



Departmental Evaluation Plan 2021 and 2022 to 2025 and 2026

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List of acronyms

CPP	Canada Pension Plan
EI	Employment Insurance
ESDC	Employment and Social Development Canada
GBA+	Gender-Based Analysis Plus
LMDA	Labour Market Development Agreements
OAS	Old Age Security
PMEC	Performance Measurement and Evaluation Committee
TBS	Treasury Board Secretariat



Deputy Head Departmental Evaluation Plan confirmation note

I approve the Departmental Evaluation Plan of Employment and Social Development Canada for 2021 to 2026. I submit it to the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat as required by the *Policy on Results*.

I confirm that this 5 year rolling Departmental Evaluation Plan:

- plans for evaluation of all ongoing programs of grants and contributions with five-year average actual expenditures of \$5 million or greater per year at least once every five years, in fulfillment of the requirements of subsection 42.1 of the *Financial Administration Act*;
- meets the requirements of the Mandatory Procedures for Evaluation; and,
- supports the requirements of the expenditure management system including, as applicable, Memoranda to Cabinet, Treasury Board Submissions, and resource alignment reviews.

I will ensure that this plan is updated annually. I will provide information about its implementation to the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat, as required.

Graham Flack

Deputy Minister of Employment and Social Development

Executive summary

In 2020 to 2021, ESDC's Evaluation Directorate continued to fulfill its mandate to support evidence-based decision-making at the Department. Evaluators adjusted rapidly to the emergency circumstances created by the COVID-19 pandemic, providing strategic and tactical support to decision-makers across the Department. They maintained close partnerships with program officials with a view to developing evaluation evidence and providing trusted advice based on their knowledge of ESDC's programs, and expertise in the conduct of various assessment methods. At the same time, the Directorate succeeded in consulting broadly with partners on the timing and scope of future evaluations that are targeted for completion between 2021 and 2026.

Evaluation Directorate Accomplishments in 2020-2021

SUPPORTED EVIDENCE-BASED DECISION MAKING

- Completed 8 evaluation reports and 24 technical studies to assist program officials
- Provided sound advice to support ESDC's COVID-19 response
- Extended Labour Market Program Data Platform to conduct net impact analysis for the Opportunities Fund for Persons with Disabilities
- Provided evaluation evidence to enable sound decision-making for ESDC's Labour Market programs



Percentage of evaluation clients who thought the evaluations contained valid, evidence-based findings



Percentage of evaluation clients who believed that evaluators' recommendations were realistic and actionable

SHARED KNOWLEDGE THROUGH DISSEMINATION & ENGAGEMENT

- Shared best practices with the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)
- Published 8 reports online and delivered 5 virtual presentations on evaluation techniques
- Promoted public awareness of ESDC evaluations through social media platforms

BROADENED THE TRUSTED ADVISOR ROLE

- Advised program officials and Head of Performance Measurement on 7 Performance Information Profiles, including regarding quality of performance indicators
- Assisted a project by Service Canada to identify lessons learned and good practices during the time of the Canada Emergency Response Benefit call centre operations
- Informed development of COVID-19 measures with existing body of evaluation evidence and agile assessments to produce early knowledge
- Supported EI Commissioner of Employers' and Workers' Forums through evaluation findings and studies

Challenges & Opportunities for the Evaluation Function

1. Human Resource Capacity

The Directorate is responding by:

- Continuing to recruit a diverse and inclusive workforce
- Supporting the professional development of staff
- Empowering staff to remain healthy, positive and engaged as they work remotely
- Using flexible staffing options



2. Quality of ESDC's Data and Performance Measures

The Directorate is responding by:

- Providing advice on the quality of Performance Information Profiles to support evaluations and ESDC's COVID-19 response
- Assessing data and performance indicators in evaluability assessments and strategies
- Leveraging machine learning to determine what labour market programs work for which clients
- Increasing use of datasets in collaboration with Statistics Canada



Going forward

In the coming years, the Directorate's evaluations will look at ESDC's COVID-19 response. This work will encompass a range of programs dealing with labour market development, learning and income security. In addition to these evaluation activities, evaluators will assess the impact of the Employment Insurance Program, the Canada Education Savings Program, and the Canada Pension Plan Disability Benefits, among other programs.

The Directorate will cooperate with program officials to continue to furnish timely evidence for strategic and tactical decision-making and ensure that the scope and timing of evaluations meet the evolving needs of the Department. The plan is to complete 10 evaluations in 2021 to 2022 and 13 in 2022 to 2023.

The Directorate will continue to expand its ability to use innovative data analysis techniques, such as machine learning, to identify program impacts. The Directorate remains committed to ensuring the professional development of its staff. This will help staff to adapt to the increasingly demanding work of program evaluation. Efforts to

recruit and retain staff will continue to emphasize maintaining a diverse and inclusive workforce.

Introduction

Purpose of the report

As per the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat (TBS) *Policy on Results*, each department must develop and publish an annual 5-year departmental evaluation plan. The purpose of this plan is to assist the Deputy Head to ensure the availability of factual, neutral, and timely information on the department's programs. This information supports evidence-based decision-making and helps keep Canadians informed on departmental results.

Rigorous planning is important to ensuring the effectiveness of ESDC's evaluation function. The Directorate determines the timing of evaluations by consulting with program officials and central agencies on the basis of need, risk, and priorities. The Plan also helps ensure transparency in the decision making process for the evaluation function, highlighting priorities and coverage decisions.

Departmental context

Employment and Social Development Canada's mandate is to build a stronger and more competitive Canada, to support Canadians in:

- helping them live productive and rewarding lives; and,
- to improve Canadians' quality of life.

The Department delivers a range of programs and services that affect Canadians throughout their lives.

The Department's portfolio includes Employment and Social Development, the Labour Program, and Service Canada.

- Employment and Social Development delivers a range of programs and services that assist Canadians throughout their lives. It provides seniors with basic income security, supports unemployed workers, helps students to finance their post-secondary education, and assists parents who are raising young children. The Department also assists persons with disabilities and their families, and supports the homeless-serving sector through Reaching Home: Canada's Homelessness Strategy.
- The Labour Program fosters safe, healthy, fair and inclusive work environments and cooperative workplace relations in the federal jurisdiction.

- Service Canada serves as a single point of access for some of the Government's largest and most well known programs and services. This includes Employment Insurance (EI), Old Age Security (OAS), Canada Pension Plan (CPP), the Social Insurance Number, and the Passport Program.

ESDC played a key role in supporting the Government of Canada's significant and decisive actions to support Canadians and businesses facing hardship due to the COVID-19 pandemic. This included developing an array of programming for individuals and families, including Indigenous people and self-employed individuals. ESDC's COVID-19 measures also targeted various non-governmental organizations and non-profit sectors helping Canadians.

In 2019 to 2020, the Department spent \$144.4 billion on programs and services.¹ Most of this spending directly benefited Canadians through statutory transfer payment programs, including EI, CPP, and OAS. The Department also administers employment benefits and support measures, which include billions of dollars in transfers annually to provinces and territories. Finally, in 2020, ESDC delivered a range of emergency benefits to Canadians in collaboration with the Canada Revenue Agency. These benefits, which included the Canada Emergency Response Benefit, helped those struggling with the impact of COVID-19.

The Department interacts with Canadians across the country. These interactions occur through online service channels, over the telephone, and through a regional network of in-person sites. The Evaluation Directorate systematically collects and analyzes evidence in a neutral fashion to support the Department's decision-making and inform Canadians. Evaluators look at the relevance, effectiveness and efficiency of departmental programs and services.

ESDC programs touch the lives of Canadians across the country. The Department works to ensure that these programs and services meet the diverse needs of all Canadians. Evaluators use a GBA+ analytical framework when carrying out their work. The most recent Mandate Letters for the four Ministers of the Department call on them to apply GBA+ when making decisions.

Evaluation Directorate mandate

Evaluation Directorate collaborates and shares knowledge with program officials across the Department to support evidence-based decision-making. The Directorate seeks input from program officials and senior management on the evaluation process through an inclusive approach to governance ([Annex 1](#)).

¹ [Departmental Results Report for fiscal year 2019 to 2020 - Canada.ca](#)

Evaluation Directorate supports program officials at all stages of the policy life cycle. At the initial stage, officials use evaluations to help inform the development of new programs and policies. During implementation, officials use evaluation recommendations to guide adjustments or program renewal. As a program or policy matures or winds down, officials can use evaluations to inform lessons learned for future programs or policies.

Evaluation Directorate occasionally advises program officials that are developing responses to the recommendations found in final reports. Evaluators can assist officials with developing action plans for recommendations. The Directorate monitors progress on the implementation of action plans. This promotes a system of continuous improvement throughout the evaluation cycle.

Accomplishments in 2020 to 2021

The Evaluation Directorate's products focused on key knowledge gaps and on the relevance, effectiveness and efficiency of programs. Most evaluations included recommendations for program improvement.

Supporting evidence-based decisions

Evaluation influenced and supported evidence-based decision making at ESDC by:

- completing 8 evaluation reports and 24 technical studies to support program officials, and the EI Monitoring and Assessment Report;
- advising on 23 Treasury Board Submissions and 9 Memoranda to Cabinet to inform policies and programs;
- providing information and advice to ESDC so that it can make sound decisions on labour market and social development programs. These include programs focusing on the unemployed, Indigenous peoples, persons with disabilities and vulnerable youth; and,
- expanding its use of innovative methodologies for impact evaluation.

Disseminating and engaging

Despite disruptions caused by the COVID-19 pandemic, the Evaluation Directorate continued to disseminate knowledge and engage with partners inside and outside of the federal government in 2020 to 2021. The Directorate produced and published 8 evaluation reports online. It also generated technical reports, one-page summaries,

lessons learned syntheses, conference presentations, and supplemental studies. These activities spanned three key areas:

1. Publishing, presentations and engagement

- Collaborated with the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) to share best practices for leveraging administrative data and using state-of-the-art methodologies to support impact evaluations. This will assist countries wishing to strengthen their capacity for labour market policy evaluation.
- Delivered a virtual presentation to the Canadian Evaluation Society's webinar on Technology and Evaluation. The presentation covered the efficient use of administrative data and machine learning for net impact evaluations.
- Delivered a nationwide presentation to ESDC staff on approaches for developing qualitative information to support the evaluation of the Foreign Credential Recognition Program.
- Published 3 technical reports related to seniors benefits. This included reports on the take-up of the Guaranteed Income Supplement, the labour market impact of a work earnings exemption on benefits for low-income seniors, and participation in the Old Age Security Program.
- Collaborated with the Chief Data Office to share more data insights across the federal government. Evaluators and officials did this through the ESDC Data Community of Practice and the Government of Canada Data Conference.
- Shared results through social media, including on LinkedIn.

2. Supporting policy analysis

- Shared technical studies and evaluations with policy developers across the Department. These documents helped to inform policy analysis and program improvements, including in relation to student access to post-secondary education and persistence in education.
- Shared evaluation results on labour market programs with decision makers to inform policy and program development, and the Government's pandemic response and recovery measures.

3. Advancing federal evaluation function

- Collaborated with TBS and other federal Heads of Evaluation via a steering committee to assess and advance the influence of the Evaluation function.
- Presented 3 webinars to the Canadian Evaluation Society.

The trusted advisor role

Over the course of 2020 to 2021, the Evaluation Directorate provided trusted advice to program officials and senior management. The advice included information to support ESDC's development of recovery measures in response to COVID-19. The Directorate did this by:

- providing evaluation evidence to support labour market policy and program decisions by providing reliable and timely impact analysis.
- assisting Service Canada with a project that identified lessons learned and good practices during the time of the Canada Emergency Response Benefit call centre operations. The Directorate provided advice on how to conduct focus groups and key informant interviews, how to analyze the data and synthesize results, and how to report the findings from them. This information might be used to improve Service Canada's project management practices and to respond to a commitment to TBS. The lessons learned may also be used to help Service Canada to modernize its services in future.
- providing evaluation evidence to support the development of certain measures announced in the Speech from the Throne, as well as the Budget.
- supporting the EI Commissioners for Employers and Workers in examining labour market issues. Evaluators prepared three supplemental studies from the 2019 to 2020 work plan. They also supported the work of the Monitoring Report and Advisory Committee by aiding the coordination of the call for study proposals and their prioritization for the 2020 to 2021 work plan.
- collaborating with Learning Branch on the assessment of the Canada Student Loans Program Skills Boost Measures. Evaluators and program officials examined the impact of the Skills Boost Measures on participants' decision to return to school and their studies.
- obtaining thorough peer reviews for all evaluation results and evaluation methodologies used by the Directorate. This approach represents an international best practice for ensuring evaluation rigour.
- contributing to a new Memorandum of Understanding with Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada on the Passport Program. The memorandum clarifies responsibilities between the two departments for providing and evaluating the program. It specifies that IRCC plays the lead role and ESDC is focused on work related to service delivery.
- assessing the Migrant Worker Support Network pilot administered by the Temporary Foreign Worker Program in British Columbia. The goal of this work was to help inform decision-making related to the protection of migrant workers. The Directorate conducted interviews and focus groups, as well as an analysis of the pilot's strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and challenges. These activities helped to assess whether the pilot achieved its expected outcomes.

In response to COVID-19, Evaluation worked with partners across the Department to efficiently generate the knowledge required to inform program decisions and avoid duplication of work. Evaluation leveraged core evaluation products and decades of evidence gathered through robust evaluations to inform policy development and departmental priorities. This established body of evaluation evidence coupled with tactical support helped senior officials integrate the lessons from the past into their policy and service delivery advice and proposed options. Going forward, Evaluation will continue to provide real-time, agile, and tactical advice.

The Evaluation Directorate collaborates with the Employment Insurance Policy Directorate to provide input and analyze data for the annual Employment Insurance Monitoring and Assessment Report. This close collaboration fosters the timely coordination and production of quality supplemental studies to inform the Report. Both Directorates work together with members of the Monitoring Report and Advisory Committee to prepare an annual work plan. The plan includes supplemental studies and internal analysis with input and direction from both the EI Commissioner for Employers and the EI Commissioner for Workers. The list of studies and analyses are available in the annual [Monitoring and Assessment Report](#). Given the scale and unique objectives of each EI benefit, the EI program is also subject to a number of evaluations.

Each year, the Evaluation Directorate administers a questionnaire to program officials. Between 2017 to 2018 and 2020 to 2021, the percentage of respondents indicating that the evaluation report for their respective program contained “valid, evidence-based findings and conclusions” increased by 12 percentage points, from 75% to 87%. The Directorate scored over 90% from respondents in 2020 to 2021 on professionalism and responsiveness. Evaluators are working to address areas where the Directorate rated lower. This includes providing officials with sufficient time to prepare documentation required for the evaluation.

Innovative Approaches

As a central component of ESDC’s program innovation landscape, Evaluation uses advanced methods to develop an evidence base for program development. In 2020 to 2021, the Directorate pursued several innovative practices. The goal of this was to better estimate the impact of programs, disseminate results to inform decisions, and experiment with new approaches. These included:

- further developing the Labour Market Program Data Platform. Domestic and international observers have recognized the Platform as an innovative best practice for labour market performance measurement and net impact evaluation of labour market programming. Evaluation Directorate recently transferred the Platform to ESDC’s Chief Data Office to enable enhanced access.

- leveraging the Labour Market Program Data Platform to examine the employment outcomes for participants of the Opportunities Fund for Persons with Disabilities. Evaluators used the Data Platform to analyze the net impact of the program's numerous active labour market interventions.
- leveraging a new database that integrates a number of internal and external data sources to support of the recent Canada Apprentice Loan evaluation. The Directorate used the integrated data to better estimate the impact of the loans when apprenticeships were completed. Going forward, evaluators can use the same database to assess the impacts of Canada Apprentice Loans on the labour market outcomes of recipients.
- collaborating with Statistics Canada and Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada to integrate data sources related to the Temporary Foreign Worker Program. This included integrating program data into the Canadian Employer-Employee Dynamics Database for the first time. Project partners also consolidated program data and Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada's Temporary Residents file. The data integration will enhance ESDC's capacity to measure the impact of the program on the Canadian labour market.
- connecting data sources so that ESDC could survey seniors who do not file income taxes. This activity was part of the Phase 2 evaluation of the Guaranteed Income Supplement. Non-tax filer information is not available to the program. By connecting administrative data and CRA income tax data, evaluators created a sampling frame of persons who may be eligible for the GIS but had not applied. The Directorate surveyed those non tax-filing seniors regarding their reasons for not applying for the program. Insights from the survey not only informed the evaluation, but will also support decisions on delivering seniors programming in the future.
- summarizing results of labour market program evaluations for ease of reference and use by decision makers. In the coming year, similar broad results mapping will be applied to recent evaluations of Labour Market and Persons with Disabilities programs.
- working with ESDC's Innovation, Information and Technology Branch to use a pop-up survey to inform the Foreign Credential Recognition Program evaluation.
- using social media platforms to contact students during the COVID-19 pandemic to gather data for the evaluation of the Canada Student Loans Program.
- advising counterparts in other departments on streamlining processes for Management Action Plans.

Results

Through 8 evaluations completed in 2020 to 2021, Evaluation Directorate measured results across all 5 core departmental responsibilities. Results from these evaluations include:

Simplifying and harmonizing foreign credential recognition processes to support internationally-trained individuals in Canada

The evaluation reported that the Foreign Credential Recognition Program improved the fairness, consistency, timeliness, and transparency of credential recognition processes. The evaluation assessed early results from the program's Canadian Work Experience Pilot Project. The project's goal is to help newcomers to overcome barriers due to lack of Canadian professional work experience. Evaluators found that the project helped participants to acquire Canadian experience and job search skills. Participants reported that work placements and coaching supports offered through the program were particularly helpful to them.

The evaluation looked at early results from the program's Foreign Credential Recognition Loans project. This initiative provides money and support services to newcomers so that they can address barriers to employment. Many internationally-trained individuals continue to face multiple barriers as they seek to work in positions that are commensurate with their qualifications. Evaluators found low loan default rates from the initiative and positive employment outcomes. Moreover, two-thirds of recipients would have taken more time to complete their credential plan in the absence of the project's supports.

Increasing the labour market attachment of persons with disabilities

The Opportunities Fund for Persons with Disabilities assists persons with disabilities to prepare for, obtain and maintain employment. The Directorate's evaluation found the program was responsible for producing a 38% annual earnings increase for program participants over the 5 years after participation. This translates to about \$1,100 more in earnings for participants than for non-participants with similar characteristics. In addition, a cost-benefit analysis found that a \$1 investment in the Opportunities Fund yields \$1.70 in return over a 10-year period following the intervention. This was particularly evident with the Skills for Employment component of the Fund. The Fund enables participants to undertake short-duration training and develop basic to advanced skills. The evaluation found that investing \$1 in this type of intervention yields \$4.40 in return over the 10 years following the intervention. A survey of employers partly informed the evaluation report and provided complementary evidence to support the impact analysis.

Helping apprentices to complete their training

The evaluation of the Canada Apprentice Loan shows that the program helps recipients complete training. An above-average proportion of recipients who were women,

Indigenous, persons with disabilities or older in age indicated that the loans were important or very important in covering their expenses while pursuing their apprenticeships. Between 2015 and 2017, approximately one-third of the eligible population used the loan. Among those people, the gender balance was roughly even between women and men. Over that same period of time, only 4% of Canada Apprentice Loan recipients used the loan as their only source of financial support from the Government of Canada.

Removing barriers to seniors receiving needed financial support

This evaluation examined take-up and awareness of the Guaranteed Income Supplement among non-tax-paying seniors. There is a lack of recent income tax information for this segment of the population, which makes it difficult to assess their needs. The evaluation found that only approximately 15% of non-tax-paying seniors who were eligible for the Supplement actually applied for it. The evaluation found that barriers to take-up among non-tax-filing seniors related to difficulties accessing information about the Supplement. Seniors from all socio-economic groups experience these barriers.

Increasing the well-being of seniors

The evaluation found that, between 2015 and 2019, the New Horizons for Seniors Program contributed to the well-being of seniors and their communities. For example, 57% of Community-based organizations that ESDC funded through the program believed that their projects increased seniors' socialization or reduced their social isolation. Nearly half of organizations that ESDC supported through the Pan-Canadian stream of funding indicated that their projects created social and community connections among seniors. This reduced barriers to inclusion. The evaluation also found that the program's Collective Impact approach showed promise in addressing social isolation. Collective Impact projects bring together organizations from different sectors to produce significant changes in their community. The evaluation found that 92% of recipients engaged in Collective Impact projects indicated that this approach effectively solved community challenges. The Program also contributed to increasing the capacity of recipient organizations to support seniors' initiatives.

Identifying the leading causes of Sickness Benefit Claims

The recent evaluation of EI sickness benefits provides a practical example on how a supplementary survey can complement administrative data. With EI sickness benefits, ESDC does not require an individual to indicate the type of illness or injury before providing them benefits. Rather, the individual must obtain a medical certificate from a

certified practitioner that indicates the number of weeks that they are unable to work. Evaluation Directorate conducted a supplementary survey to better understand the types of illnesses or injuries that are keeping claimants from working. The survey asked EI sickness claimants questions on the illness or injury that caused their separation from work. The survey found that, in 2018, 38% of cases related to chronic conditions. 37% of cases related to acute traumas, while 25% of cases related to episodic conditions. This information will help inform policy decisions on Employment Insurance in the future.

Evaluation coverage in 2020 to 2021

The Evaluation Directorate uses a risk-based approach when deciding the timing and order of future evaluations. This approach prioritizes mandatory evaluations. It also prioritizes evaluations that are most likely to inform major policy and program decisions.

In 2020 to 2021, the Evaluation Directorate completed all evaluations that were mandatory according to the *Financial Administration Act* and the *Policy on Results*.

The need to respond rapidly to the COVID-19 pandemic placed exceptional demands on the Department in 2020 to 2021. As a result, the Directorate carried over 2 evaluations scheduled for 2020 to 2021 to the following fiscal years. These were the Evaluation of the Canada Pension Plan Disability Benefits (reassessment) and the Evaluation of the Employment Insurance Seasonal Claimant Pilot.

The Directorate developed 12 evaluability assessments and 1 evaluation strategy in 2020 to 2021. These documents outline options for evaluating a given program or service. They contain information on the scope, methodology and timing of an evaluation project. The Performance Measurement and Evaluation Committee (PMEC) is responsible for reviewing and approving these documents. Evaluators always engage with program officials while developing evaluability assessments and strategies to obtain their input.

Table 1: Deputy Minister approved evaluation reports for 2020 to 2021

Planned Evaluation Reports	Completed (Deputy Minister Approval)
Foreign Credential Recognition Program	Completed: May 2020
Employment Insurance Sickness Benefits (Carried Over)	Completed: June 2020
Guaranteed Income Supplement Take-up – Phase 2	Completed: September 2020

Canada Apprentice Loan – Phase 1 (Carried Over)	Completed: September 2020
New Horizons for Seniors Program	Completed: December 2020
Opportunities Fund for Persons with Disabilities – Phase 2 (Carried Over)	Completed: January 2021
Job Bank (Carried Over)	Completed: March 2021
Canada Student Loans Program	Completed: April 2021

Consultations

ESDC rapidly developed a range of measures to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic in spring and summer 2020. During this time, evaluators engaged officials on key considerations for evaluating the department's response.

Officials with specialized expertise participated in the discussions. This included internal researchers and representatives from the Chief Data Office, Integrity Services, and Internal Audit Services.

In September 2020, PMEC discussed broad evaluation considerations for COVID-19 measures. The considerations included the need to focus on critical evaluations given capacity constraints, avoid duplication, and ensure complementarity of efforts amongst players. Going forward, the Directorate will present evaluation strategies and evaluability assessments relating to COVID-19 measures to PMEC for approval. The proposed evaluation approaches will include a GBA+ lens, and analysis of marginalized groups (for example, racialized communities) when possible.

The Evaluation Directorate conducted its annual consultation process for this plan in fall 2020. As a result of these discussions, the Directorate has adjusted the priorities, scope, and timing of evaluations to:

- re-scope ongoing and planned evaluations to encompass COVID-19 related programming changes (for example, Work-Sharing Program, Reaching Home: Canada's Homelessness Strategy)
- better measure program impacts on marginalized groups, such as racialized communities
- add an interim evaluation of the Youth Employment and Skills Strategy to provide early evidence on the impact of program adjustments. This will inform policy and program development

- minimize the burden placed on officials when the Directorate evaluates a program
- promote complementarity of effort across the portfolio (for example, Internal Audit Services, Head of Performance Measurement, Chief Data Office, and research), ensuring the efficient generation of knowledge the department needed, while avoiding duplication

The evaluation planning process also included consultations with TBS officials in January 2021. Topics included possible thematic evaluations and GBA+ analysis, including evaluation and analysis of program impacts on persons with disabilities.

Risk assessment

When assessing the risks associated with a program, the Evaluation Directorate looks at several factors:

- program characteristics,
- departmental risks identified in the Corporate Risk Profile, and
- risks specific to the Evaluation Directorate.

This multi-level approach to risk assessment ensures that evaluators consider the perspectives of key program partners and internal risks.

Program risks considered in early stages of evaluation planning include:

- size of the population affected or targeted by the program
- program materiality (for example, value)
- program complexity
- time elapsed since the previous evaluation
- magnitude of change to the program since the previous evaluation
- knowledge gaps with respect to the program

The Directorate assesses risks specific to individual evaluations when developing evaluability assessments.

The Directorate considers key corporate risks for the Department, including the Risk-Based Audit Plan. In situations where audit and evaluation schedules overlap for the same program, Evaluation Directorate may partner with Internal Audit Services to conduct a joint audit/evaluation. This provides a means of efficiently examining performance and outcomes. The Evaluation Directorate is also working with departmental researchers to coordinate activities and identify opportunities for collaboration.

Challenges and opportunities

Human resources capacity

The nature of the Evaluation Directorate's work requires it to recruit and develop its highly-skilled staff on a continuous basis. The Directorate also works to retain its employees over an extended period of time. The Directorate tasks its evaluators to develop complex lines of evidence. Evaluators need specialized skills to provide quality advice to program officials. These skills are important because the Directorate supports the Department's ambitious COVID-19 response.

Despite disruptions caused by the pandemic, the Directorate continues to pursue improvements to recruitment and staffing processes. The Directorate uses flexible staffing tools to meet short-term capacity demands. These methods include hiring students, casual employees and consultants. The Directorate also hired a number of retired public servants with expertise in 2020 to 2021 on a temporary basis to fill specific capacity gaps.

In 2021 to 22, Evaluation staff will work with colleagues from other branches to support the development of a special project to promote the hiring and retention of persons with disabilities in ESDC. This pilot project will test approaches and help determine what human resources and enabling activities work best in this area.

The Evaluation Directorate promotes the professional development of its staff. The Directorate's approach in this area aligns with the Government of Canada's Beyond2020 initiative, which envisions an agile, inclusive and equipped workforce. The Directorate enables evaluators to build their professional networks within the broader evaluation community. The Directorate supports the Canadian Evaluation Society's Emerging Evaluators Network. This is an informal group of evaluators from across government who discuss issues of importance to the evaluation community. The Directorate sponsors membership in the Canadian Evaluation Society for 40 evaluators and professional accreditation for 14 of those evaluators.

The Directorate also supports training opportunities for staff. Evaluators regularly undertake training sessions organized within the Directorate. This equips them to meet the challenges of their evolving profession. After the initial outbreak of COVID-19, the Directorate moved the sessions online so that evaluators could continue to learn while working remotely. The Directorate organizes weekly second language practice sessions geared towards improving the communication skills of staff in both official languages.

This is part of an overall Directorate strategy to support bilingual capacity and advance experienced staff.

Despite COVID-19, the Directorate maintains an enriching and positive work environment. The Directorate responded rapidly to pandemic-related office closures in March 2020. It leveraged technology so that staff could move forward on their projects collaboratively with peers while working remotely. The Directorate also supported the mental and physical well-being of employees. It organized regular online sessions so that staff could share wellness best practices with respect to teleworking and fitness and provided flexibility to staff that faced challenges working from home, particularly parents and caregivers. Managers also maintained close contact with their team members online to keep them engaged.

In addition, an employee-led team designed and piloted the Health, Wellness and Greening of the Workplace Initiative in January 2020. The Initiative's objective is to engage employees to promote health, well-being and greening of the workplace. In the context of COVID-19 and the new telework environment, the Directorate is re-focusing the Initiative on team-based social events and activities.

The Directorate has long supported the mental well-being of its staff. As part of these efforts, it is helping to develop the Department's mental health framework. A continued focus on the mental health of employees is central to encouraging open discussion about issues that can affect employees and teams.

Quality of data and performance measurement to support evaluations

Directorate evaluations depend on timely, quality data to produce useful evidence. Evaluators use performance measurement information to determine the relevance of programs and services, and whether they deliver value for money.

There is a need in the Department to improve access in keeping with the objectives of Open Data. Better harnessing the administrative data of the department also enables improved policy and service delivery.

The Evaluation Directorate supports robust data collection and performance measurement practices across the Department. Evaluators advise PMEC and program officials on the quality of performance indicators in the Departmental Results Framework. The Directorate collaborates with ESDC's Head of Performance Measurement when providing this advice. The Framework is a key means to track and communicate the Department's results and financial information to the public.

Evaluators also offer advice on Performance Information Profiles. These documents outline the performance measurement approach for each ESDC program. Program

officials develop and regularly update them. Evaluators collaborate with program officials and the Head of Performance Measurement to ensure that each Profile contains appropriate indicators and will be useful in supporting future evaluations.

The Evaluation Directorate is working closely with departmental partners to address data gaps, particularly in relation to ESDC's COVID-19 response. This will include, in part, the Evaluation Directorate playing an advisory role to departmental monitoring and assessment activities on the Canada Emergency Response Benefit. Ongoing collaboration in this area will permit the Department to develop a better understanding of how several COVID-19 program interventions benefitted Canadians.

Evaluators also carefully address data issues when developing plans for program evaluations. These evaluability assessments or evaluation strategies include a review of a program's performance information and the quality of data supporting the performance indicators. When evaluators identify data gaps that could hamper an evaluation, they will work with officials to develop approaches to mitigate those challenges.

The Directorate is developing the data and methodologies to conduct more refined GBA+ analysis of how program impacts might be different for specific socio-economic groups. Some administrative data contains information on various identity factors, for example:

- gender
- age
- level of education
- rural/urban
- families with children
- visible minorities
- Indigenous peoples, and
- persons with disabilities.

The incorporation of GBA+ analysis into evaluations can help identify barriers to access, systemic inequality experienced by various groups and data gaps. It can also make evaluation findings more comprehensive by considering all relevant population groups.

Resource allocation

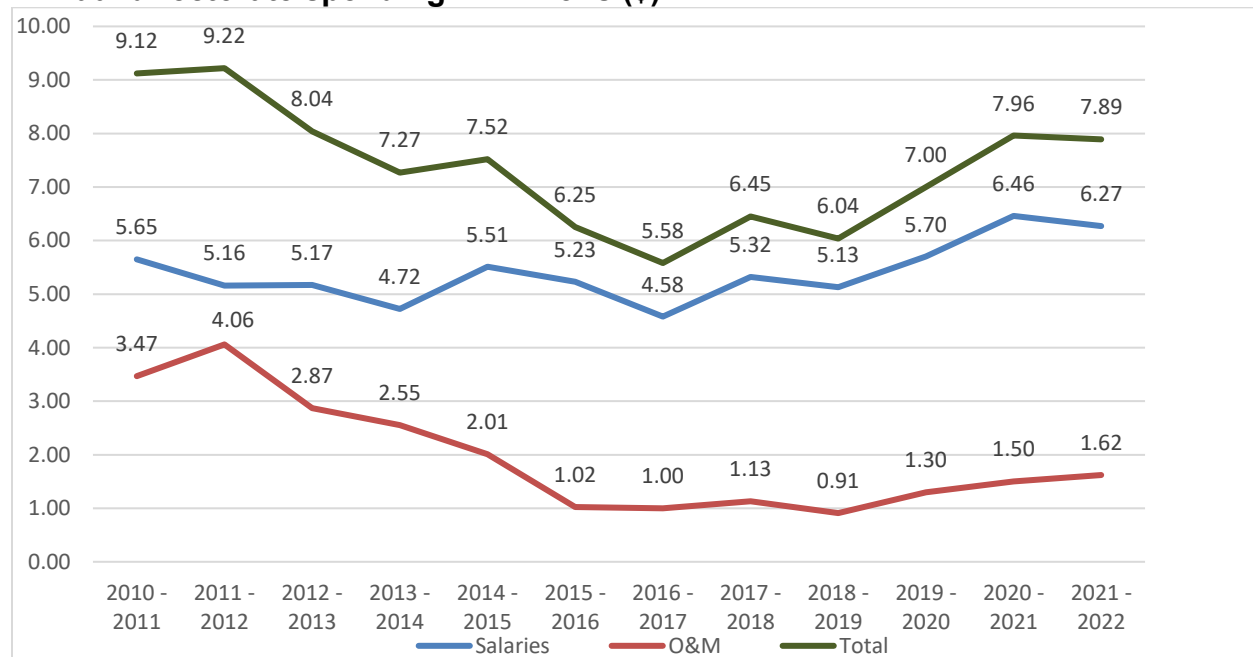
The COVID-19 pandemic was a strain on existing resources. The Directorate is working to incorporate plans for new and modified programs into the existing allocations, while carrying on previously planned evaluations. During the pandemic, some resources were

redirected to more timely, on-the-ground analysis of evaluation evidence to inform program and policy development.

Non-salary expenditures remain low relative to historic standards. However, future evaluations of COVID-19 measures may require the Directorate to spend more on Operations and Management expenses over the coming fiscal years.

In 2021 to 2022, Evaluation's budget remains largely unchanged from 2020 to 2022. The forecasted amount for salary expenditures for fiscal year 2021 to 2022 is \$6.27M, and forecasted operations and maintenance is \$1.62M. The Directorate will continue to focus on providing advice and planning evaluations of new and modified programs in addition to undertaking previously planned evaluations. It will manage its resources prudently in order to ensure it is capable of handling an expected workload increase over the near term. Having the capacity to address unexpected events in the future will necessitate the adoption of more flexible and judicious approaches while determining evaluation scope and approaches.

Annual directorate spending in millions (\$)



Going forward

Budget 2021 included numerous ESDC initiatives that will be assessed and reflected in the next Departmental Evaluation Plan. The Directorate plans to complete 10 evaluations in 2021 to 2022 and 13 in 2022 to 2023. For 2022 to 2023, several evaluations will encompass COVID-19 measures. These include the Work-Sharing

Program and Reaching Home: Canada's Homelessness Strategy. The Directorate will complete an interim evaluation of the Youth Employment and Skills Strategy. The purpose will be to develop early evidence on the impact of new measures implemented by the program in response to COVID-19. The Directorate will evaluate the incremental impacts of participation in labour market programs, such as the LMDA, using net impact analysis and machine learning techniques.

The Directorate will assess the impact of several programs targeted towards students. These include the Student Work Placement Program and the Canada Education Savings Program. Evaluators will also look at the Canada Pension Plan Disability Benefit, as well as the Employment Insurance Program's Seasonal Claimant Pilot. The findings of these and many other evaluations will inform improvements to ESDC's programming for the benefit of clients.

During this period, Evaluation demonstrated how its body of evaluation evidence as well as its expertise in conducting various assessment methods can be strategically relied upon in support of the Department's mandate. In the years ahead, the Directorate will continue this role by collaborating with policy and program officials to furnish timely evaluation evidence to inform decision makers.

The Directorate will continue to incorporate innovative methods and approaches into its operations and the services it provides to the Department and other stakeholders. It will consider pursuing more horizontal evaluations that investigate themes common to multiple programs or priorities. These evaluations could also look at specific client groups that the Department serves across a range of programs. Innovation will also be used for the dissemination of results, to enhance ease of reference and use.

The Directorate will engage experts in the academic community on how best to conduct evaluations. This will ensure that ESDC's evaluators adopt best practices from other jurisdictions, departments and disciplines to achieve results for Canadians. The Directorate will engage with researchers to increase the use of administrative data. Furthermore, the Directorate will collaborate with federal counterparts to strengthen the evaluation function across government.

This document provides an evaluation coverage table in the attached annex (Annex 2 – Planned Annual Coverage Table). The table demonstrates the Directorate will meet all coverage requirements mandated by the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat, the *Policy on Results*, and the *Financial Administration Act*. This is in addition to completing discretionary evaluations the Department has designated as priorities. The Evaluation Directorate will use flexibilities provided in the *Policy on Results* to prioritize evaluations of programs.

Programs of grants and contributions that do not have a five-year average actual expenditure of \$5 million or greater per year are not required to be evaluated every five years. These programs include:

- Canadian Benefit for Parents of Young Victims of Crime
- Sustainable Development Goals
- Skilled Trades and Apprenticeship Grants (Red Seal Program)
- Accessible Canada Initiative, and
- Strategic Engagement and Research Program

The Evaluation Directorate will continue to support the Department in making informed decisions. Evaluators will continue to adopt innovative approaches to better measure the impacts of ESDC programs.

As indicated in the 2018 Neutral Assessment of the Evaluation Function, the Directorate's work in these areas is valuable in supporting the mission of ESDC and reporting on results. The Evaluation Directorate will build on the priorities that this plan outlines in order to deliver positive results for Canadians.

Annex 1 – Evaluation governance

EVALUATION GOVERNANCE

Performance Measurement and Evaluation Committee

Composed of Stakeholders from senior ranks of ESDC, including the Head of Evaluation.



- Approves the Departmental Evaluation Plan.
- Reviews evaluation reports, including management responses.
- Approves Evaluability Assessments.
- Discusses follow-up on action plans.

Evaluation Advisory Committee

Composed of Stakeholders from across ESDC, TBS, Program Sector and Finance Canada (Director General level and below).



- Identifies options for evaluation scope.
- Discusses preliminary findings.
- Provides input for final report.

Evaluation Working Group

Composed of Stakeholders from across ESDC (Director level and below).



- Focuses on technical aspects.
- Performs data collection and analysis.
- Provides input for preliminary report.

Annex 2 – Planned annual coverage table

Program	Last evaluation of the Program	Planned Evaluation in the next 5 years	Planned fiscal year of approval	Reason for Evaluation
Temporary Foreign Worker Program (TFWP)	Evaluation of the labour market opinion streams of the Temporary Foreign Worker Program (2010 to 2012)	Temporary Foreign Worker Program Evaluation	2021 to 2022 First Quarter	Commitment in TB Submission (Adjusted to 2021 to 2022 completion)
Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service	Evaluation of the Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service - Phase 1 (2018)	Phase 2 Evaluation of Federal Mediation and Conciliation Service	2021 to 2022 Second Quarter	Departmental Priority
Student Work Placement Program	Not Applicable. New Program.	Evaluation of Student Work Placement Program – Phase 1	2021 to 2022 Third Quarter	Commitment in TB submission (2021 to 2022 completion)
Canada Education Savings Program	Canada Education Savings Program: Summative Evaluation (2015)	Evaluation of the Canada Education Savings Program (Canada Learning Bond-focused)	2021 to 2022 Third Quarter	Deputy Minister Request
Canada Pension Plan Disability	Summative Evaluation of the Canada Pension Plan Disability Benefit (2011)	Canada Pension Plan Disability (CPPD) Benefits (Reassessment) (Carried Over)	2021 to 2022 Third Quarter	Departmental Priority
EI Program – Regular Benefits	Evaluation of Initiatives to Extend EI Regular Benefits (2016)	Seasonal Claimant Pilot (Carried Over)	2021 to 2022 Third Quarter	Commitment in TB Submission

Program	Last evaluation of the Program	Planned Evaluation in the next 5 years	Planned fiscal year of approval	Reason for Evaluation
Union Training and Innovation Program	Not Applicable. New Program.	Union Training and Innovation Program Evaluation	2021 to 2022 Fourth Quarter	Required by the FAA
Workforce Development Agreements	Previous evaluations conducted involving various programs (e.g. Labour Market Agreements (LMAs), Targeted Initiative for Older workers (TIOs), Canada-Manitoba Labour Market Agreement for Persons with Disabilities)	Evaluation of the Workforce Development Agreements (2018-2023)	2021 to 2022 Fourth Quarter	Commitment in TB Submission
Enabling Fund for Official Language Minority Communities	Enabling Fund for Official Language Minority Communities (OLMC) (2017)	Evaluation of Enabling Fund for Official Language Minority Communities 2022	2021 to 2022 Fourth Quarter	Required by the FAA
Wage Earner Protection Program	Evaluation of Wage Earner Protection Program (2014)	Evaluation of Wage Earner Protection Program	2021 to 2022 Fourth Quarter	Commitment in TB Submission
Work-Sharing Program	Evaluation of the Work-Sharing Program (2016)	Evaluation of the Work-Sharing Program	2022 to 2023	Deputy Minister Request
Enabling Accessibility Fund	Enabling Accessibility Fund	Evaluation of Enabling Accessibility Fund	2022 to 2023	Required by the FAA

Program	Last evaluation of the Program	Planned Evaluation in the next 5 years	Planned fiscal year of approval	Reason for Evaluation
Skilled Trades Awareness and Readiness (STAR)	Not Applicable. New Program.	Skilled Trades Awareness and Readiness (STAR) Evaluation	2022 to 2023	Required by the FAA
Reaching Home: Canada's Homelessness Strategy	Homelessness Partnering Strategy (HPS) 2018	Evaluation of the Reaching Home Strategy	2022 to 2023	Required by the FAA
Literacy and Essential Skills	Literacy and Essential Skills 2017	Evaluation of Literacy and Essential Skills	2022 to 2023	Required by the FAA
Future Skills Program	Not Applicable. New Program	Evaluation of Future Skills Program	2022 to 2023	Required by the FAA
Labour Market Development Agreements	Second Cycle Evaluation of the Labour Market Development Agreements (2012 to 2017)	Evaluation of Labour Market Development Agreements	2022 to 2023	Commitment in TB Submission
Canada Education Savings Program	Canada Education Savings Program: Summative Evaluation (2015)	Canada Education Savings Program Impact Evaluation	2022 to 2023	Deputy Minister Request in response to an OAG report
Supports for Student Learning Programs	Pathways to Education 2018 Evaluation	Pathways to Education Canada - Evaluation	2022 to 2023	Required by the FAA
EI Program – Special Benefits	Summative Evaluation of EI Parental Benefits (2005)	Evaluation of EI Parental and Maternity Benefits	2022 to 2023	Commitment in TB Submission

Program	Last evaluation of the Program	Planned Evaluation in the next 5 years	Planned fiscal year of approval	Reason for Evaluation
Early Learning and Childcare	Not Applicable	Evaluation of Early Learning and Childcare	2022 to 2023	Commitment in TB Submission
Youth Employment and Skills Strategy	Summative Evaluation of the Horizontal Youth Employment Strategy, 2020	Mid-Cycle Evaluation of ESDC Youth Employment and Skills Strategy	2022 to 2023	Departmental Needs/Risks
Labour Market Development Agreements & Opportunities Fund for Persons with Disabilities	Not Applicable. GBA+ Evaluation not previously conducted.	GBA+ Evaluation Study	2022 to 2023	Departmental Needs/Risks
Sectoral Initiatives Program	Evaluation of Sectoral Initiatives Program 2018	Evaluation of Sectoral Initiatives Program	2023 to 2024	Required by the FAA
Canada Pension Plan Service Improvement Strategy	Not Applicable. Initiative Not Previously Evaluated.	Evaluation of Canada Pension Plan Service Improvement Strategy	2023 to 2024	Commitment in TB Submission
Canada Student Loans Program	Canada Student Loans Program	Canada Student Loans Program: Loan Repayment	2023 to 2024	Commitment in TB Submission
Canada Service Corps	Not Applicable. New Program	Canada Service Corps Evaluation	2023 to 2024	Required by the FAA
Federal Workers Compensation Service	Evaluation of the Federal Workers' Compensation Service (2018)	Federal Workers' Compensation Service	2023 to 2024	Departmental Priority

Program	Last evaluation of the Program	Planned Evaluation in the next 5 years	Planned fiscal year of approval	Reason for Evaluation
Canada Disability Savings Program	Evaluation of Canada Disability Savings Program 2018	Evaluation of the Canada Disability Savings Program	2023 to 2024	Required by the FAA
Opportunities Fund for Persons with Disabilities	Opportunities Fund for Persons with Disabilities – Phase 2 Evaluation (2021)	Evaluation of the Opportunities Fund for People with Disabilities	2023 to 2024	Required by the FAA
Indigenous Early Learning and Child Care	Not Applicable. New Program.	Horizontal Indigenous Early Learning and Child Care Evaluation	2023 to 2024	Required by the FAA
Canada Student Loans Program – Forgiveness for Doctors and Nurses	Not Applicable. New Initiative.	Evaluation of the Canada Student Loans Program – Forgiveness for Doctors and Nurses	2023 to 2024	Deputy Minister Request
Employment Equity Program	Evaluation of the Employment Equity Program March 2019	Evaluation of Employment Equity Program	2023 to 2024	Required by the FAA
Old Age Security Service Improvement Strategy	Not Applicable. Strategy Not Previously Evaluated.	Old Age Security Service Improvement Strategy Review	2023 to 2024	Commitment in TB Submission
Occupational Health and Safety (OHS)	Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) (2019)	Occupational Health and Safety (OHS)	2023 to 2024	Departmental Priority
International Labour Affairs	Multilateral Labour Affairs (2018)	Evaluation of International Labour Affairs	2023 to 2024	Departmental Needs/Risks

Program	Last evaluation of the Program	Planned Evaluation in the next 5 years	Planned fiscal year of approval	Reason for Evaluation
Labour Standards	Labour Standards (2019)	Labour Standards	2023 to 2024	Departmental Priority
Canada Student Loans Program and Canada Apprentice Loans	Evaluation of the Canada Apprenticeship Loan (2020)	Evaluation of the Canada Apprentice Loan	2024 to 2025	Commitment in TB Submission
Skills and Partnership Fund	Aboriginal Skills and Employment Training Strategy and the Skills and Partnership Fund, 2020	Evaluation of Skills and Partnership Fund	2024 to 2025	Required by the FAA
Indigenous Skills and Employment Training Program	Aboriginal Skills and Employment Training Strategy and Skills and Partnership Fund, 2020	Evaluation of Indigenous Skills and Employment Training Program	2024 to 2025	Required by the FAA
Youth Employment and Skills Strategy	Summative Evaluation of the Horizontal Youth Employment Strategy, 2020	Horizontal Evaluation of Youth Employment and Skills Strategy	2024 to 2025	Required by the FAA
Social Development Partnerships Program	Evaluation of Social Development Partnerships Program 2019	Evaluation of the Social Development Partnerships Program	2024 to 2025	Required by the FAA

Program	Last evaluation of the Program	Planned Evaluation in the next 5 years	Planned fiscal year of approval	Reason for Evaluation
EI Program – Regular Benefits	Not applicable	Evaluation of EI Program – Seasonal Claimant Pilot – Phase 2	2024 to 2025	Departmental Needs/Risks
EI Program – Special Benefits	Not applicable	EI Extended Parental Benefits	2024 to 2025	Departmental Needs/Risks
Support for Student Learning Programs – Outbound Student Mobility	Not applicable. New Program	Evaluation of Outbound Student Mobility Pilot – International Education Strategy	2024 to 2025	Required by FAA
Foreign Credential Recognition Program	Evaluation of the Foreign Credential Recognition Program (2020)	Evaluation of the Foreign Credential Recognition Program	2024 to 2025	Required by the FAA
Apprenticeship Grants	Evaluation of the Apprenticeship Grants (2019)	Evaluation of the Apprenticeship Grants	2024 to 2025	Required by the FAA
Service Delivery Partnerships	Not applicable. New program.	Evaluation of the Service Delivery Partnerships program	2024 to 2025	Departmental Needs/Risks

Program	Last evaluation of the Program	Planned Evaluation in the next 5 years	Planned fiscal year of approval	Reason for Evaluation
EI Program – Special Benefits	Evaluation of Compassionate Care Benefit (2006)	Evaluation of EI Program - Caregiving Benefits	2024 to 2025	Departmental Needs/Risks
Student Work Placement Program	Evaluation of Student Work Placement Program – Phase 1 (2021)	Evaluation of Student Work Placement Program – Phase 2	2024 to 2025	Departmental Needs/Risks
Old Age Security	Guaranteed Income Supplement Evaluation (2021)	Evaluation of the Guaranteed Income Supplement	2025 to 2026	Departmental Needs/Risks
EI Program – Fishing	2006 Summative Evaluation of EI Part I	Evaluation of EI Program - Fishing Benefits	2025 to 2026	Departmental Priority
Passport Program	Evaluation of the Passport Program (2020)	Evaluation of the Passport Program	2025 to 2026	Departmental Priority
New Horizons for Seniors Program	Evaluation of the New Horizons for Seniors Program (2020)	Evaluation of the New Horizons for Seniors Program	2025 to 2026	Required by the FAA
Social Innovation and Social Finance Strategy	Not Applicable. New Program	Evaluation of the Social Finance Fund	2025 to 2026	Commitment in TB Submission

Note:

As an evaluation for the Job Bank program was approved in March 2021, it is not listed in the table above. Consultations with program officials, scheduled for Fall 2021 will need to occur before it is included in the coverage table.

The Government of Canada Telephone General Enquiries, In-Person Points of Service, and Government of Canada Internet Presence programs will be included in a proposed evaluation of Providing Service and Information to Canadians in 2029-30.