

*Request for Proposals: Essential Skills Expert
“Development of Alternate Career Information for CSMLS Internationally Educated MLT Applicants*



Canadian Society for Medical Laboratory Science
Société canadienne de science de laboratoire médical

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

Essential Skills Expert:

Development of Alternate Career Information for CSMLS Internationally Educated Medical Laboratory Technologist Applicants

Issue Date: September 6, 2013

Response Deadline: September 30, 2013 (5:00pm EST)

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Project Overview

Approximately 200 internationally educated medical laboratory technologists (IEMLTs) apply to CSMLS each year to have their credentials assessed. In most cases (90% of all assessments) internationally educated practitioners do not meet Canadian standards immediately; that is to say “Prior Learning Assessors” typically identify gaps in their education/experience which must be remediated before they become eligible to sit the certification exam. To this end, each of these applicants receives a customized “learning plan”, detailing subject deficiencies and potential avenues of remediation. These individuals are given a period of time to remediate these gaps and become eligible to sit the CSMLS certification exam.

However, even after an internationally educated individual has remediated any and all identified gaps, anecdotal evidence and quantitative research suggests that they still experience difficulty passing the certification exam and becoming fully integrated into the workforce. A CSMLS study shows that only 34% of international candidates pass the certification exam on their first attempt compared with 86% of those educated in Canada¹.

Although many applicants successfully complete their learning plan and become certified/licensed there are a number who are “lost” in the system and never become employed as medical laboratory technologists. While there are likely a number of reasons for this occurrence, in some cases, it is possible that many come to the realization that the practice of laboratory science in Canada is considerably different than they experienced in their home country. As such, the job of a licensed/registered MLT may not be the most practical and fulfilling choice for these individuals. Directing applicants, early in the assessment process of potential, alternate careers that make better use of their skill sets may help to reduce the number of those who are lost in the system and decrease levels of unemployment and underemployment among applicants.

Project Objectives

The primary objectives/deliverables associated with the “Alternate Careers” project are as follows:

- To undertake an environmental scan/literature review of best practices in the field of alternate career pathway development and communication;
- To have an expert review laboratory science competency profiles and essential skills (and NOC codes/descriptions) and recommend a list of suitable, potential alternate careers essential skills (NOC) – not confined to the health sector;
- To conduct focus groups and/or surveys with IEMLTs who are i) currently in the assessment process, ii) have become licensed and ii) “dropped out” of the assessment process and gather their feedback on the type(s) and potential utility communication materials related to alternate careers;
- Develop a list of alternate career pathways/communication materials for IEMLTs and associated protocols how and when this information should be provided to applicants;

¹ “Determination of Factors Contributing to Exam Success for Prior Learning Assessment Candidates” Christine Nielsen, CSMLS, HSM Practicum Ryerson University. April 2004, Pg. 8.

- Revise elements of the PLAR process as necessary (i.e. define appropriate intervention points and communication materials)
- Based on the above, develop partnerships with referral sources (i.e. employers and/or placement agencies).

Key Subcontracts

A number of individual consultants will be retained to support the project and its objectives. These include:

1. *A Researcher:* An external researcher will be retained to conduct a literature review and environmental scan related to alternate careers. Presently, CSMLS (and many other regulatory bodies) have conducted fairly limited work in this regard. The only two “alternate careers” CSMLS have identified (biotechnology sector, medical laboratory technology assistant) have come about in an *ad hoc* manner as opportunities presented. The researcher will bring forth best practices in the field of alternate career generation so that CSMLS is able to more systematically identify potentially referral sources and prepare appropriate interventions.
2. *An Essential Skills Expert:* A key component of the project relates to determining what MLT skills are transferrable to other unregulated careers. CSMLS will retain an expert with experience in reviewing competency profiles and translating them into practical workplace terms. The aim of this work is to generate a list of alternate careers that are potential referral routes for IEMLTs that are unlikely to become licensed as such in Canada.
3. *A Focus Group Facilitator:* Once the findings from the researcher and essential skills expert have been analyzed, the CSMLS will retain an individual or firm (by competitive RFP process) with experience in working directly with internationally educated health professionals. This individual will be charged with the task of gathering information directly from IEMLTs on the perceived value, need and timing of alternate career information.
4. *A Communications Consultant:* Once potential alternative careers and intervention strategies have been determined, a communication consultant will be retained via a competitive RFP process. This individual will develop suitable material directed at IEMLTs in the credential assessment process. All material will be provided in a plain-language format (in both official languages) to ensure the highest possible levels of clarity and comprehension.

Central to the success of the project is the identification of select alternate careers related to the profession of medical laboratory science that certain applicants could be directed to during the application and assessment process. It is in this capacity that we are seeking the services of an essential skills expert (#2).

Reporting Structure

The essential skills expert will report directly to the project manager, Keith Johnson, and will also liaise with the project Advisory Committee, and CSMLS staff.

Deliverables

- Review the CSMLS competencies profiles and essential skills documents related to medical laboratory technologists.
 - Essential competencies:
<http://www10.hrsdc.gc.ca/English>ShowProfile.aspx?v=383>
 - Competency profiles: <http://www.csmls.org/Certification/Competency-Profiles.aspx>
http://www.csmls.org/csmls/media/documents/comp_profile/Comptency-Profile---General-MLT-2005.pdf
- Map essential skills/competencies to potential alternate careers (preference given to those careers with National Occupation Codes (NOCs))
 - Example - MLT NOC:
<http://www5.hrsdc.gc.ca/NOC/English/NOC/2011/Profile.aspx?val1=3211>
- Prepare 12, 2-page fact sheets for selected alternate careers*, including information related to:
 - Overall description of the career
 - Links to relevant labour market information
 - Qualification paths including additional training (if any) required
 - Links to relevant resources (employers, training programs, etc.)
- Prepare a summary report that details:
 - The essential skills/competencies identified from key CSMLS documents
 - The methodology used to identify promising alternate careers
 - Recommendations as to next steps in the development of alternate career information from IEMLTs

*Note- two promising alternate careers have already been identified: pathology assistant and biotechnology. Supporting information regarding these will be provided CSMLS.

*Note – promising alternate careers included in the list of 12 should ideally require no more than 3 years of additional retraining/education requirements.

*Note- promising alternate careers do not necessarily need to be in the health care sector.

Tentative Timing and Activities

| Time | Activity | Responsibility |
|--------------------------|--|------------------------------------|
| September 6, 2013 | Distribute RFP | Project Manager (PM) |
| September 30, 2013, 2012 | Receive responses | PM |
| October 7, 2013 | Select Essential Skills Expert and initiate contract | PM and Selection Committee (SC) |
| October, 2013 | Initial meeting with the PM and CSMLS staff | PM, CSMLS, Essential Skills Expert |
| October, 2013 | Preparation of mapping exercise and | Essential Skills Expert |

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| | draft fact sheets | |
| November 1, 2013 | Update teleconference with Advisory Committee (AC) | PM, AC, Essential Skills Expert |
| December, 2013 | Draft of final report | Essential Skills Expert |
| December 11, 2013 | Update teleconference with Advisory Committee | PM, AC, Essential Skills Expert |
| January, 2014 | Final meeting with the PM and CSMLS staff | PM, CSMLS, Essential Skills Expert |
| January 31, 2014 | Revisions to final report and fact sheets | Essential Skills Expert |

Assumptions

- CSMLS reserves the right to refuse all bids received.
- Documents will be prepared in English. The costs of any written translations will be the responsibility of CSMLS.
- The essential skills expert will provide written status reports to the project manager as required.
- The essential skills expert will provide updates to CSMLS and the project's Advisory Committee via teleconference as required.
- The essential skills expert will be required to attend two face-to-face meetings in on the Greater Toronto-Hamilton Area (GTHA).
- Bids are not to exceed \$20,000 (inclusive of all applicable taxes – i.e. GST/HST).
- The consultant will be reimbursed a maximum of \$1,500 for travel related expenses in line with CSMLS/Treasury Board rates. There are no additional funds provided for travel beyond this sum (as such, these amounts should be considered in the bid proffered).
- All documents produced in this project will become the exclusive property of the CSMLS.
- Documents will also be submitted to the Government of Canada as part of the project reporting requirements and may be shared by the CSMLS and key project participants (i.e., professions participating in the Advisory Committee) through professional networks and dissemination venues.
- Upon signing the project contract, the essential skills expert will be required to sign an agreement respecting the confidential nature of CSMLS documentation and content.
- No part of this project is to be subcontracted without prior permission of the CSMLS.
- A bid tendered and/or awarded in response to this RFP does not preclude a firm or individual from bidding or being awarded another contract associated with this project.
- Joint submissions as well as those from individuals and firms are welcome.

Proposal Format

The proposal is not to exceed eight (8) pages in length (exclusive of curriculum vitae).

The proposal must include the following five (5) components:

1. An introductory section that describes the intended methodology and shows that the applicant clearly understands the scope and intent of the project and how to approach this type of work;
2. A work plan detailing timelines, key activities, deliverables, communications, personnel and associated costs;

3. A brief account of any similar projects the applicant has completed in the past with specific attention to those dealing with the research for health care professions, immigrant groups and/or regulatory bodies;
4. An account (if any) of the bidder's experience with essential skills, professional competencies and/or alternate careers;
5. A brief curriculum vitae/bio of all the applicants involved; and
6. 2-3 references of clients from similar projects CSMLS may contact at its discretion.

Preparation of Proposals

- Proposals are to be sent by email to the project manager, Keith Johnson at keithjohnson.pm@gmail.com.

Proposals are to be received no later than September 30, 2013 at 5:00 p.m. EST.

- Questions regarding the RFP are to be sent in writing to keithjohnson.pm@gmail.com. No questions will be answered within 48 hours of the submission deadline.

Criteria for Review of Proposals

The Selection Committee will use the following criteria to review proposals:

- Understanding of requirements – the proposal demonstrates that the respondent has a clear understanding of the scope and nature of the work required
- Suitability of the proposed methods/approach
- Plan meets the stated objectives
- Appropriateness of the timeline for completion
- Qualifications and related experience – of both the organization (if applicable) and the individual(s) assigned to the project
- References from customers for whom the organization/individual(s) has completed similar work
- Reasonableness of costs for proposed methods/approach