

Introduction

BCcampus is an online service connecting students and educators to programs and resources across all public post secondary institutions in BC. BCcampus provides a single access point for students who want to take post-secondary courses and programs by distance. Through BCcampus students receive online support services including course and program information, advising, admission, registration, library and course delivery services. BCcampus supports educators in developing online learning resources and building a shared community of practice. Through BCcampus educators receive development funds, access to a Shareable Online Learning Resources (SOL*R) repository, training and dissemination of best practices, and support for communities of interest.

The following values guide BCcampus in its work:

- Inter-institutional collaborative and effective working partnerships
- A learner-centric model for learning and student services
- Excellence, innovation and continuous improvement
- Recognition that the role of post-secondary education, skills training, research and development contributes to a successful BC economy
- Life-long learning opportunities for all British Columbians
- Increased choice for learning by utilizing technology

One of the goals of BCcampus is to increase the number of post-secondary online courses, programs, resources and services available to students and educators in British Columbia. Toward that end a \$1 million dollar, 2006 Online Program Development Fund is being made available to BC's public post secondary institutions. Through this Request for Proposals (RFP) BCcampus invites BC public post secondary institutions to submit proposals.

Criteria for Funding

All proposals should:

- be supported and approved as strategically important by participating institutions
- produce deliverables provided to all BC students through the BCcampus portal
- produce deliverables to be shared with all BC public post secondary institutions
- exhibit the characteristics of quality teaching and learning
- demonstrate sustainability and cost-effectiveness
- include contributions in dollars and/or in-kind from other sources, either internal or external (such as private partnerships)
- demonstrate collaboration among two or more BC public post secondary institutions

Note: The 2003, 2004, and 2005 rounds of the BCcampus Online Program Development Fund invested over \$4 million dollars in creation of online learning resources. Sixty six projects were funded to develop 220 courses, 18 course modules, 131 learning objects, and 17 virtual labs & tools. As of January 2006 thirty one of these projects had completed their development process. A key component of all rounds of the OPDF has been a requirement for grant recipients to license their resources and make them available for sharing and reuse across BC's public post secondary system. The BCcampus Shareable Online Learning Resources (SOL*R) repository was launched in Nov. 2005 as

the place where resources are to be uploaded and made available for reuse. Concurrent with its launch a set of SOL*R support services were made available to developers. Institutions that received grant money from earlier rounds of the OPDF and have completed the development of the resources must upload the resources to SOL*R as part of the grant agreement. *Institutions that received funding from the 2003, 2004, or 2005 OPDF and that have completed the development of their resources must upload these resources to SOL*R (by RFP application due date) to be eligible for 2006 OPDF funding.*

The 2006 Online Program Development Fund invites proposals in two categories:

1. Courses
2. Reuse

1. Courses (expected allocation ~ 50% of the fund)

BCcampus actively supports institutional and inter-institutional initiatives to develop and deliver online learning courses and programs that provide access to all public post secondary students through BCcampus. The courses category of this 2006 Online Program Development Fund focuses on providing funding to increase the range and breadth of fully online courses available.

- Proposals for fully online courses in an area of high student demand and/or provincial, regional, or local labour market need are preferred.
- Preference will be given to online course proposals that increase access to BC's public higher education.
- Proposals that improve access to remote or rural learners, reduce the percentage of qualified student turnaways, and/or relieve waitlists are especially sought.
- Preference will be given to proposals involving partnerships between multiple public post secondary institutions. Partner institutions must each state how they will use the developed resource.
- Preference will be given to proposals to develop online learning courses that build out complete online programs leading to a credential. These can be new programs or programs already started but requiring additional courses to be completed.
- Preference will be given to credit based online courses
- Funding to create online programs and courses that already exist within the BC higher education system will not be provided. To see a listing of completely online and distance public post-secondary credit courses see <http://www.bccourses.com>
- Proposals are expected to enable student access and enrollment in courses from multiple institutions including clear transfer and articulation mechanisms. Transfer and articulation agreements of 100 and 200 level courses may already exist, see <http://www.bccat.bc.ca>. BCcampus expects that for courses that are not now articulated but are potentially transferable, a plan should be submitted explaining how transfer will be ensured for those courses among participating institutions. The plan should involve a mechanism for sign off by institutions involved in the proposal.
- Preference will be given to proposals that form business relationships with BC e-learning companies, not-for-profits, and/or professional associations for development of program proposal deliverables

- Preference will be given to course proposals that make the resulting program available through the BCcampus student portal and market the program via a institutional/BCcampus partnership
- Proposals are encouraged to use development guidelines around optimizing the effectiveness and reusability of online learning resources such as the Flexible E-Content Guidelines and the Digital Learning Content Standards draft produced by the BC Ministry of Education. Both these guidelines are available as .pdf documents from the BCcampus web site – see Current Call for Proposals section at <http://www.bccampus.ca/Page88.aspx>

2. Reuse Development (expected allocation ~ 50% of fund)

Summaries of projects funded through the 2003, 2004, and 2005 OPDF RFP's are on the BCcampus web site at <http://www.bccampus.ca/Page91.aspx>. A component of these earlier OPDF rounds has been the licensing of the resources so that they are freely available for reuse across BC's public post secondary system.

The benefits of this approach include:

- Allowing intellectual property (IP) and copyright to be held by the developer
- Leveraging an initial investment of public taxpayers dollars many times over by allowing for free sharing and reuse among BC public post secondary educators
- Establishing a policy for online learning resource development that supports free sharing of content within the public post secondary system while still retaining commercialization potential outside
- Eliminating the weeks and months of time it can take to seek permission to use existing digital materials by tagging the asset with explicit terms defining rights to use. Educators can use the asset immediately without having to go through a permission seeking process.
- Allowing others to reuse and modify original work providing a means for continuous improvement of online learning resources by a collective of professional peers.
- Optimizing learner experiences by generating high quality online learning resources over time.
- Tracking use and reuse creates a form of market research. Lots of reuse of a resource signals its potential value in other academic domains or jurisdictions. High use data is invaluable for launching commercialization scenarios requiring investment based on the demonstrated market potential of a resource.
- Moving development of educational content from being closed and exclusively in the control of a single educator to open and shared with others. When professional peers can see and contribute to a work there is increased pressure to develop quality work in the first place and the means to quickly improve it if needed.
- Leveraging a unique aspect of digital assets - the marginal cost and effort in making copies and distributing online learning resources over a network.
- Building the reputation of developers through attribution. Developers whose work is used by hundreds or thousands of other people receive recognition that can be used to support performance measures.

The reuse category of the 2006 OPDF RFP seeks proposals that enhance and leverage these benefits.

Reuse resources can be those funded in earlier rounds of the OPDF or those developed outside the OPDF. All resources proposed for reuse development must currently be in use with BC students.

All resources improved through a 2006 OPDF reuse grant, even those originally developed outside the OPDF, become licensed for sharing and reuse using Creative Commons or BC Commons and loaded into SOL*R.

Reuse development proposals can be for learning objects, courses, and/or tools. Proposals must show how the benefits associated with reuse will be fulfilled and enhanced by proposal activities. Proposals must quantify how the value and usefulness of an existing resource will be significantly improved in terms of student access and diversity of use case scenarios across and within institutions.

Preference will be given to reuse proposals that form business relationships with BC e-learning companies, not-for-profits, and/or professional associations for development of proposal deliverables.

Reuse development proposals are asked to estimate the starting dollar value of the resource being reused, prior to further development, in their application form.

Proposals are encouraged to use development guidelines around optimizing the effectiveness and reusability of online learning resources such as the Flexible E-Content Guidelines and the Digital Learning Content Standards draft produced by the BC Ministry of Education. Both these guidelines are available as .pdf documents from the BCcampus web site – see Current Call for Proposals section at <http://www.bccampus.ca/Page88.aspx>

Proposals for reuse in one or more of the following categories are invited:

2.1 Continuous improvement of existing online learning resources.

Existing online learning resources funded through the OPDF or other means need regular updating and enhancements. This category of reuse seeks proposals that build on, extend, or enhance existing online learning resources.

2.2 Reuse of existing online learning resources for credit-based blended or fully online learning initiatives.

Existing online learning resources funded through the OPDF or other means have reuse potential for credit based blended online learning where online is combined with campus based activities and for fully online learning initiatives different from the original use case. This category of reuse seeks proposals that build on, extend, or enhance a resource or use it in a new way for blended or fully online learning initiatives.

2.3 Use of existing online learning resources for inter-provincial, national, or international online education initiatives.

The OPDF supports development of online learning resources for BC students. Existing online learning resources funded through the OPDF or other means and in use with BC students have reuse potential for reaching new markets and supporting inter-provincial, national or international education initiatives. This category of reuse seeks proposals that reuse and further develop existing online learning resources for BC students and beyond. Proposals for non-profit, cost-recovery, and revenue generating ventures are all welcome. Proposals can involve international higher education partners.

Proposals must show how OPDF funded reuse development strengthens the international venture and supports strategic provincial and institutional academic and business goals.

2.4 Other Innovation

Innovative proposals for new reuse scenarios are welcome. Strategies and tools for improving reuse are especially sought. Proposals that magnify reuse benefits through federation with other repositories, use of peer review, or further develop the learning design of resources are encouraged.

Application Process

Proposals must be coordinated through, approved, and submitted via e-mail by the head of institutional academic affairs. The application form should be completed and e-mailed to: pstacey@bccampus.ca. While the application form provides the basic information required those wishing to submit more detail can attach appendices as required. Successful evaluation is facilitated by proposals that are well written and specifically address guideline requirements.

Proposals with multiple institutional partners must designate a lead institution for the project and submit the proposal through the lead. Institutional partners should include a letter of support identifying names and roles of partner participants, along with how the developed resource will be used by each partner, as part of the proposal.

The deadline for submission of proposals is April 28, 2006.

Review and Selection Process

RFP evaluation, selection and award is done by independent professional peer review against a set of criteria based on the guidelines.

Communication and media announcements around OPDF grant awards will be coordinated with the Ministry of Advanced Education.