

Funding Approved for Innovative Virtual Reality Project



Virtual competency assessments to become a reality for internationally trained paramedics and medical school graduates

July 19, 2021

REGINA – The Saskatchewan College of Paramedics (SCoP) is excited to announce the approval of ~\$800,000 in funding from Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC). The money will go toward an innovative project that uses virtual reality to assess the skills of internationally educated applicants for licensure in paramedicine, prior to incurring licensing and travel costs.

“Completing a competency assessment from a distance on a paramedic who is looking to move to Saskatchewan is something we have not been able to do before,” said Jacquie Messer-Lepage, Executive Director of the Saskatchewan College of Paramedics. “This project will allow us to send a headset to applicants, which will connect them to our virtual assessment software from anywhere in the world. The applicant being assessed would put the headset on and go through various modules in a virtual environment, allowing us to assess skill and competency without travel costs, and with less disruption to the applicant’s life.”

With the additional support of the Saskatchewan Ministry of Immigration and Career Training, the overarching objective of the Virtual Assessment for Paramedic Occupational Competency (VAPOC) project is to develop web-based immersive technology tools.

Saskatoon technology company Luxsonic Technologies Inc has been awarded the contract.

“We’re very excited to be working with SCoP on this innovative project. Remote assessment of hands-on clinical skills is a very challenging problem, one that isn’t easily solved using traditional technology,” said Mike Wesolowski, CEO of Luxsonic Technologies. “We’re thrilled that SCoP recognizes that immersive technology can provide a high fidelity, hands on, and low-cost solution to this problem. VAPOC will be the first of its kind VR-based occupational competency assessment and we look forward to seeing it used by paramedic regulators across Canada.”

The project will also provide a mechanism to assess International Medical Graduates wishing to pursue an alternative career as an Advanced Care Paramedic. Project results will also be shared nationally to further support harmonization of competency assessment and labour mobility across Canada.

“We have a healthcare system in Saskatchewan that needs more paramedics, especially at the Advanced Care level,” said Messer-Lepage. “The educational institutions are graduating as

many as they can, but it's still not enough. This tool has the potential to help us attract the number of practitioners we will need in the future.”

In the future it will also enable paramedics working in rural and remote regions across Saskatchewan to update their required competencies without leaving their home communities.

Project history

In 2017 SCoP became the first paramedic regulator in Canada to develop and launch an online portal (SK Portal) for internationally educated paramedicine applicants. The project was completed with funding support of the Saskatchewan Ministry of Immigration and Career Training (ICT) and served to streamline application and regulatory evaluation processes for internationally trained applicants coming to Saskatchewan.

Following implementation of the SK Portal, SCoP leveraged its work on the project in support of a 2017/2018 federal grant application to establish a national point of entry into paramedic licensure in Canada. The SCoP model served as a backbone for the national project as it demonstrated proof of concept.

An application for funding was submitted to the *ESDC Foreign Credential Recognition Program*, and significant multi-year funding was awarded to the Canadian Organization of Paramedic Regulators (COPR), of which SCoP is an active member and key project contributor. The COPR International Applicant Portal was launched in November 2019.

For information on SCoP research, visit www.collegeofparamedics.sk.ca/research/projects/

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About the Saskatchewan College of Paramedics

The Saskatchewan College of Paramedics is the licensing and regulatory body for Emergency Medical Responders (EMR), Primary Care Paramedics (PCP), Intermediate Care Paramedics (ICP), Advanced Care Paramedics (ACP), and Critical Care Paramedics (CCP) in the province of Saskatchewan.

The College, also known as SCoP, has a mandate to protect the public ensuring that EMR and Paramedic professionals possess the knowledge, skills, and judgement necessary to practice safely and appropriately. SCoP accomplishes this through establishing entry to practice qualifications, licensing and certification systems, and disciplinary functions.

Paramedics and Emergency Medical Responders in Saskatchewan are self-regulated by the Saskatchewan College of Paramedics under the authority of *The Paramedics Act 2007*.

For more information about the College, please visit <http://collegeofparamedics.sk.ca>