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# Regional Future Workforce (RFW) - Critical Minerals Pilot Program

#### **Background Information:**

Ontario is a global leader in automotive and smart mobility solutions with this sector being a cornerstone of the province's economy. However, the landscape of this industry is rapidly evolving due to technological disruptions and the imperative to transition to a low-carbon economy. Recent significant investments in Ontario's vehicle electrification value chain led to an increased demand for responsibly-sourced critical minerals (ie. Cobalt, lithium, nickel, etc.) to produce these next-generation technologies. As a result, Ontario's ecosystem has a corresponding increased labour demand to accelerate growth across both automobility and critical minerals sectors. Our critical minerals sector is expected to rapidly expand, requiring an additional minimum of 3,340 workers by 2040.

As the demand for skills in areas such as software development, data analysis, and electric vehicle technology rises, the Ontario Vehicle Innovation Network (OVIN) has taken proactive steps to address these shifts and meet talent development demands – including the launch of Ontario's Regional Future Workforce Program (RFW) and its newest Critical Minerals stream.

Through the Regional Future Workforce (RFW) program, OVIN, in collaboration with various stakeholders, made substantial strides to engage students across Ontario. By reaching over 45,000 students and forging 225 industry-academic partnerships across diverse sectors, the RFW program exceeded its initial goals to advance diversity and inclusivity for the automotive and mobility sector. With over half of the participants being girls, women, and non-binary individuals, and nearly half coming from underrepresented groups, the program has laid a strong foundation for fostering a more diverse talent pool.

However, the success of such initiatives also requires addressing future challenges. Within Ontario's automotive and smart mobility sector, the critical minerals mining industry faces two significant obstacles: an aging workforce and evolving skill requirements necessitated by the sector's evolution. To navigate these challenges effectively, it is imperative to engage students and youth early, particularly those from underrepresented groups, in education and career development programs. Research underscores the efficacy of such interventions in sustaining interest in STEM subjects and Skilled Trades and careers among younger generations.

Recognizing this urgency, Ontario has intensified its investments in early workforce development initiatives, including STEM-focused and Skilled Trades programs and a revamped curriculum emphasizing these skills from grades 1 to 9. By nurturing the next generation of talent through such initiatives, Ontario not only ensures a seamless transition to a technologically advanced and diverse workforce but also fortifies its position as a global hub for automotive innovation and mobility solutions.

The success of Ontario's automotive and mobility sector hinges on its ability to cultivate talent and adapt to evolving demands. Through strategic investments and collaborative efforts aimed at engaging younger generations early and promoting diversity, the province is poised to chart a course toward sustained growth and leadership in the automotive and mobility sector.

## **Program Overview**

The OVIN Regional Future Workforce - Critical Minerals Pilot Program aims to address the growing workforce demands and opportunities within Ontario's critical minerals sector, essential for the automotive and mobility industries, particularly in the context of electric vehicles (EVs) and advanced manufacturing. This program will focus on attracting, training, and retaining talent, fostering innovation, and ensuring sustainable practices, while incorporating key findings and takeaways from OVIN's Critical Minerals Talent Strategy.

Applicants can apply for up to <u>\$300,000 CAD</u> to develop and deploy short-term student/youth engagement pilot programs for summer 2024. Each program should focus on increasing awareness and skills related to critical minerals (mining), in addition to fostering sector-based diversity, equity, and inclusion of <u>underrepresented groups</u>, particularly Indigenous communities.

Eligible applicants include Ontario-based **non-profit organizations**, school boards, academic institutions, and Indigenous communities.

The objective is to continue to foster interest and develop Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM), Skilled Trades, and other skills for the future of the critical minerals, automotive and mobility sector. By targeting equity-deserving groups, we aim to increase awareness and partnership opportunities, remove stigma and create a more inclusive landscape within the sector.

## **Definition of Critical Minerals Sector:**

Critical minerals are defined by the Ontario Mining Association (OMA) as minerals that are necessary for key strategic products and applications, like electric vehicles (EVs), and for which there are few viable substitutes. Within OVIN's Critical Minerals Talent Strategy, we define the critical minerals sector to comprise of critical minerals mining (and processing), in addition to the production of EV batteries and EV battery recycling (see OVIN's Critical Minerals Talent Strategy <u>Impact Report</u> and <u>Strategic & Policy</u> <u>Insights Report</u> for more information).

## **Definition of Underrepresented Groups:**

Underrepresented groups include, but are not limited to, women, Indigenous Peoples (First Nations, Inuit and Métis), persons with disabilities, members of visible minority/racialized groups, and members of LGBTQ2+ communities (see the <u>Dimensions charter</u> for more information).

## **Program Objectives:**

#### OVIN's Regional Future Workforce - Critical Minerals Pilot Program aims to advance:

- 1. **Talent Pipeline Development:** Attract, train, and retain a diverse workforce with the skills needed for the automotive, mobility, and critical minerals sector.
- 2. Learning Opportunities: Increase exposure to learning and development opportunities relevant to the automotive, mobility, and critical minerals sector for underrepresented students (kindergarten to post-secondary) across Ontario.
- 3. **Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion:** Increase the number of equity-deserving and underrepresented groups exploring career opportunities in the automotive, mobility, and critical minerals sector.
- 4. **Collaboration:** Facilitate collaboration across Ontario between non-profit organizations, academic institutions, in addition to the automotive and mobility sector.
- 5. **Innovation:** Support projects that advance the extraction, processing, and recycling of critical minerals.
- 6. **Strategic Alignment:** Address key findings and takeaways from OVIN's critical minerals strategic reports.

Key Requirements and Expected Outcomes of this pilot program include:

- Engagement with underrepresented groups and Indigenous communities early and meaningfully to understand training needs and maximize participation.
- Promotion of sector awareness and talent attraction through educational and developmental programs.
- Collaboration between educational institutions, non-profits, and industry partners to create a cohesive and supportive ecosystem for workforce development.

## **Benefits:**

For Applicants and Partners	For the Critical Minerals sector	For Underrepresented Students
<ul> <li>Access to provincial funding sources through one application.</li> <li>Development of mutually beneficial partnerships among industry, academia, non-profit organizations, and Indigenous communities across Ontario the critical minerals, automotive and mobility ecosystem.</li> <li>Development of engaging and</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>Increased awareness of Ontario's dynamic critical minerals mining industry.</li> <li>Decreased stigma around critical minerals/mining careers, including those in the skilled trades.</li> <li>Further development of Ontario's critical minerals talent pool.</li> <li>Strengthening Ontario as a talent development leader in the global automotive and</li> </ul>	<ul> <li>Broadened horizons for future career options.</li> <li>Socialization and increased awareness of Ontario's dynamic critical minerals, automotive and mobility sector and associated career opportunities.</li> <li>Increased access to learning and development opportunities (including programs aimed at</li> </ul>

<ul> <li>specialized</li> <li>programming that</li> <li>creates solutions for</li> <li>Ontario's critical</li> <li>minerals talent pool.</li> <li>Ability to engage</li> <li>students in valuable,</li> <li>robust, and engaging</li> <li>experiential learning.</li> </ul>	mobility space through its critical minerals capabilities, therefore improving employment opportunities.	nurturing competitive and in-demand skills).
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# Program Structure:

Under the RFW – Critical Minerals Pilot Program, selected applicants will develop and deploy related STEM, Skilled Trades, and other educational programs (lessons and activities) during the summer 2024 to increase underrepresented students' awareness of critical minerals sector careers while improving diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) within in the sector.

- Programs must be developed in response to the critical minerals sector's skills and talent needs.
- Programs must be developed and delivered within two months after project activation, with all projects closing by September 30, 2024.
- Applicants demonstrating strong partnerships or links to the mining and EV battery manufacturing industry are preferrable.
- Applicants must demonstrate a plan to produce and deliver engaging programs that are responsive to the needs and practices of the underrepresented communities being served and supported, including students from Indigenous communities.
- Applicants are encouraged to partner with relevant community organizations that engage and support equity-deserving and underrepresented groups.
- Depending on the age of the audience segments being engaged, applicants and their partners must confirm that the associated project team has met the requirements of Vulnerable Sector and Criminal Record Checks.
- Programs must demonstrate the engagement of at least one audience segment (defined below) and at least one region within Ontario.
  - The following is a map of the regions across Ontario:



- Applicants are strongly encouraged to engage with Indigenous communities and/or mining industry partners that are based in Northern Ontario.
- Programs delivered must directly help members of underrepresented groups develop knowledge and skills, as well as provide training and engagement opportunities that reflect the needs of the rapidly evolving critical minerals sector and address the underrepresented groups challenges with a focus on STEM and skilled trades.
- Programs must be developed and deployed for one or more of the following audience segments: (1) Kindergarten to Grade 4, (2) Grade 5 to Grade 9, (3) Grade 10 to Grade 12, and (4) Post-Secondary (Undergraduate and/or Graduate) students.
- Programs must demonstrate commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion, including diversity (with respect to backgrounds and expertise) within project teams delivering the program.
- Applicants are encouraged to conduct an environmental scan of existing programs related to the critical minerals, automotive and mobility, and adjacent sectors in region(s) they wish to implement their program to better understand the other players in the region, and to identify potential partners.

## Key Components:

- Design, development, and implementation of programs
- Detailed program logistics and administration
- Program's evaluation metrics
- Creation of a marketing, promotion, and outreach plan

## Design, Development, and Implementation of Programming

- 1. The **Program Design** section of each application must include: an overview of the focus areas addressed in the proposed program in a plan for how to appropriately engage students from underrepresented and equity-deserving groups and report on their participation.
  - Lesson plans for STEM topics **are encouraged** to include topics aligned with mining, mining technologies, EV battery manufacturing, and EV battery recycling.
  - Lesson plans are encouraged to include topics most aligned with in-demand occupational health and safety, technical, and operational skills needs within the mining industry and EV battery manufacturing or recycling.
  - $\circ$   $\;$  The grade range of students they plan to engage in this program.
  - The region(s) of Ontario where applicants plan to launch the program.
  - Elements that make the program innovative and responsive to the future skills demands of the critical minerals sector.
  - Focus on supporting students from equity-deserving and underrepresented groups as defined in the Program Overview. Program delivery should be aligned to their unique experiences and needs. See additional information below under "Student Participation Overview."

## 1(a). Students' Participation Overview:

- A high-level summary of anticipated student demographics (and communities engaged) in the region(s) they plan to implement programming in.
  - A strategy overview that focuses on supporting students from equity-deserving and underrepresented groups.
  - Description of how the program is unique and interactive for students.
  - A forecast of the number of students expected to participate in the program.
     OVIN requires applicants to engage at least 50 students, with at least 60% of participants coming from underrepresented and equity deserving groups.
     Please note that programs should be offered to participating students at no cost.
- 2. The **Program Development and Implementation** section of each application must include on overview of lesson plans and activities for the RFW Critical Minerals Pilot Program. OVIN must approve this plan prior to implementation.
  - Program content must:
    - Increase student awareness of opportunities (career and innovative opportunities) within the critical minerals (mining) and automotive and mobility sectors. OVIN will provide pre-program and post-program surveys to all programs that should be used to assess participants' awareness.
    - Be appropriate and curated for the audience segment specified. Applicants must develop more than one program if they are addressing a wide age range of students. Content should be reasonable for the age groups identified.

- Focus on students from equity-deserving groups and underrepresented groups.
- Include activities/sessions that encourage active engagement from students. The applicant should describe the tools that will be used to make the program interactive.
- Include student feedback channels where students can discuss ideas and provide direct feedback on sessions.

# Program logistics and administration:

Applicants must establish a plan for the successful deployment of the RFW – Critical Minerals Pilot Program. It should include an overview of your logistics plan and the team expected to deploy the program. All plans must be approved by OVIN prior to implementation stage. Please note the requirements for each below.

- 1. Logistics:
  - Outline staffing requirements for the program
  - Identify materials required for the program
  - Include a detailed program schedule for program participants

## 2. Project Team:

- An outline of their team that includes the number of staff required to run the program, the expertise of team members, and the aspect of the program each team member will be responsible for. If applicants anticipate hiring additional staff, they will need to outline the roles, expected salaries, and what component(s) of the program they will contribute to.
- Applicants must detail the expertise of the organizational representative, including their role within the applicant's organization. Please note that these representatives will be OVIN's point of contact, so please include their contact information in this section. Applicants must outline how organizational representatives will be involved in each key activity.
- Applicants must outline their logistics and administration plan for implementing the program. Applicants are encouraged to outline details of staff training, materials required to run the program, scheduling of activities, support for programming, etc.
- Applicants have the option to attend and participate in an OVIN Showcase event that will occur late August/early September to showcase their work with the RFW Critical Minerals Pilot Program.

# Marketing and Promotion:

- Applicants must provide their marketing and promotion strategy to promote the program.
- Applicants are also required to develop an outreach plan detailing how they will encourage students to sign up for the program.
- Any marketing and promotional materials that use images and videos of people (including program participants) must have a process and documentation for obtaining informed consent.
- Selected applicants will seek OVIN approval on the marketing materials and will work with the OVIN team to market and promote the program. Marketing materials can include the website students use to register for the program, email promotions, and posters.

# Program's Evaluation Metrics:

OVIN will provide an evaluation framework, comprised of standardized pre- and post- program surveys for students, and specific questions for instructors and program coordinators, for each of the successful applicants to administer.

Student survey data:

- Participant gender
- Number and proportion of participants from rural and remote communities (if applicable)
- Program's impact on critical minerals mining knowledge and awareness
- Program's impact on general interest in the critical minerals sector
- Program's impact on participants' interest in pursuing a career in the critical minerals sector
- Program's impact on STEM and Skilled Trades skills development

Instructor survey data:

- Perspectives on the program's success
- Number and proportion of underrepresented participants
- Impact on student awareness and interest in the critical minerals sector
- Impact on student's interest in pursuing a career in the critical minerals sector
- Impact on STEM and Skilled Trades skills development and interest

Data and information from instructors and program coordinators:

- Program design and implementation details
  - Overall program focus and strategy
  - Number of mentorship opportunities (if applicable)
  - Number of industry tours (if applicable)
- Total number of collaborations and partnerships (industry partners, school boards, non-profits, post-secondary institutions etc...) created throughout the program
- Total number, as well as which cities, towns, and counties programming was delivered in

## Eligibility:

- Eligible applicants include Ontario-based elementary and secondary public schools, school boards, post-secondary institutions, non-profits organizations, and Indigenous communities.
- All partners must be Ontario–based.
- Industry partners must be Ontario-based within the critical minerals/ mining industry, including but not limited to:
  - Critical minerals mining and mining-adjacent industry establishments, including Original Equipment Manufacturers (OEMs);
  - Automotive and Mobility EV Battery Manufacturers, including Tier 1 suppliers; and/or
  - Relevant industry associations within the critical minerals sector (ie. Mining, EV battery manufacturing, or EV battery recycling).

- Industry partners are encouraged to contribute in-kind (expertise and other appropriate resources) towards the program.
- All projects should be completed by September 30, 2024, at the latest no project extensions will be provided.
- Applicants that cannot fulfill these requirements will not be eligible for funding.

## Overall partnership requirements are outlined below:

	APPLICANTS			
Partnership Requirements	School Boards	Academic Institutions	Non-Profit Organizations	Indigenous Communities
Collaborate with at least one industry partner to develop programs	Strongly Encouraged	Strongly Encouraged	Strongly Encouraged	Strongly Encouraged
Work with at least one post- secondary institution with strong critical minerals (mining) and automotive and mobility initiatives to develop programs	Strongly Encouraged	N/A	Strongly Encouraged	Encouraged
Work with at least one school/school board to coordinate student participation	N/A	Encouraged	Encouraged	Encouraged
Work with at least one Indigenous community to deploy encourage increased partnerships	Strongly Encouraged	Strongly Encouraged	Strongly Encouraged	N/A

\*\*Please note:

- Program funds will only be released to successful applicants, and not to their partners.
- Applicants who have received over \$500,000 of funding from OCI administered programs in their lifetime (excluding Talent Edge) are required to obtain OCI approval before a new application for funding is initiated.

## How the funding works:

- Eligible applicants can apply for a maximum of \$300,000 to develop and deploy engaging educational programs for at least one of the following audience segments:
  - Kindergarten to Grade 4
  - Grade 5 to Grade 9
  - Grade 10 to Grade 12
  - Post-secondary students (undergraduate and/or graduate)
- Applicants must submit one application that clearly articulates how they intend to uniquely engage each audience segment
- Please note the maximum funding an applicant can receive is \$300,000 regardless of the number of audience segments included in their proposals.

## Eligible Expenses:

Eligible expenses under this program cover expenses incurred by the applicant under the following categories:

- Travel
- Salaries
- Operating expenses

Please refer to the Eligible Expenses Guidelines

## **Matching Contribution Requirements**

Applicants that classify as non-profit organizations and academic institutions must provide a matching contribution for the project of at least one full-time employee whose salary is paid wholly by the applicant. This employee must be dedicated to the development and implementation of the program. This requirement does not apply to Indigenous communities.

## Please note:

- 1- Matching contributions must be coming directly from the organization/ institution. Funds cannot come from other public funds or be leveraged for other public funds.
- 2- Applicants are responsible for meeting their commitment to the matching contribution. Underspending will result in an equal amount deducted from OCI's final contribution.

## Flow of Funds:

- OCI funds flow only to the Applicant.
- Upon project activation, OCI will release an advanced payment of up to 50% of the total OCI award, at the sole discretion of OCI.
- The remaining 50% of the overall funding will be released within 30 days of the submission of the required final reports including data, and information requirements, claim form, proof of expenditures and partnership contributions, financial attestation, and a request for reimbursement.
- Only eligible expenses will be reimbursed to successful applicants. (Please refer to the Eligible Expenses guidelines document linked above under Eligible Expenses).

# **Reporting**

Please note that to receive funding from OCI, the applicant MUST complete all required reports as contractual obligation. Note: Applicants MUST retain all proof of purchase, receipts, and other relevant documentation relating to eligible expenses. These should be included in Final Report.

- All projects should be completed by September 30, 2024, at the latest no project extensions will be provided.
- Applicants that cannot fulfill this requirement will not be eligible for funding.
- All eligible expenses related to project execution should be incurred by September 30, 2024 (no expenses incurred after September 30 will be honoured).
- All final reports should be submitted by October 15, 2024, at the latest. There will be no extensions granted for the final reports.

Reporting instructions and templates will be sent to successful parties at the time of reporting. Reports must be received and approved by OCI prior to release of funds for eligible claims.

The Report form is accessed directly on the AccessOCI system from the Report Tab.

Forty-five (45) days prior to the scheduled completion date, the Applicant and project partner(s) will receive an email notification of the project end date from the AccessOCI system, with a link to the Final Project Report, should the Applicant or project partner(s) wish to begin entering data.

On the scheduled project completion date, the Applicant and project partner(s) will receive another notification and a link to complete a Final Project Report the AccessOCI system

Applicants must submit their Final Reports within 15 days of project completion to be reimbursed for eligible expenses and maintain good financial standing with OCI.

#### **Final Report**

- The report should describe the status of program milestones and financial spending.
- All reports must be accompanied by the receipts of expenses incurred towards the program, and attestation from the institution or organization regarding the use of funds.
   In addition to the final report, there will be 1 interim presentation to show progress in developing the program.

#### How to Apply:

#### Full Proposal Application Submission Due Date: July 18, 2024

- Once ready to apply for the Regional Future Workforce Critical Minerals Pilot Program, the applicant should connect with their OCI Business Development and Commercialization Manager (BDCM) to start the process towards initiating an application.
- If new to OCI, the applicant should complete the <u>Program Enquiry Form</u> to be connected with an OCI BDCM to discuss the eligibility and how to start the application process.
  - Please note that completion of this form does not constitute an application for funding.
- Once the Program Enquiry Form has been completed, an OCI BDCM will contact you shortly to discuss the opportunity and, if required, to assist in initiating the application.

#### **Full Application: Application Requirements**

- The full application package must include:
  - (a) an application proposal
  - (b) other supporting documents (see details below).

#### Please note the due date to submit the full application is **July 18, 2024.**

#### 1. Application Proposal:

Applicants must develop and submit a proposal for the Regional Future Workforce – Critical Minerals Pilot Program, which includes the following sections:

- Background: Applicant organization background and demonstration of managing similar program deployments.
- Key Components:
  - Program Design, Development, and Implementation:
    - Details on program focus, methodology of student engagement, strategy on supporting EDI initiatives.
    - A detailed work plan outlining how they plan to manage key milestones, activities, and timelines.
  - Logistics and Administration: a draft of the program's logistics plan (includes the overall resources utilized to deploy the program).
  - Program Marketing and Promotion: Applicants are required to outline what marketing materials they plan to develop and how they plan to promote the program.

- Monitoring and Evaluation: Details on how the applicant plans to measure program outcomes and impact, and track and collect data. Please use OVIN's pre- and postprogram surveys as part of your evaluation techniques (the surveys will be provided if you are a successful applicant).
- Program Final Showcase: A final showcase will be hosted by OVIN inviting all applicants to showcase their work.
- Financial Breakdown and Justification: How the approved funds will be utilized.

## Assessment:

- The Regional Future Workforce Critical Minerals Pilot Program is a discretionary, nonentitlement program with limited funding. Not all eligible applications can necessarily be <u>funded</u>. All eligible applications are assessed on their merit and undergo a review process in which the applications are reviewed against program objectives and evaluation criteria.
- Full applications are internally reviewed for eligibility, completeness, and financial compliance prior to evaluation by independent external reviewers with domain and sector expertise.
- Each application will undergo a written external review by three subject-matter experts. All reviewers are bound by Non-Disclosure Agreements (NDAs).
- Applicants may be invited to present their proposals in person or by video conference to OVIN's External and Internal Review Panel.
- The External Review Panel will review the submitted applications and make the funding recommendations to OCI. The final funding decision is made by OCI.
- Successful applicants will be notified by OCI and provided with additional information necessary to activate the project.

# Timeline:

Action Item	Due Date
Applications open	July 4, 2024
Proponent Information Session	July 11, 2024
Applicants to Confirm Interest	July 12, 2024
Full Application Due	July 18, 2024
Eligibility Review of Applications	July 19, 2024
Applicants to address any elements of Eligibility Check	July 19, 2024
Final Eligibility Check/ReviewJuly 22, 2024	
Selected applicant presentations to OCI	July 25, 2024
OCI Final Decision - Award and Decline letters sent	July 26, 2024
Signed Agreement Due	July 29, 2024
Project Activation	August 1, 2024
OVIN Led Showcase Event for all Successful Applicants	Early September
Interim Applicants' Update Presentations	September 2024
Project Close	September 30, 2024

Final Reports Due	October 15, 2024
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## **Evaluation Criteria:**

- Applicant's previous experience running successful programming for K-12 and post-secondary students
- The grade range of students that applicants plan to design program(s) for
- The region(s) in Ontario where applicants plan to implement their program(s)
- Elements of technical, STEM or Skilled Trades education the program teaches and incorporates, and their relation to the critical minerals sector
- Applicant's focus and commitment to Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion, and their ability to support students from underrepresented groups
- How innovative the proposed program design is
- How innovative the proposed program curriculum is
- Whether proposed data collection methods are sufficient to understand program impact
- The projected number of students who will participate in the program
- Please note:
  - Preference will be given to applicants who can engage a higher number of students from underrepresented and equity deserving groups
  - Preference will be given to applicants that demonstrate plans to deploy the program to multiple audience segments and multiple regions within Ontario
  - To ensure we are representative of diverse audiences across the province, OCI will prioritize funding one applicant per region (as appropriate based on Applications received)
  - Applicants demonstrating strong partnerships or links to industry are preferable

## **Project Administration:**

## Project Activation

- Upon approval of a project for funding, the selected applicant will be forwarded a copy of the funding agreement with schedules specific to the approved proposal. This funding agreement must be signed via OCI's online electronic signature function by all contracting parties within 30 days of notification of the award.
- The purpose of the OCI funding agreement is to define roles and obligations for the project partners with regard to OCI's guidelines and funding contribution only. Project partners are encouraged to enter into a separate agreement to commit to other roles and responsibilities relating to the program.
- The project will be activated upon receipt of the signed funding agreement. The start date will by default be the date of activation and cannot be changed.

#### Links to Important documents:

- <u>Funding Agreement</u>
- Eligible Expenses
- <u>Application/ Proposal Questions</u>
- <u>Student and Instructor Survey</u>

## **Contacts:**

For further questions regarding program guidelines, eligibility, and the online application, please contact your OCI Business Development and Commercialization Manager (BDCM)

or

You can contact Shannon M. Miller (Talent Strategy & Workforce Planning Project Lead) directly at <u>smiller@oc-innovation.ca</u> for further information.