

## REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS



# Unlocking the Career Development Value within Experiential Learning

May 2020

## Deadlines

Request for Proposals released: May 4, 2020

Intent to Submit: June 12, 2020 [apx 1.5 months later]

*(submit your name, contact details and a note confirming your intent to submit a response to this RFP to riz@ceric.ca)*

Proposal Deadline: August 6, 2020 [apx 7 weeks after intent]

Anticipated Award of Contract: October 15, 2020 [apx 2.5 months after deadline]

Anticipated Project Initiation: late October, 2020 [apx 1.5 weeks after award]

## 1. Introduction

The need to effectively bridge the gap between the classroom and the world of work has ignited interest in experiential learning. The media is rife with articles around employers being concerned that graduates are not prepared for the workforce. There is growing optimism that experiential opportunities will introduce learners to the notions of work and the workplace, and in turn expose them to a variety of skills development opportunities. We often see a tie-in between what a learner experiences in the workplace and learns in the classroom, but not necessarily in terms of employability skills. Some academics are now identifying that they need to help students understand how what they're learning is related to the workforce. Yet, with a recent proliferation of experiential learning opportunities available at all levels of education as well as outside formal education, it is not clear how programs are connecting experiences to career management skills, specifically combining direct experience with focused reflection.

Understanding what elements of reflective practice are beneficial to career development success may be valuable to learner, education at all levels, employers and community alike. But to understand this, one must have an appreciation of how experiential learning opportunities currently connect with career development and whether that connection is in fact intentional, and develop an understanding of which kinds of experiential learning opportunities will assist or not assist learners with their career development.

CERIC is issuing this Request for Proposal (RFP). The purpose of this national initiative is to a) gain a better understanding of the intersections between career development and experiential learning; b) determine how and where gaps can be

best filled; and c) develop an easily accessible resource that supports building reflective practice into an Experiential Learning program and facilitating (greater) awareness of using such practices to enhance EL for the career management of program participants; and d) highlight the beneficial value of reflective practice inherent in career development, how this can enhance the intrinsic value of experiential learning, regardless of setting, and how this can be incorporated into current programs.

## 2. Background

CERIC is a national charitable organization that advances career development. CERIC works with a multi-sectoral group of career development communities including those individuals working within K – 12, post-secondary and civil society. Career development is the lifelong process of managing learning, work, leisure, and transitions in order to move toward a personally determined and evolving preferred future. There are a number of factors that influence career development, including interests, abilities, values, personality, background, and circumstances. Career development encompasses the development of the whole person and is more than just deciding on a major or a job; It really is a lifelong process, meaning that throughout life a person changes, situations change, and every individual must continually make career and life decisions.

Experiential learning (EL) is learning that is based on learners being directly involved in a learning experience rather than their being recipients of ready-made content in the form of lectures. It is inductive, action-oriented, and learner centred with emphasis on the process of learning rather than the product. With experiential learning, knowledge is created from the combinations of grasping and transforming experience. Experiential learning opportunities may include: land-based learning programs, co-op placements, internships, field experience, industry/community research projects, interactive simulations, labs, performance-based learning, service learning, applied research projects, campus entrepreneurship/incubators, and case studies to name a few. The experiential learning model first developed by Kolb and Fry (1974) emphasizes learning through an iterative cycle immersing the learner in an experience and then encouraging reflection about the experience to develop new skills, new attitudes, or new ways of thinking. The intersection of career development and experiential learning provides a range of opportunities designed to assist the learner make meaning from their experiences and education situated within the exploration of their career options and gain learning based work or volunteer experience.

Yet, is this actually happening in practice? Are the linkages between experiential learning and career development sufficiently clear? Are EL programs treating

reflection differentially: sometimes consciously or unconsciously embracing it, sometimes devoid of it, and sometimes disconnected from it?

CERIC's interest in this project is to develop an easily accessible (online or downloadable) resource that supports building/enhancing reflective practice (for career development) into an Experiential Learning program for anyone currently delivering or considering delivering such a program (eg. existing regional work such as <http://experientiallearning.ca/en/examples>.)

The resource may be comprised of practical tools and reference materials, each with an intersection with career development and its intrinsic reflective practices, and may include sample materials, practice exercises, sample assessments, summary of best or promising practices, key insights from any data gathering/research (including how various/different reflective practices could be utilized across scenarios such as mentoring or job shadowing), and other relevant strategies and tools.

### **3. Purpose/Intent**

The purpose of this RFP is to invite interested resource developers to submit a detailed proposal that will enable CERIC to select the appropriate organization/team that it determines is best suited to complete the project according to the enclosed criteria.

### **4. Scope of Work**

In addition to the completion of the five deliverables noted below, each proposal will include details of the activities/methodologies to be used for the following components, each with linkages between reflection and Experiential Learning in service of career development ( i.e. self-assessment, understanding one's interests and values, identifying skills developed, etc.):

- Providing a landscape of where Experiential Learning is happening in Canada in so far as reflection is being used to further a career development objective and understanding the degree to which this is being used to unlock career development value within Experiential Learning by:
  - Identifying models of those who use reflective practices to turn on the career value in their Experiential Learning programs (ie. where and how reflection on Experiential Learning is taking place in an intentional way to meet a career development objective such as understanding skills, interests, values, etc.), how they are doing this and what they have learned

- Determining the level of awareness of the use of reflection by participants within Experiential Learning as it relates to the career development value of the activity (do participants in EL realize they are being reflective?)
- Identifying any barriers to incorporating reflection in service of career development within Experiential Learning
- Providing a snapshot of what learners are reflecting on in terms of their career development and how learners are being guided in the reflection process
- Providing an inventory of which reflective tools are being used to further career development objectives of the learner, and in which settings
- Techniques for identifying and examining the short and long term impact of reflection on EL
  - Identify the impacts of Experiential Learning that could be amplified with career development reflection lens (ie. are EL participants aware of and can identify workplace essential skills? does it enable EL participants to make a better skills match between what they've learned in the program and what kind of jobs they're moving toward?)
  - Document where reflective practices enhance career value to the end user and community (including showcasing the value and benefits of reflection and including reflective practices with EL opportunities)
  - Determine the linkages between the value of reflection, career development and employer needs
  - Determine what has happened to the skills developed as a result of the Experiential Learning program (are they appropriate, necessary, have they evolved as a result of the experiential learning?)
- Approaches for developing an accessible and culturally inclusive resource that facilitates (greater) awareness of using reflective practices to enhance EL for the career management of the participant – criteria or conditions for what is to be included and why
- Strategies for implementation, evaluation and subsequent modification of the resource and tools

## 5. Target Audience

The primary audience for this resource is anyone in any sector (secondary and post-secondary education, community based or private sectors) who is interested in embedding a career development component into the delivery of an Experiential Learning Program and activating its career value.

## 6. Deliverables

There are five main deliverables for the project:

- A Background Report with literature review on the EL landscape (where Experiential Learning is happening in Canada in so far as reflection is being used to further a career development objective), success factors and impacts completed by December 31, 2020
- Easily accessible (online or downloadable) and culturally inclusive resource submitted by April 30, 2021 that supports building/enhancing reflective practice into an Experiential Learning program for anyone currently delivering or considering delivering such a program (may include sample materials, practice exercises, sample assessments, summary of best or promising practices, key insights from any data gathering/research and other relevant strategies and tools).
- Knowledge dissemination through: webinars for Experiential Learning program staff across different sectors; presentation at two conferences (e.g. CACEE, CEWIL, OCEA) in addition to a 50 minute presentation on key findings at Cannexus in January 2022
- Augment literature list developed by CERIC: <https://ceric.ca/wpdm-package/experiential-learning-and-career-development/>
- Evaluation report on the use, utility and impact of the resource after 4 months and any recommended changes required as a result

CERIC will own all copyrights to the deliverables.

## 7. Budget and Duration

The range of funding available to conduct the research and provide the five deliverables above is \$30,000 - \$50,000.

### *Travel*

Travel and registration costs to attend and present at Cannexus 2022 are to be included in the financial proposal.

### *Duration*

Timelines will be negotiated with the successful applicant. Ideally, the background report, presentation of findings and an English or French language, copy-edited resource can be completed in 6 – 8 months. The project duration should also allow for an additional 4 months for follow-up and evaluation of the resource.

## 8. Eligibility Requirements

This RFP is open to all researchers/resource developers, consultants or contractors residing in Canada. The successful candidate will have strong resource development credentials and preferably previous exposure and understanding of EL and career development.

Applicants are requested to submit an electronic copy (in Microsoft Word or PDF format) of their proposal which is no longer than 30 pages by the deadline above.

Your proposal should convey the following:

- Your understanding of the scope of work;
- The proposed approach including activities/methodology (that is inclusive of diversity of perspectives and language);
- Your level of ethical awareness and capacity related to the subject matter and how you will treat any ethical issues which might arise from this project given your methodology;
- A work plan and timelines, identifying the level of effort required in relation to milestone/target dates;
- A detailed budget;
- If you are submitting on behalf of a team of individuals, the capacity of the team, which outlines the experience as well as delineates the roles and responsibilities of the team members; and,
- Possible challenges and opportunities envisioned in undertaking this work.

In addition, the following elements are mandatory and will not be counted towards the 30 page maximum:

- An overview of your relevant resource development and work experience;
- Your current curriculum vitae/resume, including relevant publications; and,
- A list of 3 references that can be contacted to discuss your relevant experience.

## **Inquiries**

All inquiries, proposal submissions and other communications are to be directed to:

Riz Ibrahim, Executive Director  
CERIC  
Foundation House  
2 St Clair Avenue East, Suite 300, Toronto, Ontario, M4T 2T5

CERIC reserves the right not to move forward with this project.

## **RATED CRITERIA**

Proponents are asked to include in the proposal the information that is requested in each of the areas listed in this section. Please limit the information provided to what is specifically requested in this RFP.

### **A Understanding the Requirements – Total Points = 15**

Each proponent should include a 1-2-page summary of their understanding of the scope of work specified in this RFP. This content should be expressed in the proponents own words and not simply recite the requirements specified in this document. The summary should demonstrate the proponents understanding of the linkages between reflection and Experiential Learning in service of career development.

### **B Proposed Approach– Total Points = 30**

Each proponent should describe the approach and/or process proposed to address the scope of work and deliverables requirements of this RFP (See Sections 4 and 6). The proposal should outline the proponents approach to the following:

- a) Project management
- b) Needs assessment and market research
- c) Resource design strategy
- d) Stakeholder engagement
- e) Collaboration
- f) Budget allocation
- g) Risk mitigation associated with: project scope; stakeholder resistance; ethical considerations that may arise; treatment of data and confidentiality; compliance with appropriate privacy legislation; and, turnover of internal and/or consultant personnel.



The proposal should include any notable methodologies, innovative solutions, tools and techniques, and the proponent's respective suitability to this project. Each proponent should also provide a high-level workplan that reflects the proposed approach/process and demonstrates your ability to meet the schedule requirements for this project, including any applicable milestones.

### **C Demonstrated Expertise – Total Points = 20**

Each proponent should provide the following in its proposal:

- a) A description of the services the proponent has previously delivered and/or is currently delivering demonstrating the proponent's experience, with an emphasis on experience relevant to the Deliverables indicated in sections 4 and 6 – Scope of Work and Deliverables, and particularly as it relates to: providing a landscape of where Experiential Learning is happening in Canada in so far as reflection is being used to further a career development objective and understanding the degree to which this is being used to unlock career development value within Experiential Learning; and, designing, development, implementation and evaluation of an easily accessible and culturally inclusive resource;
- b) Describe any similarities or differences from this project.

### **D Proponent References – Total Points = 10**

Each proponent is requested to provide **three references** for any work done by themselves in the past three years that is similar in nature, complexity, and size to the requirements specified in this RFP.

- a) Provide the name of each project reference, along with his/her phone number and email address.
- b) Identify the size of the projects, the extent of involvement, and results achieved.

Our review teams will only evaluate three references. If more than this number are provided by the proponent, only the first three (3) listed in the proposal will be evaluated.

### **E Knowledge Dissemination – Total Points = 10**

Each proponent should provide the following in its proposal:

- a) Experience with conducting webinars and live presentations (with links if possible), with a brief description of the scope, reach and impact
- b) Examples of reports or other written passages (via links)

**F Evaluation – Total Points = 10**

Each proponent should provide the following in its proposal:

- c) Experience with conducting project monitoring and evaluation
- d) Examples of evaluation reports or other written summary passages (via links)

**G Added Value – Total Points = 5**

“Added value” is the realization of additional benefits beyond the inherent worth of the requested goods or services. Describe the aspect(s) of your proposal that would result in added value for this project as related to this RFP.