatever you decide, please be sure to itemize your costs. For example, rather than include a blanket overhead charge, please include specific details on each line item. This could be overhead but it is important that it is enumerated.

### 3. Can VLS funding be used to support a projects that is funded by other government bodies?

The EOI documentation is clear that funding cannot duplicate any existing funding provided for projects (e.g., provincial/federal grants).

### 4. For the Digital Capacity Funding, is it a proper use of the funding to extend an existing contract staff member?

Yes.

### 5. Would reimbursement of regular staff time, or co-op students be considered an eligible expense (i.e., wages of existing staff for the time they are working on the VLS program)?

Yes, please refer to the eligible expenses section of the specific EOI you are interested in. In most cases, release time is an allowable expense for subject matter experts in addition to other existing staff.



## EOI Specific Questions

1. **In the Digital Content EOI, what does “assessment strategies” mean/refer to?**

The Digital Content evaluation criteria refers to the assessment strategies that are proposed to be adapted or developed specific to the content. For example, an open textbook might include H5P activities as part of a formative assessment approach.

2. **Is collaboration with an out-of-province company partner allowed under the Digital Delivery EOI?**

The Digital Delivery parameters are clear on the fact that the technology partner needs to be based in Ontario.

3. **Is documentation or evidence of business activity required to determine the status of an educational technology company for the purposes of Digital Delivery projects?**

Any evidence you can provide is helpful to boost the confidence of the evaluator that you are adhering to the parameters of the funding call.

4. **How does eCampusOntario's define a “short-duration learning opportunity?”**

Many project types in the EOIs are designed to provide institutions flexibility in designing a proposal response. For this reason, no definitions containing information such as hour ranges for courses, programs, or short-duration learning opportunities are provided. When preparing your proposal review the evaluation criteria, the purpose of the EOI, and consider value for money within the budget maximum.

5. **Considering some new programs take multiple years to receive approval, can the funding be used to cover one year of a program development process (e.g., from ideation to final proposal that would be ready to submit for approval)?**

Because the VLS funding is for a period of one year, we will be expecting final product (e.g., course content) as a deliverable that can be leveraged by other Ontario institutions

immediately within the year. Because of this requirement, you may choose to consider a program that is shorter and quicker to develop.





6. Are social media expenses, such as Facebook, Instagram and google ads, considered eligible expenses in the Digital Capacity - Collaborative Supports EOI?

Yes, social media expenses for research purposes would fall under "Other expenses associated with meeting the outcomes specified in this EOI" (p. 8, Digital Capacity - Collaborative Supports EOI).

7. If an institution is applying for more than one capacity area in the Digital Capacity – Targeted Supports EOI, is a separate application required for each area?

The Digital Capacity – Targeted Supports EOI is one application per institution. Applicants have the option to demonstrate need in a maximum of four capacity areas. Overlap in capacity areas is allowed (e.g., three instructional designers, one media developer).

8. Can there be collaboration with institutions outside of those mentioned in Appendix A In the Digital Content EOI?

For a proposal to be considered a collaborative submission in the Digital Content EOI (and eligible for the collaborative top-up), the collaboration must be between the institutions outlined in Appendix A and the collaboration should be specific and meaningful to that project, not adjacent or complimentary.

9. Relating to the Digital Delivery EOI, is there a minimum cash or in-kind value that needs to be adhered to?

No ratio of cash to in-kind is prescribed.

10. Is project management / program management support an eligible expense?

Yes, the Digital Content EOI includes project management in the list of eligible expenses (see p. 11)



11. Under Digital Content, will equal consideration be given to projects that are designed to support graduate students as projects that are designed to support undergraduate students?

The content developed under the Digital Content category is not specific to any type of student, level, course type (non-credit or credit) or program (non-credit or credit).

12. Can a technology company partner with more than one institution?

There are no restrictions in the EOIs regarding how many institutions work with the same company.

13. Under Digital Delivery, can the funding be used to purchase licences or limited access to a tool to test / pilot it?

Yes, if that is required to carry out the evaluation plan (see evaluation criteria). This could also be an in-kind contribution from the company.

14. **In the EOI for Digital Delivery, the description says that "Funding of up to \$100,000 is available for member institutions to conduct projects that engage an Ontario-based educational technology company" (p4) but the table on pg 5 shows a max budget of \$100-150k (also shown in the submission template). Which is correct?**

Thank you! This was an error that has been corrected. The document now reads "Funding of up to \$150,000 is available for member institutions to conduct projects that engage an Ontario-based educational technology company" in alignment with the table on page 5.

15. Are there any restrictions on how funded courses can be used (e.g., can they be used in funded programs)?

There are no restrictions on how the funded content is used by institutions after it has been created.



## Bundling

1. How does bundling within a single EOI, such as Digital Content for example, effect the submission?

You may bundle like proposals within a category (for example, Digital Content) under one submission. However, in order to ensure an efficient and effective evaluation process, the proposals will be evaluated as a single unit. The proposals will either be all successful, or not.

If you are submitting 10 proposals, based on the core content page limit of 4 pages per proposal, your bundled application should not exceed 40 pages. Pages dedicated to attestation and project plan are not included in this total. The same principle applies to the budget maximum. If you are submitting 4 courses at \$25,000 each, your total budget cannot exceed \$100,000.