

**Access to the Future Fund  
2007/2008 Innovation Funding Proposal**

**Curriculum Commons Model for Post-Secondary Institutions**

Prepared by:  
Lakeland College, Keyano College and NorQuest College

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# Innovation Funding Proposal Curriculum Commons Model for Post-Secondary Institutions

## Applicant Information

<b>Participating Organizations:</b> <i>Indicate which one organization would receive the grant funds, be responsible for reporting and accountability, and act as the primary contact for the project.</i>  <i>The application should be submitted by the President or most senior position of that organization.</i>			
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## Project Overview

<b>Project Name:</b>	Curriculum Commons Model for Post-Secondary Institutions
<b>Duration of Project</b>	2.0 Years

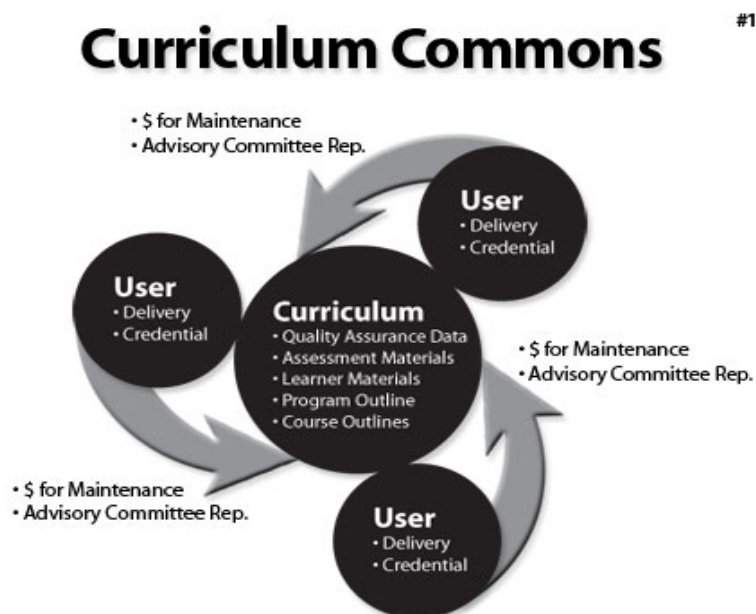
## A. Project Summary

Post-secondary curriculum development and maintenance is often expensive and can be prohibitively so for smaller rural institutions. Brokering of programming from a cooperative institution can also be expensive and may limit the ability of the receiving institution to meet the niche needs of its learners and employers.

From time to time in the history of the Alberta post-secondary system, some institutions have attempted to implement a collaborative curriculum process. In doing so, they have struggled with legal, copyright, academic integrity and sustainability issues.

Lakeland College, Keyano College and NorQuest College propose to collaborate on a research project that will identify both models and best practices in collaborative curriculum development and maintenance, and that will lead to the design, development and evaluation of a “Curriculum Commons Model” that will have broad application for the Alberta Post-Secondary System.

The proposed Curriculum Commons concept outlines a collaborative process involving multiple users of a program curriculum with the ultimate goal of increasing institutional and learner accessibility to educational programming without limiting an institution’s ability to control the delivery and services associated with the program. The Curriculum Commons Model can be utilized with any viable curriculum and in various academic disciplines and geographic locations.



The research phase of the project will answer the following questions:

- How do educational organizations enact their inter-institutional collaborative efforts in a manner that achieves cost effective curriculum development and maintenance?
- What issues are associated with collaborative curriculum development maintenance, and usage?
- What are the limiting factors of a collaborative model?
- What are the best practices associated with the legal agreements essential to a collaborative model?
- What models will readily facilitate participation of the member institutions of the post-secondary system?
- What are the best practices in terms of the implementation of a Curriculum Commons Model?

The project will have two phases.

**Phase one:** best practice research and the subsequent design of a made in Alberta Curriculum Commons model which includes implementation tools.

**Phase two:** testing and evaluation of the model and tools followed by the dissemination of the project results.

The Curriculum Commons Model framework and tools (e.g. legal agreement template) will be readily available to all Alberta post-secondary institutions upon completion of the project.

The purpose of this project is to assist Alberta post-secondary institutions in engaging in collaborative curriculum development, maintenance and implementation. The outcomes of this level of collaboration are:

- enhanced program quality leading to global leadership in post-secondary education,
- increased access to learning opportunities leading to greater participation rates in post-secondary education by under- represented populations
- improved program articulation/ transfer agreements leading to greater learner flexibility and satisfaction with respect to program laddering,
- a reduction in program credit and brokering negotiation efforts between institutions.
- an increase in the cost effectiveness of curriculum development allowing for the enhancement of student related services in other area of the institution
- The provision of information for policy makers and key stakeholders

The Curriculum Commons Model will be perpetually sustainable since it will be designed on best practice that may be replicated for many curricula, in many

locations. The Curriculum Commons Model will replace less effective models that do not facilitate collaboration and articulation between institutions.

## **B. Links to Innovation Fund Objectives, *A Learning Alberta and Alberta Advanced Education and Technology Policies***

### **Innovation**

This innovative project brings together a body of best practice knowledge in curriculum collaboration and leads to the development of a tangible and useable Curriculum Commons framework and set of tools. The implementation of the Curriculum Commons Model will assist in the building of Alberta's capacity as a world-class leader in curriculum development and delivery.

### **Collaboration**

Lakeland College, Keyano College, and NorQuest College have a long history of inter-institutional collaboration in the area of program delivery. In phase two of this project the three partners will test the Curriculum Commons model using the NorQuest College Practical Nurse curriculum.

The research and development of the model will help these three institutions embark on a collaborative curriculum venture. However, ultimately, their shared experience, and the analysis of that experience, will be of service to the Alberta post-secondary system at large. In addition, this project will contribute to the achievement of the vision stated in the *Roles and Mandates Policy Framework for Alberta's Publicly funded Advanced Education System (August 2007)* that "Alberta's social, cultural and economic well-being is enhanced through a globally recognized advanced education system that provides high-quality and efficient programs, is resilient and responsive to learner and economic needs and unleashes innovation through world-class research and knowledge transfer" (p. 2). This vision is exemplified in a series of principles for advanced education system partners, who are called to be accountable, collaborative, responsive, sustainable and effective in the use of resources. Partners must also present learners with seamless transitions and develop globally recognised excellence in programming. Many of the collaborative outcomes identified with these principles will be demonstrated in this project, including

- a contribution to the building of a sustainable and value added knowledge economy,
- the provision of a response to economic and social needs in all communities,
- the enhancement of information sharing and knowledge transfer,
- the fostering of world class research and innovation.

## Participation

The Curriculum Commons Model project will ensure that the activities of the three partners can be expanded to other partnerships in any academic discipline or geographical region. The project aims at assisting institutions to expand their program offerings, enhance curriculum quality, improve articulation agreements, and maintain curriculum collaboration. This, in turn, will benefit learners in regions where program offerings are limited. Collective, high quality standards of curriculum will enhance opportunities for student transfer reducing barriers to movement between institutions and labour markets.

The Curriculum Commons Model project meets all the policy outcomes identified in the report of the steering committee of *A Learning Alberta*. The Curriculum Commons Model and research will:

- enable educational institutions to respond effectively to the choices and aspirations of learners in their communities
- provide consistent and high quality programming in diverse communities, thereby overcoming barriers of limited resources
- provide improved curricula which will allow for the facilitation of vibrant learning communities, permitting institutions to adapt high quality programming to diverse needs, despite cultural or geographic limitations
- support institutional autonomy, allowing institutions to modify and redirect services to diverse learners
- advance global educational leadership by expanding the current body of knowledge in the areas of curriculum collaboration and sustainability
- contribute to the development of a seamless post-secondary learning system

With proven success, the Curriculum Commons Model will enhance the ability of Alberta institutions to collaborate in the production and global marketing of curricula that is of a consistently high quality. This collaborative model can be duplicated beyond regional boundaries and will facilitate program design in other countries of a quality that matches that offered in Alberta. This anticipated consistency of curriculum quality will enable the transfer of professional graduates between labour markets. This innately innovative project promotes excellence through learning by providing research and knowledge transfer in post secondary education. The outcomes of the project are expected to stimulate the creation of a wide range of similar projects. The project inherently promotes collaboration over competition and fosters improved integration in the post secondary system.

A major anticipated outcome of the project is a sustainable, long term and perpetually expanding Curriculum Commons Model that will increase the strategic advancement of learning opportunities in Alberta.

## **C. Project Design**

### **Inputs**

The Curriculum Commons Model project will bring together specialists in a wide range of skill areas. Input requirements for the project include:

- research design, information collection and analysis
- legal consultation
- graphic design
- project management
- steering committee oversight
- evaluation design, information collection and analysis
- administrative and clerical expertise.

### **Activities**

This project is scheduled for completion two years from the approval date.

#### **Phase one: Research and Development of the Curriculum Commons Model (12 months)**

1. Upon approval of the project, the project manager will establish the Steering Committee terms of reference and complete the project management design.
2. The initial phase of research and assessment is scheduled to begin three months from the start of the project. The focus of this phase will be a review of salient current literature on related world research. This initial phase is designed to identify information and experiences that might inform the project.
3. Legal consultation is scheduled for approximately 50 hours. The outcome of the consultation will be a legal agreement template that will be tested in phase two of the project. The legal agreement will incorporate best practice information from the initial research and assessment step of the project.
4. Design and development of the model and an implementation toolkit. Graphic designers will develop visual representations of the model, reflecting the best practice information developed in steps one and two.

By the end of the first year, the model will be ready to test in a pilot.

## **Phase two: Pilot and Evaluation of the Curriculum Commons Model (12 months)**

1. Lakeland College, Keyano College and NorQuest College, using the NorQuest College Practical Nurse curriculum, will test and adapt the model and the tools to ensure an effective and viable Curriculum Commons Model.
2. Formative evaluation will occur simultaneously with many stages of the model's implementation, which will be scheduled within the academic year at the colleges. Summative evaluation is scheduled for the end of the pilot test. Analysis, reporting and dissemination, based on the evaluation findings, will require about three months. These tasks, in particular dissemination and publication, will continue beyond the period supported by the Innovation Fund.

### **Outputs**

- Research and assessment will provide resources, including a body of literature from related projects, to support and inform the design of the other phases of the project.
- Project design and development, in the remainder of the first year, will result in a complete and functional model of the Curriculum Commons Model, including overall project design, a legal template, documentation, including graphics, and a detailed plan for implementation.
- The analysis of both formative and summative evaluation data will result in a detailed assessment of the project, leading to a renewed plan for full implementation of the Curriculum Commons Model in other venues.
- Reporting and dissemination will result in extensive documentation intended to inform the continuation and expansion of the Curriculum Commons Model.

### **Outcomes**

The project will provide scholarly research, and a Curriculum Commons model and toolkit document. Additionally, the project will lead to enhanced inter-institutional curriculum collaboration and, thus, to increased accessibility to educational programming. The model will be applicable to the full range of post-secondary programming in Alberta, which includes vocational training, and will promote, and enable better preparation of, Alberta's workforce;

increase the quality of academic and higher education, and recreational and faith based programs. Implementation of the Curriculum Commons Model has the potential to enhance the quality of life for all Albertans, in many areas of life, through the post-secondary educational system.

#### **D. Project Governance**

Governance for the project will be outlined in a memorandum of understanding to be signed by representatives of all three participating institutions, Keyano College, Lakeland College, and NorQuest College. The three colleges are public post-secondary institutions with a long-standing history of collaboration and collegiality. The Curriculum Commons Model will be based on a new partnership, as defined by the memorandum of understanding. Based on this agreement, the three institutions will appoint a steering committee with membership from all three schools. The steering committee will have legal and financial responsibility for all phases of the project. The steering committee will appoint a project manager who will be accountable to, and report to, the committee. The project manager will be responsible for direct oversight of the work during the first phase, in year one, when the research and development work will be concentrated at NorQuest College. The project manager, in consultation with the steering committee, will supervise other participants, including editors, graphic artists, instructional designers, evaluators, and administrative and clerical assistants.

Decision making, in the first phase, in year one, will be delegated to the project manager, in consultation with the steering committee. In the second phase, year two, the work will shift to implementation and data collection in the field, at Lakeland College, Keyano College and NorQuest College. Administrators at each site will oversee the work, in consultation with, and under the authority of, the steering committee. Final reporting and dissemination will be delegated to various participants, including administrators and committee members, under the direction of the steering committee.

Published and printed works resulting from this collaboration will acknowledge all partner institutions; presentations at conferences or other forums will be approved by the steering committee and presented jointly.

#### **E. Evaluation Plan**

Formative and qualitative evaluation will inform oversight of the project and may occur in all phases. Summative and qualitative evaluation reporting on significant outcomes will occur at the conclusion of phase two. Patton (2002) identified a model of qualitative program evaluation that emphasizes processes and outcomes as measurable elements to inform decision making. The general

focus of evaluation will be on the overall impetus for the project, including issues of usability and transferability, identified by Kirkpatrick (1994) as an important but overlooked area of evaluation. Within this definition, evaluation methodologies will be informed by Stufflebeam's (1971) *Educational Evaluation and Decision Making* model; formative evaluation will emphasize input and processes, while summative evaluation will emphasize the final product. Analysis of information from evaluation, will present an effective model for curriculum usage to the learning communities in Alberta and beyond. It is anticipated that success of the Curriculum Commons Model project will lead directly and rapidly to the creation of several similar projects in Alberta.

**References:**

- Kirkpatrick, D.L. (1994). *Evaluating Training Programs: The Four Levels*. San Francisco, CA: Berrett-Koehler.
- Patton, M. Q. (2002). *Qualitative Research and Evaluation Methods*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Stufflebeam, D. et al. 1971. *Educational Evaluation and Decision Making*. Itasca, Ill:Peacock.

## F. Financial Information

### Project Revenue Source

Contributions from participating organizations:	Contribution Amount	Confirmed In-kind
NorQuest College (administrative support for project manager, office space, project steering committee representative, year 2 implementation lead, facilities for meeting space )	40,000	yes
Keyano College (project steering committee representative, year 2 implementation lead)	30,000	yes
Lakeland College (project steering committee representative, year 2 implementation lead)	30,000	yes
Innovation Fund – requested funding	241,000	no
<b>Total project funding</b>	<b>341,000</b>	

Project Expenses	Amount
Research Project Manager (12 months – project coordination, design research and development, final project report, dissemination deliverables)	100,000
Legal Consultation on template	15,000
Evaluation services	20,000
Graphic design and dissemination materials production	20,000
Travel (project steering committee, research project manager)	20,000
Office productivity equipment– Research Project Manager	2,500
Materials and supplies (office supplies)	500
Dissemination (travel, conferences, forums)	15,000
Project Administration (MOU, financial accounting, project reporting)	48,000
<b>Total requested funding for project expenses</b>	<b>\$241,000</b>
<b>In-kind Partner contributions</b>	<b>\$100,000</b>
<b>Total Project Expenses</b>	<b>\$341,000</b>