FWI Funding Statement

Project title: Undergraduate Education & Civic Engagement: An Online Template for Faculty to Use Public Outreach as An Educational Strategy

How the FWI funds have been spent:
Please find attached: [1] a letter provided by Normal Agency (now known as BLVD) outlining terms and conditions for the allocation of $5,000 to different phases of the project (i.e., website development) and [2] two receipts provided by Normal Agency for approximately $2,500 each. There is no balance remaining.

1. **How the activity enhanced the competence and effectiveness of this individual (or others) with respect to teaching, research, service and/or leadership:**
The aim of the proposal was to request funding to create an online instructional template under the heading of *MacEngaged* for faculty at McMaster University and beyond to implement a unique group-based project into their course curriculum (regardless of discipline and year of study) that would allow students to work with their peers in groups of five-to-six students to propose and successfully implement projects using (course-specific) content learned in the classroom with civic engagement. This online template would also provide instructions on how to guide and motivate students to document their work and create reflections through the use of a Learning Portfolio. A final aim would be to create an ongoing survey-based database using the free and open source online application LimeSurvey® where students, instructors, and community partners would be invited to complete questionnaires assessing their experiences so that this data could be used to better the structure of such types of (civic engagement) assignments as well as to add to the existing literature on student engagement and intellectual development using public outreach as an educational platform.

The MacEngaged website has been successfully created and is available on the McMaster University server (http://www.macengaged.com/). This website has been advertised through personal communications and as part of poster presentations and workshops at teaching and learning conferences across Canada and the United States. Conference presentations have been delivered at *Society for Teaching and Learning at Higher Education* (STLHE; Vancouver, 2015), *Canada International Conference on Education* (Toronto, 2015), *Integrated and Engaged Learning Conference* (Waterloo, 2015), the *Association for Authentic, Experiential & Evidence-Based Learning Conference* (Boston, 2015) and at McMaster University through our *Teaching & Learning Conference* (December, 2015).

I have received valuable and extensive feedback on design of the website and the implementation of MacEngaged. As a result, during the winter semester of 2016, I updated the organization and delivery of MacEngaged in Psych 2NF3 (Basic & Clinical Neuroscience). I believe the recommendations have had an enormous impact on my ability to execute this project (and the course) as course ratings have increased from 7 (out of 10) in previous years to 9 (out of 10) in the current year.
I have collaborated with Dr. Paul McNicholas and his post-doctoral student Cristina Tortora from the Department of Mathematics & Statistics at McMaster University for guidance on how best to structure survey questions associated with the research component of this project so that we are able to track changes in individual students from start to end of a course.

2. **How the activity contributed to the goals of a course/program/department/Faculty;**
   The implementation of MacEngaged in Psych 2NF3 is very much supported by the department since it is the only community engagement project in a second level course in Psychology, Neuroscience & Behaviour.

3. **The results of your evaluation of the quality of the expected development and its potential impact;**
   In collaboration with 4th-year thesis students (during the academic years of 2014-2015 and 2015-2016) and in consultation with Dr. McNicholas, a student survey has been successfully created to assess the development of students undergoing MacEngaged from an academic, personal, civic, and professional perspective. When this survey was administered through LimeSurvey®, the response rate was very low (roughly 20%). In order to increase student participation, data was then collected through surveys delivered via hard-copy at the start and end of the course with a response rate of about 60%

   The preliminary data indicate that the greatest changes in student perceptions occurred in the theme of academic development, specifically academic value of a community engagement project, and student-faculty interactions. There were no changes in student perceptions observed for questions on future community engagement plans and value of reflection.

4. **How you have (or plan to) communicate and disseminate the insights gained with peers and broader McMaster communities.**
   The data collected during the 2014-2015 academic year was presented at the Teaching & Learning Conference at McMaster University (December, 2015). Data collected during the 2015-2016 academic year will be presented at STLHE (June, 2016) along with continued promotion of the MacEngaged website. Currently, we are in process of re-analyzing the data and preparing it for inclusion in a publication for submission to a journal on the scholarship of teaching and learning.

5. **How the outcomes of the project will be sustained or expanded.**
   Normal agency has committed to making updates on the website free of charge for the next five years. Two thesis students have been recruited for the 2016-2017 academic year. They will assist in creating online surveys for instructors that have adopted some or all elements of MacEngaged in their courses. They will further assist in creating a second survey for community partners.
6. **Please outline any barriers or challenges that may have prevented you from achieving some of your project goals.**

The ethics process associated with collecting data from students took much longer than expected. Most of the time was spent on [1] creation of content for the website, [2] design of the website, [3] creation and implementation of student surveys at McMaster University. Moreover, the extremely low participation rate by (McMaster) students via LimeSurvey® was unexpected. It took some time to reorganize the strategy for collecting data. As a result, it impacted the creation and implementation of LimeSurveys® for community partners and other instructors. The plan for 2016-2017 is to continue collecting data on MacEngaged students (enrolled in Psych 2NF3) via hardcopies; gain ethics approval to collect data from students and instructors at other institutions and also their community partners (through the MacEngaged website).

The financial and project reports can be submitted to fwi@mcmaster.ca.