Global Skills Opportunity: FINAL Evaluation Terms of Reference

Program background and objectives

The $95 million Global Skills Opportunity program, part of Canada's International Education Strategy, aims to give Canadian college and undergraduate-level university students the chance to study, work or conduct research abroad. The program places an emphasis on providing global opportunities to students from underrepresented groups—specifically students with disabilities, Indigenous students and low income students —who have not traditionally been able to participate in such programs due to financial, logistical or other barriers.

Through this project, Universities Canada and Colleges and Institutes Canada administer grant funding to post-secondary institutions (PSI) in Canada in order to fund study or work abroad opportunities for students, in a manner that addresses three key objectives:

- Increase the participation of underrepresented students, including those from low-income families, Indigenous students, and students with disabilities;
- Diversify destination countries where Canadian students pursue international learning opportunities; and,
- Test innovative approaches (e.g., new tools, services, technologies or partnerships) to maximize uptake and reduce barriers to study/work abroad.

The program aims to reach 11,000 participants, with 50% of the program funding going to participants from the targeted underrepresented groups and 40% to non-traditional countries (i.e. countries other than the UK, US, Australia and France).

Please see Appendix A for the program logic model.

Project Management Arrangements

The project is jointly managed by Universities Canada (UC) and Colleges and Institutes Canada (CICan), with local project administration by partners post-secondary institutions (universities and colleges).

Universities Canada and Colleges and Institutes Canada are the technical lead for their respective sectors. They hold separate contribution agreements with ESDC and are individually responsible for disbursing funds to Canadian post-secondary institutions through call(s) for proposal(s), monitoring and evaluating progress toward results, leading strategic communications activities, sharing learnings and best practices amongst the post-secondary sector, increasing the evidence base on the impact of outbound mobility programming, and co-convening advisory group meetings in partnership with Universities Canada. They share the same Logic Model and are responsible for reporting on the same

KPIs, though their respective PMFs differ slightly in terms of substance. They have taken slightly different approaches to implementation that align with established practices at each respective organization.

Purpose, objectives and scope of the evaluation

The final evaluation is intended to be summative in nature and provide information on impact of the program as the pilot is set to end on March 31, 2025. The results will be shared with stakeholders, used to demonstrate the demand for the program and advocate for renewed/ permanent funding.

Evaluation framework/criteria and key questions

The evaluation will utilize the framework of: Relevance, efficiency, effectiveness, impact, sustainability, with a focus on final results and impact of the pilot program.

Evaluation questions will be finalized by the contracted external evaluator(s) and Universities Canada and Colleges and Institutes Canada as part of the Inception Report, and will speak to the following overarching questions:

- *To what extent have the intended outcomes, for which UC and CICan are accountable, been achieved? For longer-term outcomes, what evidence is there that these outcomes have the potential to be achieved post-pilot program?*
- *What is the best way to ensure longer-terms outcomes can be captured and analyzed post-pilot phase?*
- *To what extent have the assumptions of the Logic Model held true?*
- *What are the factors that have facilitated or impeded (or have the potential to faciliate or impede) the achievement of these outcomes?*
- *To what extent can changes be attributed to the program?*
- *What was the influence of other factors?*
- *Do the outcomes of the program represent value for money?*
- *Were there any unintended/unexpected outcomes achieved?*
- *What are some of the program successes and lessons learned and how can they inform policy going forward?*

Evaluation methodology

The evaluation will be an independent final evaluation, utilizing mixed methods, with an overall participatory approach that involves UC and CICan and key stakeholders. While the detailed methods will be worked out by the contracted evaluator in the inception report, the following methods are proposed:

- Desk review and analysis of key documents (i.e. logic model, project PMF etc.)
- Desk review and analysis of monitoring data, including data from:

- o University and Colleges Baseline Survey
- o Pre-departure forms (before participant starts)
- o Post-experience reports (after scholar completes)
- o Project financial and narrative reports (biannually and annually)
- o CICan and UC annual reports and Innovation Fund reports
- o Mid-term evaluation report
- Interviews with program staff and administrators (UC, CICan, PSI staff)
- Interviews with program participants
- Post-completion/follow-up surveys of program participants

Main deliverables

- Inception report (10-15 pages) for review and approval by UC and CICan
- Presentation of preliminary findings for discussion
- Draft report for review and inputs by UC and CICan
- Final report (max 50 pages) incorporating UC and CICan inputs and an executive summary (2 pages)
- Evaluation framework, plan and tools (including post-graduation survey and data mapping) for the longitudinal evaluation of the ultimate outcome.

Evaluation management arrangements

UC and CICan will appoint a designated contact person from the program team (referred to below as the UC and CICan evaluation manager) to liaise with and support the evaluator. Other UC and CICan staff will engage with the evaluator as required.

- UC and CICan evaluation manager responsibilities:
  - o Brief the evaluator on relevant UC/CICan policies and procedures; Provide evaluator documents for desktop review; Initial coordination with the project team and stakeholders on the schedule (i.e. for interviews); Organize logistics for the presentation of preliminary results; Circulate the first draft of the evaluation report for comments; Ensure the final version of the evaluation report address stakeholders' comments (or an explanation why any has not been addressed) and meets UC/CIC requirements.
- Evaluator responsibilities
  - o Responsible for conducting the evaluation; Coordinate with UC and CICan evaluation manager, project team and stakeholders to conduct the entire evaluation process; Proceed to a desk review of all relevant documents; Elaborate the inception report; Conduct data collection and analysis; Complete and submit the presentation of preliminary results, the first version and final report by agreed deadlines.

Evaluator/Evaluation Team Qualifications

- Relevant post-secondary qualification with minimum 5 years of experience in project /program evaluation.
- Proven skills and experience in undertaking evaluations of projects in the area of post-secondary skills development and/or international mobility programs
- Experience with results-based management
- Extensive knowledge of, and experience in applying, qualitative and quantitative research methodologies;
- Experience with evaluation and reporting on Government of Canada funded projects (i.e. ESDC, GAC, etc).
- Understanding of EDI principles and gender-based analysis; experience in projects that focus on underrepresented groups is strongly preferred.
- Demonstrated proficiency in English and French (in the case of evaluation teams/agencies, at least one principal evaluator should have this proficiency)

Evaluation timeline and budget

The maximum budget for evaluator fees is $50,000 CAD

The call for expressions of interest closes on September 13, 2024. Results will be shared by September 20, 2024. Project kick off meeting will be held the week of September 30, 2024. The final evaluation report is due March 1, 2025.

Required documents for expression of interest

- A cover letter expressing your interest in the contract and how you meet the requirements
- Evaluator CV (for teams, include the CVs of all principal evaluators)
- Narrative Proposal (Maximum 2 pages)
- Proposed budget/timeline for completion of key activities and deliverables (can be included with the narrative proposal or as a separate document)

Submission of expression of interest

Please submit your expression of interest to Universities Canada and Colleges and Institutes Canada by 3pm, September 13, 2024 to Alyssa Szilagyi, aszilagyi@univcan.ca, and Marie-Eve Bérubé atmberube@cican.org.

Contact information

For more information or questions on this RFP, please contact:

- Alyssa Szilagyi, Program Officer, Global Skills Opportunity, Universities Canada, aszilagyi@univcan.ca

- Marie Eve Bérubé, Senior Program Officer, Outbound Student Mobility, International Partnerships, Colleges and Institutes Canada, mberube@cican.org
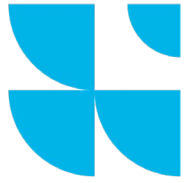
GSO Logic Model

	1000 Enhanced educational opportunities and employment outcomes for Canadian post-secondary students			
Ultimate Outcome				
Intermediate Outcomes	1100 Improved skills, intercultural competencies and expanded international employment networks of participants in the outbound mobility program		1200 Strengthened culture of outbound mobility on Canadian PSI campuses and strengthened capacity to deliver outbound mobility programs	
Immediate Outcomes	1110 Increased access and equity to participation of Canadian PSE students (particularly target student groups) in international study/work opportunities as part of their academic program, especially in non-traditional countries	1120 Increased knowledge of intercultural competencies and professional networking skills	1210 Strengthened capacity of Canadian PSIs to test innovative and accessible opportunities and support for students to participate in study/work abroad opportunities	1220 Improved collaboration, information sharing and reporting on outbound mobility experiences across Canadian PSIs to improve the delivery of outbound mobility programming
Outputs	1111 Participants receive grants to study/work abroad, including in non-traditional countries	1121 Participants receive pre/post departure briefings and supports, including international networking skills training, safety briefings and tailored wrap-around supports for students in target group	1211 Canadian PSIs receive grants to implement, invest, and test new or innovative ideas that enhance mobility programming in Canada	1221 Key results, impacts, implementing strategies, best practices and lessons learned documented and shared across the Canadian PSE sector
Activities PSIs	1. Apply for grants from CICan/Universities Canada to develop work and/or study abroad programming, with a focus on students in target groups, including in non-traditional countries 2. Administer grants to students to go on work and/or study experience abroad, with priority given to students in target groups 3. Sign agreements with partners in non-traditional countries 4. Employ a character and needs-based approach to recruiting and selecting participants	1. Tailored wrap-around materials developed and training offered to students from target groups 2. Develop materials for pre/post departure support and training, including professional networking skills, self-reflection, and cross-cultural awareness 3. Provide pre- and post- experience services, including safety briefings, and wrap-around supports for students in target groups	1. Apply for grants from CICan/ Universities Canada to test innovative projects/approaches 2. Implement and test projects to reduce barriers to outbound mobility	1. Policies/solutions at the PSIs level: - identify barriers that students face (particularly from target group) - develop, implement, and share strategies to address barriers 2. Undertake all administrative work required to deliver and report on performance management, including a detailed database of participants 3. Canadian PSIs provide annual performance reports and semi-annual financial reports to CICan/Universities Canada

Global Skills Opportunity Expérience Compétences Mondiales

Activities CICan & Universities Canada	1. Establish a transparent, fair and efficient selection process to review funding proposals from PSIs and make recommendations related to funding allocations based on pre-established criteria 2. Sign contribution agreements with Canadian PSIs 3. Disburse funds to Canadian PSIs	1. Administer pre-and post-participation surveys to participating students to assess impact on skills development and expanded networks.	1. Establish a transparent, fair and efficient selection process to review request to fund innovative ideas to support students to participate in study/work abroad opportunities 2. Sign contribution agreements with Canadian PSIs to implement the selected innovative ideas 3. Disburse funds to Canadian PSIs to implement selected innovative ideas	1. Develop a data collection framework, and monitoring and evaluation strategy 2. Develop data collection and report template for PSIs 3. Monitor and collect data from PSIs to support program evaluation 4. Maintain a database of participants including PSI, program, type of experience (study/work-integrated learning), country, duration and target group) 5. Work closely with officials from ESDC to design and implement the program; including data collection 6. Report semi-annually to ESDC 7. Collect and share best practices through ongoing engagement with PSIs and develop shared online resources