



Global
Skills
Opportunity

Expérience
Compétences
Mondiales



Strengthening Canada's Global Skills

Global Skills Opportunity Consortium's Submission to the House of Commons Standing Committee on Finance

August 2024

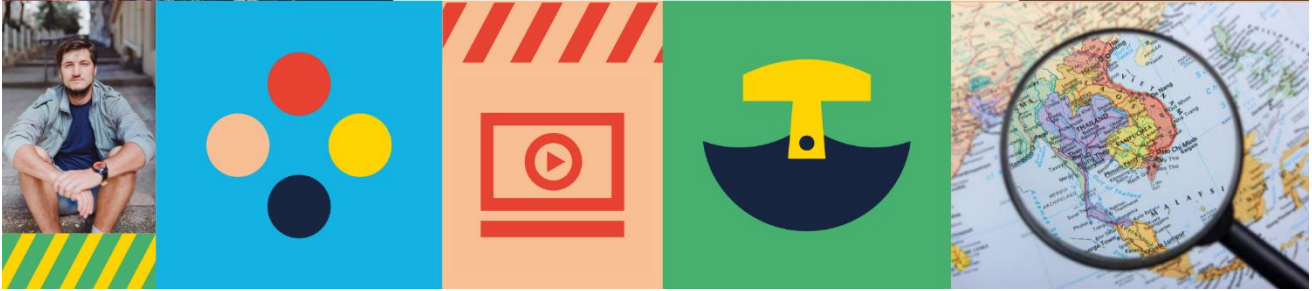


Universities
Canada.
Universités
Canada.



COLLÈGES &
INSTITUTS
CANADA

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CANADA



Recommendation: Continue to equip Canadian students with the essential skills required to thrive in a rapidly changing labour market, while also enhancing Canada’s competitiveness, boosting its productivity and deepening global ties through the renewal of the Global Skills Opportunity program.

“[My GSO experience in Peru] was transformative and fostered personal and professional growth.

It pushed me outside of my comfort zone, allowing me to adapt to diverse environments and establish meaningful connections across cultures. It instilled a deep sense of purpose and fueled my commitment to creating a more sustainable and equitable world.”

Paul Hingley, Northern Alberta Institute of Technology, Building Construction Engineering. Member of the Métis Nation.

Paul now works as a Junior Project Coordinator, building homes and putting his technical knowledge and intercultural skills to work.





GSO contributes to a more productive Canada

Global Skills Opportunity (GSO) is Canada's first and only national outbound student mobility program, providing a framework for the delivery of skill-based international work and study experiences to thousands of Canadian post-secondary students. Funded by Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC), GSO is administered jointly by Colleges and Institutes Canada and Universities Canada. The program empowers Canadian universities and colleges, to design and execute accessible study and work abroad opportunities that equip students with critical global skills that are in high demand by employers and crucial for Canada's immediate economic success and long-term prosperity. In the final year of a five-year pilot program, GSO has proven to be an innovative, flexible and adept student mobility program that is delivering significant benefits for Canada and Canadians.

"I had the opportunity to expand my competencies, knowledge and understanding of my field of study.

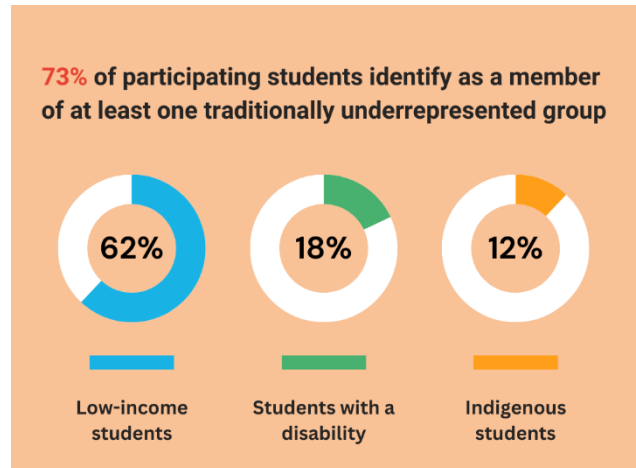
I plan to use my newfound skills and knowledge regarding cultural competence and the relevance of Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, Decolonization and Indigenization for global health and community engagement when I enter the healthcare sector to connect with and provide better quality care to my patients."

Shubh Borad, Western University, Health Sciences

GSO has a proven track record of success

The program has been successful in strengthening Canada's place in the world and in providing critical funding for Canadian youth to acquire and enhance valuable skills that enable them to thrive in today's competitive job market.

Since its launch in 2019, GSO has met and surpassed all its targets despite challenging circumstances. 141 participating post-secondary institutions across Canada have engaged more than 11,000 students in international work and learning experiences in over 100 countries through more than 800 collaborative international partnerships. So far, 73% of participating students identify as a member of at least one traditionally underrepresented group.



Global skills, local impact

An independent evaluation revealed the profound impact of the GSO program on job-readiness. Participants are better prepared to transition to the workforce as they build essential global networks and develop crucial skills such as problem solving, intercultural communication, adaptability, and critical thinking. [Employers](#) often cite this skill set as being critical for success in the modern workplace and [research shows](#) that students who work and/or study abroad excel academically, complete their post-secondary education at higher rates, and achieve superior employment outcomes and salaries. Underrepresented groups benefit the most.



"Visiting the early childhood education centre in New Zealand and talking to the teachers gave me a fresh perspective and new ideas that I can incorporate into my work as a ECE student. Children sang and conversed in te reo Maori [which] deepened my understanding of Indigenous solidarity and language revitalization. This resonated deeply with me, especially as a descendant of Indian Day School survivors from Membertou First Nation."

Ethan Paul, Nova Scotia Community College, Early Childhood Education

As a horizontal initiative, GSO plays a pivotal role in enhancing participant skills while aligning with several key priorities of the Government of Canada. These include Canada's Export Diversification Strategy and Inclusive Trade Agenda, Indo-Pacific Strategy, Disability Inclusion Action Plan, and Reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples.



"Before studying in Lund (Sweden), I was ready to quit university. Studying abroad offered a different way [of] learning, which was much more compatible with who I am.

I acquired lab skills at a much quicker pace, learnt how to network and made professional connections with a diverse group of researchers. Every disabled student should have the opportunity to study abroad, without the financial burden of their specific needs. The skills I gained will help me during my studies and they will serve me in my future career."

Sarah Claire Gaudet, Université de Montréal,
Microbiology & Molecular Immunology

Initiatives like GSO foster collaboration among institutions and bolster the global standing of Canadian post-secondary education. In an era of rapid technological change, social polarization and geopolitical tensions, GSO is producing a new generation of global citizens who are globally fluent and locally savvy to [address some of Canada's and the world's greatest challenges](#).

GSO on the global stage

As a trading nation also seeking to attract more foreign direct investment, Canada needs a globally skilled and engaged workforce. While global giants pull talent from anywhere in the world, 98% of Canadian businesses are small and medium-sized, relying on local expertise. [Business leaders](#) recognize that skills gained through international study and work experiences are critical to strengthening the country's human capital and capacity to trade, negotiate and attract investors.

Strengthening Canada's place in the world

GSO has engaged with more than 100 countries



The more Canadians engage around the world, the more we bolster Canada's reputation as a nation of skilled workers, innovators, and a place to invest and do business. Similarly, the more Canadians with global competencies, and networks, the better we position our businesses for success around the world. With an emphasis on non-traditional destinations, GSO is enhancing Canada's global

relationships, cultivating business ties in crucial emerging markets, and bolstering its competitiveness.



Beyond Canada, global peers such as the United Kingdom, Australia, Japan and countries in the European Union recognize the importance of developing a globally skilled workforce and are committing significant investments towards doing so. The United Kingdom alone provides international work and study experiences to more than 35,000 students each year whereas Australia leverages such investments to strengthen ties in the Indo-Pacific Region. To stay competitive Canada must continue to do the same.

Renewing GSO will also have a significant positive impact on Canada's international education brand. With federal immigration reforms set to result in fewer international students in the years to come, the Government of Canada has an opportunity to leverage outbound GSO participants as ambassadors to enhance Canada's reputation and to promote the benefits of international education at home and abroad.

Conclusion

As demonstrated, GSO has supported the strengthening of Canada's human capital and competitiveness and enhanced the country's global reputation. In today's globalized world and multi-cultural Canada, investing in essential global skills for the next generation is no longer optional. Global Skills Opportunity is a successful, flexible and adept pilot initiative with a proven track record of impact. Renewal will strengthen Canada's economy, productivity and global competitiveness by supporting an increased number of underrepresented students to pursue international study and work opportunities.

We thank the Standing Committee on Finance for the opportunity to share our recommendation for Budget 2025. We stand ready to work with the government to continue supporting students in building global skills for a strong, prosperous and resilient Canada.