



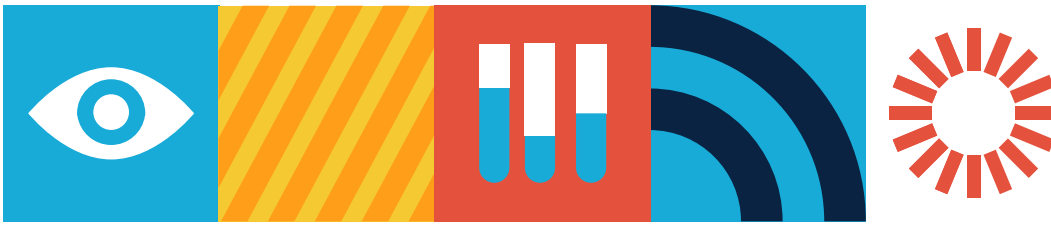
Strengthening Canada's Global Skills

Submission to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance
Pre-budget Consultations in Advance of Budget 2024

August 2023

Submitted by the Global Skills Consortium





Recommendations to promote global skills development among Canadian post-secondary students:

Transition GSO from a pilot to a permanent program and increase the current funding envelope to \$200 million over five years with \$40 million ongoing annually.

By ensuring sustainability and growth, the program will continue to effectively equip Canadian students with 21st century skills, deepen global ties, and enhance Canada's competitiveness.

This investment would significantly expand program impact, enable a broader reach and access, and strengthen benefits for Canadian students, businesses, and communities.



What is Global Skills Opportunity?

Global Skills Opportunity (GSO) is Canada's national outbound student mobility pilot program. GSO helps Canadian post-secondary students, especially underrepresented students (students with disabilities, Indigenous students, and students from low-income backgrounds), acquire in-demand global skills through international study and work experiences. With an emphasis on innovation, the program empowers post-secondary institutions to reduce barriers to participation and expand the number of enriching and accessible experiences in non-traditional destinations. Post-secondary institutions across Canada are ideally positioned to leverage and continue to expand their international networks and partnerships to support a growing cohort of globally minded and globally skilled students.

Current GSO objectives and targets:

Objectives

1 Widen access and equity to participation in outbound student mobility programming

Program targets

50% of total funding is to provide study/work abroad opportunities to target student groups (low-income students, students with disabilities and Indigenous students). The program aims to address inequality and representation in outbound student mobility through inclusive policy and practices.

2 Diversify the destination countries where students choose to study/work abroad

40% of total funding is to prioritize activity in non-traditional countries (i.e. countries other than the US, UK, France and Australia)

3 Test innovative approaches to reduce barriers to study/work abroad

10% of total funding is to be used to support innovative approaches to reduce barriers to outbound mobility in Canada

GSO is an integral component of the Government of Canada’s skills strategy and a flagship initiative under its [International Education Strategy](#). Projects are designed, implemented, and managed by participating universities, colleges, cégeps and institutes across the country with funding to support the participation of students. This decentralized approach allows post-secondary institutions to create experiences that best serve the needs of their students and communities.

“The greatest thing I gained from my GSO experience is confidence, which has in turn strengthened so many of my skills. Professionally, academically, and personally, I am more prepared to own my strengths and to step outside of my comfort zone. My interpersonal, communication, and leadership skills have all benefited from that confidence.”

JACLYN HOLDSWORTH

McMaster University - Trinidad and Tobago

Canadians need to be globally fluent and connected, especially in emerging economies, to drive new trade and export opportunities. GSO funded international learning and working experiences create these valuable new human networks – in fact 75% of participants report having expanded their international networks because of their GSO experience.



“Working alongside professionals in my field and learning about the industry from a global perspective will give me a competitive edge in my career. I developed a global mindset, cross-cultural communication skills, and an understanding of how to work effectively in diverse teams. I am more motivated than ever to pursue my goals and make a positive impact in the world.”

TRAVIS DAVID

Nova Scotia Community College – Vietnam.

An investment in global education is an investment in Canada’s future – and will produce returns for decades to come. GSO directly supports Canada’s Export Diversification Strategy, its new Indo-Pacific Strategy, and Canada-Africa Economic Cooperation Strategy, all of which recognize the urgency of such investments.



Benefits of Global Skills Development

Canada must invest in the development of high-end talent that can successfully navigate everchanging events and new markets.

This skill set enables individuals to effectively adapt in diverse cultural settings, communicate across borders, solve complex problems, and collaborate in a globalized world. Global skills include cultural competence, intercultural communication, problem solving, adaptability, collaboration, and critical thinking, many of which align with Canada's [Skills for Success Framework](#).

“Investing in international experiences is investing in creativity, in problem solving, in building relationships, in fostering entrepreneurship, in building leadership capabilities – all which are critical for Canadian business.”

JOHN BAKER

Chief Executive Officer at D2L

As structural, technological and environmental factors continue to reshape Canada's labour market, global skills are increasingly in demand by employers – and it is vital that Canadians from all backgrounds have access to these opportunities. GSO equips Canadians entering the workforce with the skills needed for Canadian businesses to compete in a rapidly changing and increasingly international labour market.

“Canadian companies benefit from hiring individuals who can build strong, trusted relationships across cultures and borders.”

TABATHA BULL

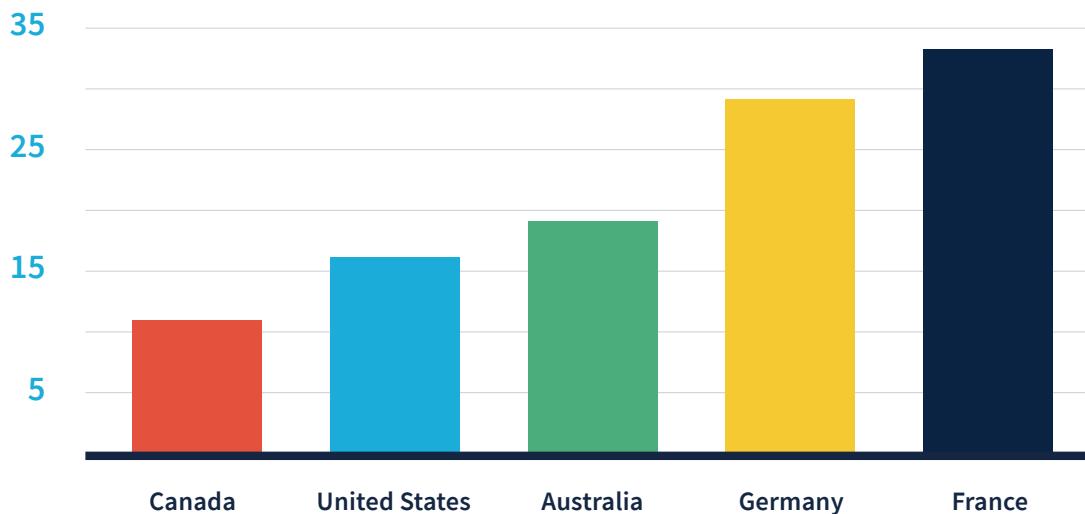
President and CEO, Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business

Canada is recognized globally as a stable and reliable trading partner and one of the best places to do business. When Canadian students have international experiences, they foster relationships and people-to-people ties that facilitate opportunities for Canada to diversify and expand business activities. Global skills are pivotal to building and leveraging these strong international relationships.

Investing in the acquisition of global skills is a way for Canada to future-proof its labour market in the face of short-term and long-term challenges, while also serving as a social and economic equalizer. Research shows that students who study and/or work abroad achieve higher academic scores, degree completion rates, employment rates and salaries after graduation, with those from underrepresented groups seeing the greatest benefits.

Unlike peer countries such as the United States, the United Kingdom, Australia, France, Germany (and the European Union more broadly), relatively few Canadian students are afforded the opportunity to study or work internationally, in the context of their post-secondary education.

PERCENTAGE OF STUDENTS WHO STUDY ABROAD



Recognizing the importance of investing in global skills and drawing inspiration from GSO, the UK launched its [Turing Scheme](#) in December 2020 with an annual budget of £110 million and a commitment to providing international study and work experiences to over 35,000 students yearly.



Moving Beyond Pilot Phase

Global Skills Opportunity is a success and is well on its way to surpassing its targets.

To date, more than 5,000 students – 75% of whom identify as underrepresented – have completed a GSO funded international study or work experience in one of more than 100 countries. Of that group, 64% identify as a low-income student, 18% as a student with a disability and 13% as an Indigenous student. GSO has been a strong catalyst to bringing the benefits of internationalization to Indigenous students across Canada.

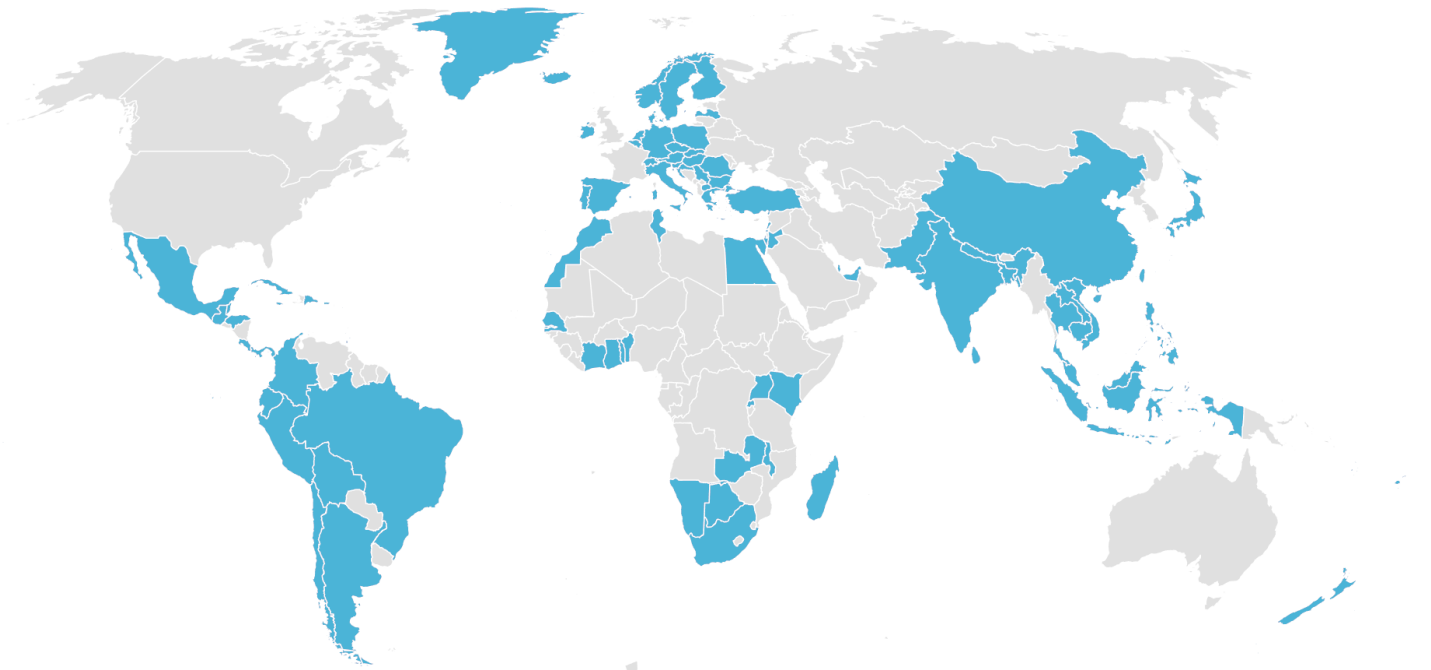
The Maple League, for example, a consortium of four undergraduate focused institutions, have, through GSO, created the ‘Nation to Nation: Building Indigenous Knowledge Across International Borders’ project which brings together Indigenous students from each institution to travel to Belize with Indigenous faculty members to learn about the Yucatec, Mopan, Garinagu and K’ekchi cultures of Belize.

One student had the following to say about her experience:

“I feel like I understand what it means to be an Indigenous person on a deeper level, having these connections and experiences with Indigenous groups from different places. I was able to take inspiration from what I learned in Belize and apply it to my own journey in cultural and language revitalization and preservation. GSO removed all barriers to accessibility and this experience will be carried with me in every aspect for the rest of my life.”



NON-TRADITIONAL GSO DESTINATIONS



GSO is also helping to diversify the destinations where Canadian students choose to work or study abroad with 83% of GSO funded experiences having so far taken place in non-traditional destinations including in key markets in the Indo-Pacific Region.

Students from Douglas College, for example, participated in a work-integrated learning experience through a faculty led field school at Far Eastern University’s Manila campus where they honed their knowledge of global e-commerce and marketing while strengthening their global skills and networks with partners in the Philippines.

One student had the following to say about her experience:

“Through my work–integrated learning experience in the Philippines I had the opportunity to enhance my negotiation, time management and intercultural communication skills. I am more independent, confident, and culturally aware. I look forward to putting these newfound skills to good use as I advance in my career.”

A work-integrated learning opportunity in an international setting is one of the most enriching experiences a student can have during their post-secondary experience. GSO participants report being better prepared for the transition to the workforce, had an improved sense of their potential career pathways, gained important international networks, and developed key global skills.

In response to the COVID-19 pandemic and the grounding of international travel, GSO began with innovation, allowing post-secondary institutions to test approaches to reduce barriers to participation. This upfront investment built a strong foundation for future success and increased the capacity of post-secondary institutions to deliver safe, enriching, and accessible international study and work experiences. Through GSO’s ‘Innovation Fund’ over 500 knowledge-sharing products, resources and tools have so far been developed.

New to international engagement, thanks to GSO, Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies (SIIT) leveraged the Innovation Fund to conduct a needs assessment and develop a suite of wrap-around supports tailored to the specific needs of their Indigenous student body. With additional funding from GSO, SIIT is now pursuing Indigenous to Indigenous mobility opportunities across the Americas.

Also, through GSO’s Innovation Fund, the Université de Montréal held focus groups with students with disabilities and conducted a literature review to identify non-financial barriers to mobility and developed an inventory of international partners offering the required services and accommodations to facilitate their participation.

GSO has also allowed Canadian post-secondary institutions to advance their internationalization objectives by formalizing partnerships with post-secondary institutions across the globe. Over 120 post-secondary institutions across Canada are implementing 160 GSO mobility projects leveraging over 600 partnerships in non-traditional destinations.

Participating post-secondary institutions are also investing time and additional financial resources – totaling over 30 million dollars - to ensure the success of their GSO project. Still demand for financial support far exceeds what GSO has been able to provide. With 45 project proposals being refused - which would have provided thousands of students with international experiences - post-secondary institutions have the capacity to do even more. By expanding and committing to long-term predictability in program funding, more students will be able to develop their global skills across a wider range of disciplines. As Canada competes globally for talent, embedding global skills into curriculum will future-proof Canada’s workforce.

“Bridge the Ocean”, a project implemented in collaboration between Nova Scotia Community College, New Brunswick Community College, and the European Union’s Erasmus+ program, facilitated student mobility between Canada, Finland, Denmark and the Netherlands with a focus on hospitality, green construction and entrepreneurship. Partnering institutions worked together to build a framework that can be used for future collaborations between Canadian and European institutions.



Canada has an opportunity to build on the program’s momentum by making it permanent signaling that it is serious about investing in global skills. Continuing to support this program would allow institutions to further bolster their capacity to deliver safe, enriching and accessible international study and work experiences, across a wider range of academic and training programs, to students who would otherwise not have the opportunity to participate.

The program has equipped a new generation of students, from all backgrounds, with global skills necessary to meet Canada’s ever evolving labour market needs. It is now time to make the program a permanent part of Canada’s skills strategy and approach to international education.



GSO is funded by Employment and Social Development Canada. While jointly administered by Colleges and Institutes Canada and Universities Canada, the programming is delivered to students via their post-secondary institutions (PSIs) through multi-year projects.



The following organizations are pleased to support the submission by the Global Skills Consortium:

