DIGITAL

Program Guide

DIGITAL LEARNING LAB

CareerTech

Funded by Canada's Global Innovation Cluster Program

Last Updated: September 12, 2024

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Introduction

DIGITAL is looking to encourage the development and proliferation of tools and technologies to advance the practice of workforce development. This will benefit a diverse range of stakeholders, including employers, workers (current employees, job seekers, job switchers), tools providers, training providers and decision-makers.

Career technology (CareerTech) solutions include EdTech and are focused on employer and job-seeker needs. These tools aim to bridge the gap in preparing workers to enter and thrive in high-growth and future-proof careers while helping companies fill and hire needed positions. By leveraging technology to advance workforce development, CareerTech aligns with Digital Learning Lab's mission and priorities, ensuring Canadians can get job-ready faster and more cost-effectively in an evolving economy.

By encouraging high industry co-investment and close collaboration with employers, the program ensures that the solutions developed create real value and meet the demands of the employment market.

Successful projects will leverage technologies to:

- advance the practice of workforce development through innovation;
- link ecosystem actors and beneficiaries to bridge the gap between demand and supply; and
- advance equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI). This includes Indigenous Peoples, racialized persons, women, youth, people with disabilities, immigrants and 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals.

Areas of Interest

DIGITAL will co-invest up to $10 million of funds, alongside industry, that will result in roughly $20 million of new investment in the proliferation, adoption and impact of innovative CareerTech digital solutions in Canada. By co-investing in ambitious projects that address global workforce development challenges, Canadian companies will find the talent they need to succeed, scale and widen their impact and gain market adoption of CareerTech solutions within Canada and in international markets. Concurrently, thousands of Canadians will be able to access critical learning and job-placement supports and opportunities.

We aim to help reduce the cost and time required to be job-ready in the digital economy, while supporting employers to find the talent they need to succeed. Our areas of

technology interest within the CareerTech stream are aligned with the categories of a pan-Canadian Rapid Skilling System, and include:

1. **Labour Market Information:** Insights into local and national industry demands help create effective workforce solutions for sectors with high demand.
2. **Skills Assessments**: Skills assessments and competency frameworks act like a roadmap, helping learners identify their strengths and opportunities for growth, guiding them on the best route to acquire the skills needed for the job market.
3. **Skills-Based Training:** Skill or competency-based training accurately targets the evolving needs of industries, enabling individuals to continuously adapt and learn new skills required by a fast-changing work environment.
4. **Credentials:** As the number of credentials available to learners' surges, consistent quality standards and metrics is the key to ensuring their portability and relevance for learners and employers alike.
5. **Job Placement:** To land, retain, or advance in a job is the ultimate goal, supported by employers adopting skills-based practices in both hiring and career development initiatives. This can include work-integrated learning placements, apprenticeships, and job-matching supports.

Across all streams within our Digital Learning Lab, DIGITAL prioritizes projects that support the training and placement of underrepresented learners, employees and job-seekers. This includes Indigenous Peoples, racialized persons, women, youth, people with disabilities, immigrants, and 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals.

Target Outcomes

Investing in CareerTech will enable Canadian employers to efficiently access a skilled talent pool tailored to their needs, while empowering individuals with the specific skills needed in today's job market. Projects in this stream will bridge the gap between industry requirements and workforce capabilities, ensuring a robust and adaptive economy ready to meet the challenges of the future.

Collectively, successful projects will form a high-profile CareerTech ecosystem that will:

- result in the commercialization, proliferation and adoption of new and innovative Canadian-owned CareerTech solutions;
- provide digitally-enabled skilling and work placement resources and opportunities for learners and job-seekers;
- Increase collaboration, clarity and efficiency of the CareerTech offer in Canada for both workers and employers;

- support the scaling of high potential, growth oriented Canadian technology companies; and
- spur a collective $10 million or more of matching investment from industry and other organizations.

Project Eligibility

DIGITAL will evaluate and select projects proposals from consortia that aim to develop and commercialize career technology solutions with customers and address well-defined problems in the Areas of Interest described above.

Projects may be a combination of one or more of the following:
- "follow-on" opportunities to support the commercialization, adoption and propagation of career technology solutions that were developed with prior investment from DIGITAL;
- early commercialization and adoption of existing Canadian-owned career technology solutions in new target markets (i.e., international expansion, adjacent markets);
- improvements or new developments to address verified product/market fit gaps for the purposes of commercialization and adoption of the career technology solution, and;
- creation of new consortia and networks to support proliferation and impact of the career technology solution.

Eligibility criteria

Consortia	- Participants: - A minimum of three organizations (excluding DIGITAL) in the consortium contributing in a meaningful way - Project must be industry-led (see appendix 3) - Project partners should include in the consortium organizations representing: - customers for the solution developed - research or post-secondary academic institutions

	- Employment or community organization - Project Partners must be DIGITAL Members or Associates at the time of application submission[1] - DIGITAL provides co-investment only to Members[2] ("**Eligible Members**") in good standing[3] that are: - for-profit organizations; - not-for-profit organizations; - non-federal Crown corporations whose funding is derived from commercial activities; or - indigenous organizations.
Co-investment	- The funds available from DIGITAL are limited to $10 million and DIGITAL's co-investment is subject to availability of funds from ISED. - All organizations that expect to receive DIGITAL co-investment must become Members when their project is selected. - DIGITAL will co-invest **up to 50%** (DIGITAL's co-investment rate) of total eligible project costs that are incurred and paid by Eligible Members. (see more details in Appendix 3) - Project Fees are deducted from DIGITAL's co-

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[1] Project Partners may sign up to be an Associate (no fee) via our website:
https://www.digitalsupercluster.ca/join-us/
[2] A Member must be a Canadian company or a multi-national corporation that is legally registered to do business in Canada and has a substantial Canadian business operation. DIGITAL will confirm eligibility with applicants as they develop their project proposals and before they sign DIGITAL's Membership Agreement.
[3] Good standing means that the organization has adhered to DIGITAL's Charter of Values, complied with their Master Project Agreement obligations on other projects, and has no outstanding payments due to DIGITAL.

	investment payments. Project Fees are described in Article 5.3 of the Membership Agreement and will be set out in the Master Project Agreement (MPA). • No single organization may receive **more than 80%** of DIGITAL's project co-investment unless otherwise pre-approved by DIGITAL. • Refer to the [Co-Investment Guidelines – Global Innovation Cluster](#) for more information.
Incrementality	• The project is not already approved or in progress; • Financial commitments are distinct from investments that would have otherwise occurred; • The project would not be undertaken at the same scope or scale without the participation and co-investment commitments from DIGITAL and the partners.

Data Governance and IP strategy	• Projects must create a clear IP strategy for new Foreground IP and Background IP (see more details and IP definitions in Appendix 3) • All improvements to existing Background IP and any newly created Foreground IP arising through DIGITAL's co-investment must be owned by Canadian entities that have substantial operations in Canada. • Projects must have data governance frameworks and mechanisms (see more details on Responsible Use of Technology and Data in Appendix 3) • Consortia must have data governance frameworks and mechanisms, including having at least $5 million of cybersecurity insurance to cover network security and privacy breach liability.
Project size and timeline	• This stream co-invests up to $10 million over two project types: ○ **Pilot Projects.**[4] Technology Readiness Level (TRL) 2 – 5 and typically are under $250,000 in total size.

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[4] Pilot Projects (Technology Readiness Levels 2 to 5): small-scale, short-term experiments that encompass phases from concept development to initial validation and testing in real-life settings. This type of project is designed to test and validate innovative workforce development concepts before broader implementation. At the time of submission to the Call, commercialization of the project has not yet begun.

References:

* TRL https://ised-isde.canada.ca/site/innovative-solutions-canada/en/isc-technology-readiness-level-scale

	o **Development or Scale-Up Projects.** [5] TRL 6 – 9 and typically range in size from $500,000 - $2,000,000. • There is no maximum project size. All projects must be completed by December 31, 2027.

Please refer to Appendix 3 for more details on the different Eligibility criteria.

Evaluation Criteria

Four main evaluation criteria will be considered while reviewing projects, both at the EOI and at the FPP stage, the relative weighting of each is outlined below.

Industry Demand & relevance (30%)	EDI & Ecosystem Impact (30%)
• Demonstrates a strong alignment with **industry needs** and clearly articulates how the solution bridges employment gaps, providing evidence of industry commitment through letters of support, partnerships or co-investment. • Project **outcomes directly address future workforce development challenges** and lead to tangible training and employment outcomes.	• **Advances equity, diversity, and inclusion** by increasing participation and support for underrepresented groups. • Provides **accessible solutions with wrap-around supports**, particularly for those from underrepresented groups, including mentorship, career guidance, and additional resources that alleviate barriers to participation and success in the workforce. • **Strengthens and develops the broader Canadian ecosystem** by fostering partnerships and collaboration, ensuring the project's

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[5] Strategic initiatives (Technology Readiness Levels 6 to 9): advancing the design and development of workforce training programs, tools, or services by optimizing proven solutions for broader impact and efficiency. These projects have already been tested in several markets and aim to expand their reach, enrich the concept, and/or address new challenges or demographics.

References:
* TRL https://ised-isde.canada.ca/site/innovative-solutions-canada/en/isc-technology-readiness-level-scale
* CRL https://arena.gov.au/assets/2014/02/Commercial-Readiness-Index.pdf
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• Proposes **evolutive solutions** that can withstand the test of time. • Validates the **commercial viability** and relevance of the proposed solution.	impact extends beyond a single organization and contributes to addressing broader challenges. • Includes **sustainability and scalability plans**, with a focus on maintaining the solution's long-term impact, adapting it for use in various contexts, and sharing outcomes with the broader community to drive further innovation.

Workforce Innovation (20%)	**Team & Management Plan** (20%)
• Introduces **new ideas, methodologies, or practices** that significantly advance the field or address existing and emerging challenges in a unique way. • **Builds upon evidence of research and development efforts** that have led to the proposed innovative solution, including pilot studies or preliminary results. • Uses **advanced technologies** (such as Artificial Intelligence, Augmented reality, Internet of Things, Quantum computing...) in the proposed solution to enhance impact of the solution. • Introduces a clear **IP plan** covering ownership and protection, with a solid approach to data sharing, access, and responsible use of data and technology. Open-source models are strongly encouraged to promote transparency and collaboration.	• The **consortium is balanced, with the necessary expertise and capabilities**, and added value through collaboration across private, public, not-for-profit, and academic sectors. • All consortium partners stand to benefit commercially, operationally, scientifically, or academically from the project, ensuring **strong engagement, commitment, and collaborative effort** throughout the project's lifecycle. • The project has a **robust governance structure** with experienced independent management, a realistic execution plan, and clear financial and service commitments for each participating organization. • Comprehensive **risk management plan** to ensure project success.

Application Process

DIGITAL is targeting new investments that align with the Areas of Interest and eligibility criteria described above. All applicants will follow the same two-step application process, including those for proposed projects that continue to build off the success of previous projects that attracted DIGITAL co-investment.

All consortium partners are expected to work together during the application process and provide organizational signoff by an authorized signatory when submitting

the applications. Each organization participating in the proposed project agrees that, by applying they will:

- Adhere to DIGITAL's Charter of Values, including the Diversity & Inclusion principles outlined in the [Membership and/or Participation Agreement](#).
- Consent for DIGITAL to disclose the participating organizations, total investment, the total co-investment sought from DIGITAL along with the full or partial Executive Summary from the submitted applications.
- Not publicly disclose any information about a proposed project until we jointly agree to announce it (public releases and notices). For clarity, DIGITAL's decision can be shared in confidence with the consortium partners and their respective internal teams, Boards and investors as appropriate.

Organizations that fail to comply with these requirements could have their Membership rights terminated, project funding withdrawn and/or other proposed projects removed from consideration.

DIGITAL's team is available to guide consortia throughout the application process. Upon request, we will help you understand if your proposed project is eligible, identify potential partners you may want to work with, provide feedback on your applications, help you complete the budget and IP rationales, and review the Master Project Agreement template.

Funds are limited and it is a competitive process. All applications will be reviewed and evaluated according to set timelines. Teams are required to prepare their best applications by the following due dates:

1st Application: Expression of Interest (EOI)

The Project Lead of qualified consortia will be invited to submit an EOI and be provided with the EOI template(s) and submission instructions.

The EOI is intended to assess and confirm project eligibility, fit and readiness: the potential for success. EOIs will be reviewed after the EOI Call is closed. Incomplete EOI submissions will not be reviewed, but the Project Lead will be notified.

- DIGITAL will review all complete EOI submissions for eligibility, fit and readiness.
- The consortium may be asked to provide additional information to inform the EOI review.
- Project Leads will receive a notice of decision letter from DIGITAL by email. Successful applicants will be invited to develop a Full Project Proposal.

2nd Application: Full Project Proposal (FPP) Package

DIGITAL will provide the templates and submission instructions for the FPP package to the Project Lead of successful EOI applicants. The project consortium is expected to collaboratively develop and submit their FPP package for consideration.

The FPP submissions that arrive earliest will be reviewed and evaluated first, until the available funds are fully committed. DIGITAL will endeavor to keep applicants informed as projects are selected.

- DIGITAL will review the FPP submission for completeness and confirm fit and eligibility. Incomplete or ineligible FPP submissions will not be evaluated, and the Project Lead will be notified.
- Complete and eligible FPP submissions will be provided to an **independent Project Selection Committee** (PSC) and evaluated against the Evaluation Criteria.   The project consortium will be invited to make a presentation to the PSC and may be asked to provide additional information to inform the PSC's recommendation.
  - All consortia invited to develop a FPP will be notified who the PSC members are.
  - Any consortium partner must identify and notify DIGITAL of a potential conflict of interest with any member of the PSC in advance of their FPP submission.
  - At no time should consortium partners or related stakeholders engage PSC members with regards to project ideas or applications that are in development, are under evaluation or have been decided upon. *Organizations who fail to comply with this requirement could have their Membership rights terminated, project funding withdrawn and/or other proposals removed from consideration.*

- PSC members will not reach out directly to applicants for information or input regarding proposed projects; these requests will be managed by the DIGITAL team.
- Final investment decisions are made by DIGITAL based on parameters set out by its Board of Directors.
- The Project Lead will receive a notice of decision letter from DIGITAL, that will include feedback from the PSC. The PSC may suggest a revised proposal be submitted and re-evaluated for consideration.
- Successful FPP consortia will proceed to sign a Master Project Agreement (MPA) within 30 days of DIGITAL's selection decision. Each consortium partner is expected to confirm they have reviewed the MPA template and identify any specific areas of concern in their FPP submission. DIGITAL may withdraw its investment commitment if the MPA is not signed by the established deadline.

Appendixes

Appendix 1: About DIGITAL

DIGITAL, Canada's Global Innovation Cluster for digital technologies, grows Canadian businesses through the development, adoption and deployment of Canadian-made technologies and by working with industry to develop a digitally skilled workforce to positively impact lives across our country.

We bring together businesses, academia, community and government agencies to solve some of industry and society's biggest challenges – better and faster than any single organization can do on its own. Through a powerful model that combines cross-sector collaboration, Canadian IP creation and results-based co-investment, we unlock the potential of Canadian industry to lead and succeed in the digital world.

Our investment in technology development is also integrating the development of a diverse and skilled workforce to support the scaling of small and medium enterprises (SMEs) and a robust innovation ecosystem, led within our Digital Learning Lab. Within the Digital Learning Lab, we support projects and opportunities that will support our mandate to build capacity in the digital technology ecosystem; increase the breadth and diversity of talent in the sector; and expand Canada's capacity to be a global leader in digital technology development, adoption and deployment.

Appendix 2: Key DIGITAL foundational principles

Collaborative Innovation

Collaborative innovation is the concept of working together to do something that has not been done before and cannot be done alone – building trusted relationships and sharing knowledge, risk, financial investment, and the resulting benefits. This means more than just investing money. It is about doing things differently - leveraging each other's strengths to drive innovation, overcome challenges and explore new opportunities.

The ideal project consortium:

- is led by a Career technology product company who owns and will continue to invest in the Career technology solution(s);
- grants a major consortium role to industry and employers, showing great demand for the presented solution;

- involves potential early adopter customers with a focus on equity principles, to validate product-market fit and demonstrate the benefits of implementing and adopting the Career technology solution(s); and
- engages one or more research or post-secondary academic institutions.

All consortia are expected to have diverse and inclusive teams that create equity through the meaningful participation of under-represented groups, with an emphasis on Indigenous Peoples, racialized persons, women, youth, people with disabilities, immigrants and 2SLGBTQIA+ individuals.

Co-investment

The term "co-investment" refers to the concept that the consortium partners, including DIGITAL, are sharing in the total investment required to fund the collective project costs. In this stream, DIGITAL will **co-invest up to 50% of each selected projects' total value,** alongside the project's industry investment (prioritized) and other potential funding sources. Funding from DIGITAL is non-refundable and non-dilutive.

The financial commitments – both costs (uses of funds) and investment (sources of funds) of each consortium partner are to be outlined in a project budget that forms part of the Full Project Proposal. Refer to the Co-Investment Guidelines – Global Innovation Clusters for more information about our approach to co-investment and the eligibility of project costs and uses of DIGITAL's funds from Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada.

Demand-Driven

DIGITAL co-invests in the development, commercialization and adoption of Career-technology solutions that aim to solve market-validated problems in target markets within Canada and abroad.

Consortia must demonstrate a high potential for scaling the growth of Canadian companies (including SMEs[6]). They should collectively bring a proven track-record of commercial success and a strong understanding of their target markets to inform a compelling commercial strategy and go-to-market plan for early-maturity projects, or a growth strategy for new markets and applications for more mature projects.

Consortia must include organizations that represent potential customers, including employers and/or distribution channel partners that will provide advice, guidance, requirements and market validation through early customer adoption.

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[6] ISED uses the term 'SME' to refer to businesses with fewer than 500 employees globally.

Where the users and buyers are different (e.g., training institutions vs employers and/or employment organization), the consortia should include both perspectives – to consider usability and adoption needs as well as procurement. These partners will trial the Career technology solution during the project to demonstrate product-market fit and prove the benefits that can be realized by using the technology or applying it to new markets and purposes.

The potential customer partners are expected to:

- participate in an implementation, proof of value, or trial period to evaluate the use of the Career technology and validate expected outcomes;
- participate in any case studies that can be used for marketing purposes
- join forces to ensure clarity for end users eventually;
- provide feedback to advance the Career technology solution and inform the product roadmap, and;
- ideally, procure the technology solution (i.e., sign a license agreement with ongoing financial obligation) if the technology solution meets their pre-defined business and procurement requirements.

Appendix 3: Details on Eligibility criteria

Consortia

All types of organizations, including those located outside of Canada, are encouraged to participate in project consortium. **A minimum of three organizations** (excluding DIGITAL) must participate and contribute in a meaningful way, and their contributions do not need to be equal. Each organization is expected to have clear roles and responsibilities, deliverables and financial commitments, but it could also be conducting research or evaluations, providing services, or bringing experience in certain markets.

- **Projects must be industry-led**. The Project Lead will have overall accountability for project governance and reporting.
    - The Project Lead is the commercialization entity for the career technology solution. Typically, they are also the product company who owns and will continue to invest in the career technology solution(s).
    - The Project Lead is expected to make a material financial contribution to the project and be seeking DIGITAL co-investment.
- **At least one organization representing a potential customer** of the career technology solution. Eligible members are described below (Co-Investment section).

- **A research or post-secondary academic institutions is strongly encouraged**, especially to conduct independent evaluations or develop case studies that prove out the benefits realized by using the career technology.
- A **Community or Employment organization** representing the workers and/or job seekers is encouraged, to ensure adoption and tailoring of the tools and communications to the end beneficiaries.
- All consortia must have **experienced and proven project management** capabilities for complex, multi-party collaborative initiatives. Consortia are strongly encouraged to select and engage this party as they develop their Full Project Proposal (FPP) and for support during contracting. DIGITAL may require that this role be held by an independent third-party to ensure objectivity.
- All participating organizations must be compliant with all economic or financial sanctions or trade embargoes imposed, administered or enforced from time to time by the Government of Canada.
- All participating organizations must be DIGITAL Members or Associates at the time of application submission. For more information and to join, visit **here**.

A Non-Disclosure Agreement Template is available for use by consortia who wish to have a non-disclosure agreement in place during the application and contracting stages.

Co-Investment

- The funds available from DIGITAL are limited to $10 million and DIGITAL's co-investment is subject to availability of funds from ISED.
- DIGITAL provides co-investment only to Members ("**Eligible Members**") in good standing that are:
  - for-profit organizations;
  - not-for-profit organizations;
  - non-federal Crown corporations whose funding is derived from commercial activities; or
  - indigenous organizations;
- Other federal Crown Corporations, and government departments or agencies are not eligible to receive ISED funds directly, although they may bring their own contributions to projects or be funded by Eligible Members to carry out project activities.
- International organizations (offshore companies and research organizations without a registered business presence in Canada) may also participate in ISED funded projects, but any project activity undertaken by these organizations are not eligible for DIGITAL co-investment, unless otherwise pre-approved as a foreign cost for an Eligible Member.

- All organizations that expect to receive DIGITAL co-investment must become Members when their project is selected.
- DIGITAL will co-invest **up to 50%** (DIGITAL's co-investment rate) of total eligible project costs that are incurred and paid by Eligible Members.
  - Project Fees are deducted from DIGITAL's co-investment payments. Project Fees are described in Article 5.3 of the Membership Agreement and will be set out in the Master Project Agreement (MPA).
- No single organization may receive **more than 80%** of DIGITAL's project co-investment unless otherwise pre-approved by DIGITAL.

Incrementality

Projects must be **incremental** to the regular business undertakings of any of the individual participating organizations. All project partners need to confirm that the project:

- is not already approved or in progress;
- financial commitments are distinct from investments that would have otherwise occurred; and
- would not be undertaken at the same scope or scale without the participation and co-investment commitments from DIGITAL and the partners.

Projects must deliver **quantifiable benefits for Canada** and **benefits must accrue to more than a single organization.**

- Consortia must aim to generate value for the Canadian economy by:
  - demonstrating a clear path to commercialization with growth opportunities for Canadian companies in international markets;
  - growing and scaling world-leading Canadian enterprises, including SMEs;
  - position Canada's as a leader in a thriving and consolidated CareerTech ecosystem and
  - creating jobs and developing a diverse and digitally skilled workforce in Canada.

Intellectual Property (IP)

DIGITAL is committed to help Canadian organizations strengthen their IP portfolios and have robust IP strategies to support their commercial endeavors. IP generally includes all inventions, whether or not patented or patentable, all commercial and technical information, whether or not constituting trade secrets, and all copyrightable works,

industrial designs, integrated circuit topographies, and trademarks (including distinguishing guises), whether or not registered or registrable.

All improvements to existing Background IP and any newly created Foreground IP arising through DIGITAL's co-investment must be owned by Canadian entities that have substantial operations in Canada.

As consortia develop their IP plan, it is critical they have a shared understanding of:
- the market opportunity;
- the respective roles and expected benefits for each participating organization in any improvement of the Career technology solution, and in commercialization activities; and
- the data that will be used for ongoing development, training or learning of the Career technology solution.

As part of the FPP, each project partner must identify:
- any new IP expected to be created as part of the project ("Foreground IP") and how it will be protected (refer to the chart below for guidance); and
- any pre-existing IP ("Background IP"), third-party or open-source IP that a participating organization will be using and/or allowing others to use during the project.

DIGITAL takes no interest in or rights to any Foreground IP arising from the project or the Background IP of any project participant but has an interest in ensuring adherence to the following IP principles and requirements:

- Background IP (to the extent necessary for the purposes of the project) is to be licensed to other project partners on specified terms for the purposes of the project. This is typically in the form of a license grant on a non-exclusive, royalty free, revocable limited license for the purposes of the project, for the duration that the partner is involved in the project.
- DIGITAL will only co-invest on improvements made to Canadian-owned Background IP.
- Any required IP generated using DIGITAL co-investment in any other project, will be considered as Foreground IP for the purposes of any new or follow-on project.
- The Foreground IP arising through DIGITAL's co-investment must be owned by a project partner that is a registered Canadian entity, with substantial operations in Canada.

- Foreground IP, and any existing Background IP required to make use of the Foreground IP after the end of the project, are to be licensed on fair, reasonable, and non-discriminatory (FRAND) terms, subject to relevant competitive issues.
- Foreground IP developed through DIGITAL's co-investment will be entered into a registry that is accessible on DIGITAL's Community Portal.   We are sensitive to issues surrounding IP disclosures and will reasonably accommodate these concerns.
- Consider whether open-source IP will be used for any part of the project and if so, understand what it is and what implications, if any, that it might have for the IP of each of the project partners.
- Identify other DIGITAL Members that may be interested in licensing and building upon the Foreground IP to support ecosystem development.

Responsible Use of Technology and Data

Organizations are required to take appropriate measures to ensure they adhere to policies, procedures and standards for ethics, biases, cultural sensitivities and human rights to be considered and ensure that any AI technologies are understandable, transparent and ethical.

The regulatory environment surrounding privacy, security and AI is rapidly evolving in Canada (e.g., Bill C-27 to enact the Consumer Privacy Protection Act, the Personal Information and Data Protection Tribunal Act and the Artificial Intelligence and Data Act) and other countries (e.g., the EU Artificial Intelligence Act, the US voluntary AI Risk Management Framework).

- Consortia must demonstrate and understanding of the current and anticipated regulation and describe how they will ensure compliance in Canada and their target markets.

Consortia must have data governance frameworks and mechanisms to ensure:
- *Security:* policies, procedures and standards for protecting restricted, confidential or sensitive data from unauthorized access or loss (e.g., encrypting data, backing it up appropriately, taking measures to prevent cyberattacks).
  - All organizations are required to have at least $5 million of cybersecurity insurance to cover network security and privacy breach liability.
- *Data Governance:* policies, procedures and standards around data extraction, standardization, storage and access including ensuring that data is collected for specified, explicit and legally authorized purposes.

- *Data Sharing:* standardized methods to permit sharing of data between project partners for the uses of the project.
- *Ethics:* consider having an Ethics Review Committee as part of the governance model to ensure the required data sharing agreements are in place and to assess the impact of what may be considered as "high risk" AI systems considering the evolving regulatory landscape.

As part of the FPP, consortia must identify and describe:
- How the consortia will ensure the ethical and responsible approach to the use of data and ongoing development and implementation of their technology solution throughout and beyond the project.
- Data that will be provided for the purposes of the project, the source(s), owner(s), custodian(s) and the consumer(s) along with the terms for using that data.
- Confirmation that the organization providing access to and rights to use data for the purposes of the project has the rights to do so, including having the necessary consents.
- If data sharing agreements and/or research and ethics approvals need to be secured to access and use the data for the purposes of the project, and the expecting timing to secure these approvals.
- Data that will be generated through the project (including data derivatives from data brought into the project), the ownership of the data and the roles that each consortium partner will play with respect to the data – such as data producer, data owner, data custodian and/or a data consumer.
- How any provided or generated data will be used to sustain the technology solution and support commercial endeavors, including the terms of use.
- Any provided or generated data required to commercialize the technology solution, are to be license on fair, reasonable, and non-discriminatory (FRAND) terms, subject to relevant competitive issues, confidentiality obligations and any restrictions on publications.

Project Size and timeline

The CareerTech stream accepts two types of projects: Pilot Projects and Development or Scale-Up Projects.

Pilot Projects include Technology Readiness Level (TRL[7]) 2 – 5 and typically be under $250,000 in size. Development or Scale-Up Projects will fall on TRL 6 – 9 or Commercial Readiness Level (CRL) 4 – 6 and typically range in size from $500,000 - $2,000,000.

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[7] https://ised-isde.canada.ca/site/innovation-canada/en/technology-readiness-levels

- DIGITAL is seeking to co-invest $10 million in projects over these two project types**.**
- There is no maximum project size. The maximum amount of DIGITAL's co-investment is up to 50% for individual projects, subject to the availability of total funds.
- **All projects must be completed by December 31, 2027.**
  - FPPs are to include a robust and realistic project plan that describes how the project will be completed within the stated timeframe and cost and include well-defined accountabilities, key deliverables, anticipated new intellectual property and data assets, costs and funding sources for each of the consortium partners.
    - For proposed projects that are longer than 18 months in duration, a phased approach should be considered so that consortium partners can confirm their service and financial commitments.

Appendix 4: Tips for success in writing applications

- Assemble and engage a strong collaborative consortium who share in the project's vision, will co-invest in the project and share in the project benefits.
- Write a clear and concise application in "one-voice", answer all of the questions in the templates and follow the instructions provided.
- Ensure the Eligibility and Evaluation Criteria are met.
- Specify the technology products, services and processes developed, tested and commercialized in your project, and how this differs from existing operations.
- Clarify employers' involvement, to show clear demand for the solution. Define the specific problem that is addressed and describe how the commercial viability of the proposed technology solution has been validated by stakeholders.
- Highlight how the project raises Canada's CareerTech ecosystem.
- Specify the EDI approach and focus and explain how this solution lower barriers for under-served individuals.
- Craft coherent IP and data management plans.
- Ensure strong and experienced project management is demonstrated through a robust application, project plan, budget (uses and sources of funds) and governance model.
- If applicable, present a strong commercial strategy that demonstrates return on investment and economic benefits to Canada.
- Discuss and agree on the principles for any commercial arrangements between the project partners.