

November 04, 2021

# Digital Content – XR Projects

## Expression of Interest

Virtual Learning Strategy

Funded by

November 04, 2021

# Digital Content – XR Projects

## Expression of Interest

Please review the attached document and submit your application electronically according to the guidelines provided by 12:00 pm EST on January 14, 2022.

Applications will not be accepted unless:

- submitted electronically according to the instructions. Submission by any other form such as email, facsimiles or paper copy mail will not be accepted.
- received by the date and time specified.

### Key dates

Date	Description
November 4, 2021	Expression of interest released
January 14, 2022 12:00pm EST	Closing Date and Time for Submissions.  Submissions received after the closing date and time will not be considered for evaluation.  <a href="#">Submit applications here</a>
March 2022	Successful applicants notified.  Please note: due to the volume of submissions received, unsuccessful applicants will not be notified. Feedback will not be provided.

*eCampusOntario will not be held responsible for documents that are not submitted in accordance with the above instructions*

*NOTE: Awards for this EOI are contingent upon funding from Ontario's Ministry of Colleges and Universities (MCU).*

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# Background

eCampusOntario is pleased to announce the release of the 2021-2022 Expression of Interest for Digital Content - XR Projects in support of successive funding provided to extend the impact of the Virtual Learning Strategy (VLS) [announced by the Government of Ontario on December 11, 2020](#).

The COVID-19 pandemic has had an unprecedented impact on Ontario's post-secondary education sector as institutions rapidly transitioned to remote delivery. During stakeholder consultations with the post-secondary sector and relevant stakeholders in summer 2020, the Ministry of Colleges and Universities heard about the need for virtual learning supports to enable access to high-quality learning. These results, together with the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario (HEQCO) report on digital learning and lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic, informed the launch of the Virtual Learning Strategy.

The [Virtual Learning Strategy](#) has been developed by the Province of Ontario to support expansion of and improvements to Ontario-based virtual learning programming. The VLS is designed to enable Ontario postsecondary (PSE) institutions to work together to realize three pillars:<sup>1</sup>

- ***Be the future: support the sector in driving high-quality, innovative hybrid learning.***  
Providing sector supports to create more and better options for learners and a continued co-existence with hybrid learning.
- ***Be a province of lifelong learners.***  
Enabling learners to access education, re-skilling and up-skilling to equip them for jobs of the future and meet the needs of the rapidly evolving labour market at any stage of their careers.
- ***Be a global leader.***  
Help Ontario's PSE institutions and educational technology companies access the global marketplace for virtual learning.

To date, the VLS has resulted in significant effort across the Ontario postsecondary education sector to advance the readiness to engage in digital by design learning with a 21st century lens. This historic \$50M investment in post-secondary education capacity is transforming virtual learning by providing seed capital with a substantial return on investment in the form of greater capacity to engage, in both domestic and international online learning markets, through development of shared content assets, and through support for a growing Ontario educational technology sector.

The [Q0 Focus Report Launching the VLS](#) explores how the VLS is supporting ongoing and future virtual learning needs at all Ontario Indigenous institutes, colleges, and universities.

The future of learning is the future of work, and this future is hybrid. Learners can expect a combination of virtual and in-person teaching, just as many workers will divide their time between the office and working from home. The future of postsecondary education (PSE) is about options to enable this future, providing options for learners to learn when and where they want to. The future state of Ontario PSE is one in which hybrid education is the norm.

The return on the VLS investment is the enhanced capacity of our sector to support learners with options to access education and lifelong learning. The VLS heralds a shift to flexible learning that directly contributes to the growth of the skilled workforce for Ontario through expanded virtual learning opportunities for all learners. New, innovative approaches and business models will lead to reduced costs across the sector and for learners, while promoting more sustainable business models for post-secondary institutions via increased collaboration.

The Ontario Government's continued support of the VLS with this newest package of strategic funding signals strong sector commitment to building more and better virtual learning supports to enable access to high-quality learning that is collaborative, learner-driven, and digitally designed.

The [Virtual Learning Strategy \(VLS\)](#) supports learners in all aspects of the educational experience by recognizing the critical importance of the social and emotional wellbeing of learners, faculty, staff and communities within and surrounding our postsecondary system. To achieve this the VLS will:

- Prioritize the social contexts of learning, including mental health, equity, decolonization, diversity, inclusion, and accessibility.
- Focus on learner-centered design and engagement to support the development of content which has the learner and their experience at the center of every project.
- Promote learner engagement and social cohesion for students.
- Support the development of collaborative virtual learning assets and content for re-use across the Ontario postsecondary education system, including in Indigenous and French languages.

# Description

The Digital Content – XR Projects EOI is designed to support member institutions to partner with Ontario educational technology companies to utilize XR to create innovative virtual learning content utilizing these technologies. Projects can test technologies and provide support for wider market distribution while producing content for use in Ontario postsecondary institutions. Technologies should be at a sufficient stage (TRL 7 or greater) in order to pilot test or otherwise deploy in an Ontario Indigenous institute, college or university. Pilot testing or deployment should include appropriate evaluation so as to provide the company with pedagogical proof-points for developing markets for the company’s technology.

This EOI responds directly to the VLS pillar Be a global leader: Help Ontario’s PSE institutions and educational technology companies access the global marketplace for virtual learning.

Funding of up to \$150,000 is available for projects that engage an Ontario-based educational technology company.

Industry partners are required to provide a 1:1 match for grants, in cash or a combination of cash and in-kind contributions.

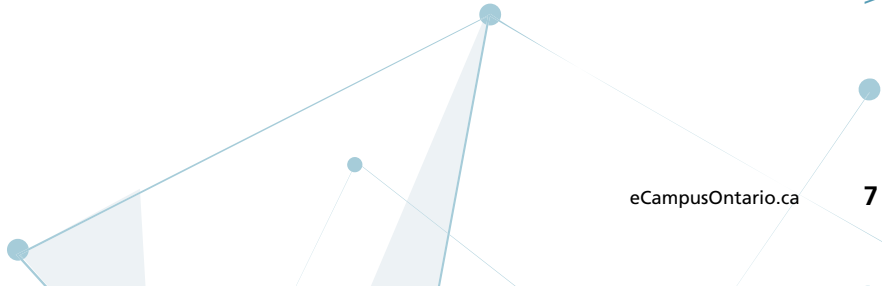
Funding is available as follows:

Project Type and TRL	Funding available and purpose
Prototype Testing (TRL 7): Prototype ready for demonstration in an appropriate operational environment Prototype at planned operational level and is ready for demonstration in an operational environment. Activities include prototype field testing.	\$25,000 - \$50,000 Small scale prototype testing of technology currently under development; could be testing of specific features independent of wider system, including content authoring and use case evaluation of learning context and outcomes.
Technology Demonstration (TRL 8): Actual technology completed and qualified through tests and demonstrations Technology has been proven to work in its final form and under expected conditions. Activities include developmental testing and evaluation of whether it will meet operational requirements.	\$50,000 - \$100,000 Larger scale testing of technology in stable form, full feature set deployment with content developed, deployed, and evaluated

Project Type and TRL	Funding available and purpose
<p>Pilot and Market Planning (TRL 9): Actual technology proven through successful deployment in an operational setting</p> <p>Actual application of the technology in its final form and under real-life conditions, such as those encountered in operational tests and evaluations. Activities include using the innovation under operational conditions.</p>	<p>\$100,000 - \$150,000</p> <p>Final technology pilot with evaluation and market planning with content developed, deployed, and evaluated.</p>

Funding is intended to provide postsecondary institutions with resources to access Ontario-made educational technology to produce high quality virtual learning content using XR, and to conduct evaluation with learners and faculty.

Proposed projects should be oriented to provide Ontario educational technology companies with a competitive advantage or other significant benefits. Projects should demonstrate a clear pedagogical rationale or purpose, and an evaluation plan to demonstrate effectiveness.



# Anticipated Timeline

Projects are expected to begin in early April 2022 with all final reporting for selected projects completed by March 10, 2023. No exceptions will be made to this timeline, and it is the responsibility of the successful applicant to ensure these timelines are upheld. Successful proponents will be required to provide regular project reporting as a condition of funding, including a final report to be submitted before the end of the fiscal year. Payments will be withheld if reports and deliverables are not received according to this schedule.

Projects may be concluded at any point during the fiscal year, with an understanding that certain reports throughout the fiscal year will still be required. Receipt of a Final Report and deliverable will trigger payment of remaining funds.

Timeline	Description
November 4, 2021	Expression of Interest released
November 4, 2021 – January 14, 2022 (12:00pm EST)	Applicants develop collaborative partnerships and prepare applications according to EOI criteria and requirements  eCampusOntario begins accepting questions to <a href="mailto:vls@ecampusontario.ca">vls@ecampusontario.ca</a> . Individual responses will not be provided. Questions and responses will be collated and posted publicly on December 3, 2021
November 10, 2021 12:00pm EST	Technical Briefing on the Virtual Learning Strategy <a href="#">Register here</a>
November 12, 2021, 12:00pm EST	Technical Briefing on the Virtual Learning Strategy <a href="#">Register here</a>
November 23, 2021 12:00pm EST	How to submit an online application: step by step <a href="#">Register here</a>



Timeline	Description
November 24, 2021 5:00pm EST	Last day to submit questions to <a href="mailto:vls@ecampusontario.ca">vls@ecampusontario.ca</a>
December 3, 2021	Questions and responses posted on <a href="#">eCampusOntario website</a>
January 14, 2022, 12:00pm EST	Deadline for application submission <a href="#">Submit applications here</a>
January – February 2022	Evaluation process
March 2022	Successful applicants notified
Fall 2022	How to select a license for your work (Registration date to come)

*\*Applicants are encouraged to attend or view a recording of any of the three online information sessions offered. All sessions will be recorded and posted for asynchronous viewing.*

## General Requirements

### Eligibility

Eligibility is limited to the following organizations: All Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology, Indigenous Institutes (the nine Indigenous Institutes in Ontario recognized in regulation under the Indigenous Institutes Act, 2017), Ontario publicly-assisted universities, and the Michener Institute are eligible to apply for VLS funding. Affiliates and Federates of Member Institutions are eligible to apply in partnership with a Member Institution. Please see Appendix A for a list of institutions who are eligible to apply. All funding decisions are subject to final approvals from MCU.

## Submission requirements

- **Online submission only:** Applications will only be accepted via the online submission form as a machine-readable PDF format: do not scan the document to create the PDF. Electronic signatures are required. Applications submitted by any other means such as email, facsimile or paper copy mail will not be accepted.
- **No late applications accepted:** Applications submitted after the date and time specified will not be accepted .
- **Template used:** Applications must be submitted using the template provided in Appendix B for efficient and fair evaluation. Applications that exceed the specified character and page limits will not be accepted.
- **Signed Attestation of Minimum Requirements:** All application submissions must include a signed attestation agreeing to the minimum requirements outlined. Applications without a signed attestation form will not be accepted. Electronic signatures are required. Attestation must be completed and signed by a representative that can bind the institution (for example, as Associate / Vice Provost Academic).

## Minimum project requirements

Minimum project requirements are listed in Attestation form provided in Appendix B. Each application must be accompanied by a signed Attestation which confirms the following. If an application does not meet minimum project requirements it will not be evaluated.

- **Eligibility:** All Colleges of Applied Arts and Technology, Indigenous Institutes (the nine Indigenous Institutes in Ontario recognized in regulation under the Indigenous Institutes Act, 2017), Ontario publicly-assisted universities, and the Michener Institute are eligible to apply for VLS funding. Affiliates and Federates of Member Institutions are eligible to apply in partnership with a Member Institution. Please see Appendix A for a list of institutions who are eligible to apply. All funding decisions are subject to final approvals from MCU.

- **Licensing of Final Product:** Final product should be released with the appropriate license which may allow others to freely retain, revise, reuse, remix and/or redistribute the content. For Open Educational Resources (OERs) applicants must ensure that all content (text, images, etc.) is released under an open license or used with copyright permissions.
- **Retention of Final Product:** All final products will be submitted to the eCampusOntario Library. This includes all source files and/or editable files used in creating the resource (including any multimedia files) to easily enable further remixing and modification where permitted by the license.
- **Acknowledgment of Provincial Funding:** Acknowledge Government of Ontario and eCampusOntario in all communications regarding the project.
- **Evaluation of Project Outcomes:** Agree to participate fully in any evaluation process regarding the initiative (for example, interview, survey).
- **Digital Standards:** All applications will prioritize use of tools and technology that are compliant with appropriate standards for openness and interoperability to support adoption and adaptation across multiple platforms that include W3C standards. Applicants will also prioritize use of tools and technology that demonstrate user-centered design; continuous evaluation and improvement; effective use of data; protection of security; and privacy of personal information.
- **Accessibility:** All content produced under this initiative must be in accessible formats in accordance with the requirements of the [Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 \(Ontario\)](#).
- **Adherence to Applicable Laws:** All products must be in compliance with all applicable legislation, including the Copyright Act (Canada).
- **Records of Expenditures:** Funding Program project agreements will require successful applicants to maintain appropriate records of expenditures (e.g. records of salaries, expenses, etc.)

## Project Innovation: Building on Success

eCampusOntario is keen to encourage our members to continue to innovate and collaborate on the creation of high-quality virtual learning. Project teams are encouraged to review the virtual learning content created through the first round of VLS EOI funding (released in January 2021) and to utilize, reuse, adapt and otherwise use this content in submissions for this second round of VLS funding. Submissions are to avoid duplication of these projects which can be searched in the following database:

[January 2021 VLS Project Database](#)

## Eligible Expenses

Examples of proposed expenditures:

- Subject matter expertise (including faculty release time).
- Instructional designer / educational developer / media developer.
- Learner compensation for co-design activities.
- Project management.
- Costs associated with accessibility, sourcing open content, copy editing, technology, media production, labour market research, environmental scans or other analysis as required.
- Reasonable costs for purchasing equipment. All equipment costs must be directly associated with the project proposed and justified appropriately in the budget.
- Other expenses associated with meeting the outcomes specified in this EOI. Due to the open nature of this EOI there may be expenditure types not listed in the examples above that may be considered. Please submit a question to [vl@ecampusontario.ca](mailto:vl@ecampusontario.ca) by November 24, 2021, to discuss these prior to your application.

Funding cannot duplicate any existing funding provided for projects (e.g., provincial/ federal grants).

All expenses and procurement of expenses must adhere to internal finance policies at your institution, as well as the Broader Public Service Procurement Directive.

# Application Process

- Review the Digital Content XR EOI document and criteria.
- Select eligible project type.
- Complete template provided. Do not exceed the specified page limit. Incomplete submissions or submissions that exceed the page limits will not be considered.

# Evaluation Process

Following receipt of applications, evaluators will score each submission against the rubric provided in Appendix C of this EOI.

- Each application will be evaluated by two independent reviewers. All reviewers will be screened for conflict of interest at the application level.
- Where possible, at least one evaluator will have knowledge of, or experience with digital learning and digital content.

If applications are received that would be substantively the same, only one application will be funded—the one receiving the higher score (assuming it meets the criteria).

All applications will be assessed according to the Evaluation Rubric provided (see Appendix C) and the high-level weightings below:

Criteria	Weight (% of total)
Impact	45%
Collaboration	20%
Logistics	35%

# Appendix A

## Eligibility

### eCampusOntario Member Institutions

First Nations Technical Institute (FNTI)  
Kenjgewin Teg  
Seven Generations Education Institute  
Six Nations Polytechnic

Algoma University  
Brock University  
Carleton University  
Lakehead University  
Laurentian University  
McMaster University  
Nipissing University  
OCAD University  
Queen's University  
Royal Military College  
Ryerson University  
Trent University  
L'Université de l'Ontario français  
University of Guelph  
University of Ontario Institute of Technology  
University of Ottawa  
University of Toronto  
University of Waterloo  
University of Windsor  
Western University  
Wilfrid Laurier University  
York University

Algonquin College  
Collège Boréal  
Cambrian College  
Canadore College  
Centennial College  
Conestoga College  
Confederation College  
Durham College  
Fanshawe College  
George Brown College  
Georgian College  
Humber College  
Collège La Cité  
Lambton College  
Loyalist College  
Mohawk College  
Niagara College  
Northern College  
Sault College  
Seneca College  
Sheridan College  
S.S. Fleming College  
St. Clair College  
St. Lawrence College

### Non-Member Indigenous Institutes

Anishinabek Education Institute  
Iohahi:io Akwesasne Adult Education  
Centre Oshki-Pimache-O-Win Education  
& Training Institute

Ogwehoweh Skills and Trades Training  
Centre Shingwauk Kinooomaage Gamig

### University Health Network

Michener Institute of Education at  
University Health Network

## Appendix C – Evaluation Rubric

Category (%)	Subcategory (%) Description	Elements	Incomplete (0)	Insufficient (1)	Approaching (2)	Meeting (3)	Exceeding (4)
Impact (45%)	Evidence of Need (15%) Explain how the project objectives align with identified needs.	Project Justification (5%)	The project justification is not provided.	The project justification is not clear or poorly articulated.	The project justification is partially described, but some questions remain.	The project justification is clear.	The project justification is well-supported with evidence of need.
		Project Objectives (5%)	The project objectives are not provided.	The project objectives are not clear or poorly articulated.	The project objectives are partially described, but some questions remain.	The project objectives are clear.	The project objectives are framed using SMART criteria (i.e., specific, measurable, attainable, relevant, and time-bound).
		Alignment between project justification, objectives, & funding goals (5%)	The alignment between project justification, objectives, & funding goals is not provided.	The alignment between project justification, objectives, & funding goals is not clear or poorly articulated.	The alignment between project justification, objectives, & funding goals is partially described, but some questions remain.	The alignment between project justification, objectives, & funding goals is clear.	The alignment between project justification, objectives, & funding goals includes how the project objectives will address identified needs.
	Evidence of Impact (15%) Provide a plan for sustaining and measuring project impact over time.	Project Impacts (5%)	The project impacts are not provided.	The project impacts are not clear or poorly articulated.	The project impacts are identified, but some questions remain.	The project impacts are clearly aligned to the project objectives.	Evidence is provided that the project objectives will lead to project impacts.
		Impact Evaluation (5%)	The impact evaluation plan is not provided.	The impact evaluation plan is not clear or poorly articulated.	The impact evaluation plan is outlined, but some questions remain.	The impact evaluation plan will clearly provide evidence of impact.	The impact evaluation plan includes mechanisms for robust tracking of meaningful outcomes.
		Sustainability Plan (5%)	The sustainability plan is not provided.	The sustainability plan is not clear or poorly articulated.	The sustainability plan is outlined, but some questions remain.	The sustainability plan includes a clear description of how impact will be maintained over time.	The sustainability plan includes a description of how the outcomes of the project will be leveraged and scaled to meet emerging and future needs.
	Equity (15%) Describe how the project will incorporate principles of equity, decolonization, diversity, and inclusion (i.e., AODA compliance) into project activities, outcomes, and/or outputs.	<sup>2</sup> EDDI in practice (5%)	The EDDI practice plan is not provided.	The EDDI practice plan is not clear or poorly articulated.	The EDDI practice plan is outlined, but some questions remain.	The EDDI practice plan clearly fosters an equitable, decolonized, diverse, inclusive, and accessible work environment for project teams.	The EDDI practice plan reduces inequities.
		<sup>2</sup> EDDI in Project Design (5%) <sup>1</sup>	The EDDI project design plan is not provided.	The EDDI project design plan is not clear or poorly articulated.	The EDDI project design plan is outlined, but some questions remain.	The EDDI project design plan clearly integrates EDDI from conception to completion.	The EDDI project design plan reduces inequities.
		<sup>3</sup> AODA compliance (5%)	A plan for ensuring AODA compliance is not provided.	A plan for ensuring AODA compliance is not clear or poorly articulated.	The plan for AODA compliance is partial, incomplete, and/or some questions remain.	The plan for AODA compliance ensures all products under this initiative will be in accessible formats and in accordance with the requirements of the AODA.	N/A

## Appendix C – Evaluation Rubric

Category (%)	Subcategory (%) Description	Elements	Incomplete (0)	Insufficient (1)	Approaching (2)	Meeting (3)	Exceeding (4)	
Collaboration (20%)	<b>Collaborative Design (20%)</b>  For each team member, provide: 1. Firstname, Lastname 2. Institution(s), Organization(s) and/ or Affiliation(s) 3. Job(s) and/or Title(s) 4. Project role(s) and contribution(s) to the project 5. Description of how their lived experience and/ or expertise will contribute to the objectives of the project	<b>Team member Role(s) (10%)</b>	Team roles and contributions are not provided for all members.	Team roles and contributions are not clear or poorly articulated.	Team roles and contributions somewhat align to the project objectives, but some questions remain.	Team roles and contributions clearly align to the project objectives.	Team roles and contributions clearly align to the project objects and support the sustainability plan.	
		Collaboration(s) / Partnership(s) (10%)	<b>Use for:</b> • Digital Content Targeted • Capacity Collaborative (Marketing)	Institution(s), Organization(s), and/or Affiliation(s) are not provided for all team members.	Project team limited to a single applicant (i.e., there is no project team).	Project team is limited to a single institution.	Project team includes inter-institutional collaboration (i.e., between two or more colleges, universities, and/or Indigenous Institutes).	Inter-institutional collaborations are clearly included in the sustainability plan.
			<b>Use for:</b> • Digital Content - XR	Institution(s), Organization(s), and/or Affiliation(s) are not provided for all team members.	Collaboration does not include any Ontario EdTech companies.	Collaboration includes a single institution working with one Ontario EdTech company with a partial or unclear commitment to match funding.	Collaboration includes a single institution working with one Ontario EdTech company with a clear commitment to match funding (cash and/or in-kind contributions).	Collaboration includes multiple institutions working with one or more Ontario EdTech companies with a clear commitment to match funding (cash and/or in-kind contributions).

Category (%)	Subcategory (%) Description	Elements	Incomplete (0)	Insufficient (1)	Approaching (2)	Meeting (3)	Exceeding (4)
Logistics (35%)	<b>Budget (20%)</b>  Provide a detailed budget that explains itemized eligible expenses using the template provided.	<b>Meeting Budget Requirements (10%)</b>	The budget is not provided.	The budget does not follow the template provided.	The budget only includes eligible expenses.	The budget does not exceed maximums permitted for eligible expenses.	The budget does not exceed maximums permitted for eligible expenses and includes in kind contributions.
		<b>Aligning Budget to Objectives (10%)</b>	The budget is not provided.	The budget is incomplete (e.g., missing descriptions for itemized eligible expenses).	The budget explains all itemized expenses, but some questions remain.	The budget clearly explains all itemized expenses.	The budget clearly explains how all itemized expenses align to the project plan and objectives.
	<b>Project Plan (15%)</b>  Outline project milestones using the template provided.		The project plan is not provided.	The project plan does not follow the template provided.	The project plan includes milestones that progress the overall project to be completed before February 28, 2023, but some questions remain (e.g., feasibility).	The project plan includes milestones that progress the overall project to be completed before February 28, 2023.	The project plan accounts for variability and unforeseen challenges to ensure the overall project is completed before February 28, 2023.



# Endnotes

1. See <https://news.ontario.ca/en/backgrounder/59593/a-made-in-ontario-virtual-learning-strategy-for-postsecondary-education> for additional context.
2. To learn more about fostering and integrating EDDI into practice and design please refer to the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council Guide to Addressing Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion Considerations in Partnership Grant Applications: <https://www.sshrc-crsh.gc.ca/funding-financement/apply-demanded/guides/partnership-edi-guide-partenariats-guide-edi-eng.aspx>
3. To learn more about AODA Compliance please refer to [Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, 2005 \(Ontario\)](#)

[vls.ecampusontario.ca](https://vls.ecampusontario.ca)

