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Canada

Evaluation of the Foreign Credential Recognition Program, 2025

Report

July 2025

Evaluation Directorate, Strategic and Service Policy Branch

Evaluation of the Foreign Credential Recognition Program, 2025

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PDF

Cat. No. Em20-213/2025E-PDF

ISBN 978-0-660-79837-0

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ACOTRO: Association of Canadian Occupational Therapy Regulatory Organizations

ACLS: Association of Canada Lands Surveyors

CAASPR: Canadian Alliance of Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology Regulators

COPR: Canadian Organization of Paramedic Regulators

CSGC: Common System for Grants and Contributions

CWE: Canadian Work Experience

ESDC: Employment and Social Development Canada

FCR: Foreign Credential Recognition

FCRP: Foreign Credential Recognition Program

FPT: Federal-Provincial-Territorial

GBA plus: Gender-Based Analysis Plus

GCInfoBase: Government of Canada Information Base

IENs: Internationally Educated Nurses

IEHP: Internationally Educated Health Professional

IRCC: Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada

ISANS: Immigrant Services Association of Nova Scotia

ITPs: Internationally Trained Professionals

MQRWG: Mobility and Qualification Recognition Working Group

NNAS: National Nursing Assessment Service

PIP: Performance Information Profile

PT: Provinces and territories

RNs: Registered Nurses

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1. Introduction

This report presents the findings of the evaluation of the Foreign Credential Recognition Program (FCRP), or hereafter referred to the Program, administrated by Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC). The purpose of the Program is to support skilled newcomers in fully participating in the labour market and Canadian society.

The Program seeks to contribute to the Government of Canada's priorities of attracting and retaining the best talent, including those with international education, training and work experience, and ensuring that all Canadians are able to reach their full potential. The objectives of the Program are to develop and strengthen Canada's foreign credential assessment and recognition capacity and contribute to improving labour market integration outcomes of skilled newcomers and enhancing labour mobility in targeted occupations and sectors.

The evaluation covers the period from April 2019 to March 2024 and was completed in compliance with the Financial Administration Act and the 2016 Treasury Board Policy on Results.

A previous evaluation of the Program was completed in June 2020 for the period of 2014-2015 to 2018-2019, inclusive. It consisted of a summative evaluation focused on the contribution of the supports provided in the improvement of foreign credential recognition processes, including direct individual support components. Building on insights from the previous evaluation, this evaluation focuses on assessing the Program's evolution, including emerging priorities such as increased support for internationally educated health professionals (IEHPs). It adopts an outcome-focused approach to examine how well the Program achieves its objectives across the three primary areas:

- Skilled newcomers are working in skilled occupations and in their field of expertise.
- Effectiveness of funded initiatives in improving credential recognition systems.
- Alignment of projects with the needs of stakeholders, including newcomers, employers, and regulatory bodies.

This evaluation employs a mixed-methods approach, integrating evidence from multiple lines of inquiry, including literature and document reviews, administrative data analysis, key informant interviews, focus groups, and surveys of employers and newcomers. A COVID-19 lens is also integrated to evaluate how the Program pivoted in response to the pandemic. Details on the methodology and its limitations are outlined in Annex C.

A list of evaluation questions and sub-questions along with their corresponding lines of evidence can also be found in Annex C.

2. Executive Summary

2.1 Key Findings

1: There is an ongoing need in Canada for a federal role in the FCR space, in helping address systemic labour shortages, enhancing collaboration among jurisdictions, and providing financial, employment and some pre-arrival support to internationally trained professionals.

2: The Program's convening efforts have improved communication among provinces and territories by facilitating the sharing of resources and strategies, particularly in addressing healthcare workforce shortages. There is, however, a need for improved collaboration.

3: While there is room for improvement, the share of participants completing the credential recognition process and securing employment in their field of expertise following the intervention has been increasing.

4: Foreign Credential Loans and Canadian Work Experience projects have reduced barriers to employment for participating internationally trained professionals.

5: System improvement projects have advanced more consistent and transparent credential recognition processes with national reach, but evidence of their impact on timeliness and overall effectiveness remains limited.

6: The Skilled Newcomer Training Incentive Bond Pilot appears as a promising way to incentivize hiring skilled newcomers, but final contribution will be clear after completion in 2025.

7: Jurisdictional differences, varying licensure processes, and complex regulatory requirements continue to hinder progress.

2.2 Recommendations

The following recommendations were developed based on key findings and evidence gathered during the evaluation. Each recommendation is mapped to the corresponding key findings to ensure transparency and traceability of the evidence base.

Recommendation 1: The program should expand complementary support for pre-arrival services for newcomers, by providing more support for initiatives facilitating centralized and accessible pre-arrival resources. This could be achieved through a collaborative effort with IRCC, recognizing IRCC as the primary lead for broader pre-arrival initiatives.

Alignment of Findings to Recommendation 1: *The FCRP already provides some complementary pre-arrival services to internationally trained professionals, helping them understand credential recognition requirements, licensing processes, and employment pathways, which reduces delays and facilitates faster workforce integration (Key Finding 1.3). Self-assessment tools and competency evaluations, such as those provided by Canadian Organization of Paramedic Regulators (COPR) and Association of Canada Lands Surveyors (ACLS), enhance newcomers' preparedness before arrival (Key Finding 1.3). Key informants emphasized the need for more centralized and accessible pre-arrival resources, including information on licensing requirements, language proficiency expectations, and funding supports (Key Finding 1.3).*

Recommendation 2: The program should continue providing and enhancing support for alternative pathways for licensure, such as fast-tracked recognition for high-demand professions, streamlined processes for provisional licensing, and bridging initiatives for international certifications.

Alignment of Findings to Recommendation 2: *The Program has taken steps to support alternative pathways for licensure through initiatives like the Government of New Brunswick Bridging Program and the National Nursing Assessment Service (NNAS), which streamline credential recognition for internationally educated health professionals (Key Finding 1.1). Provisional licensing and bridging initiatives are key strategies supported by the program, with efforts to improve coordination between the immigration system and regulatory bodies to clarify licensure requirements for newcomers (Key Finding 1.2). The pandemic underscored the need for such alternatives, as COVID-19 disruptions delayed credential recognition and increased demand for expedited pathways (Key Finding 1.1). System improvement projects funded by the Program, such as competency-based licensure documents in Nova Scotia and the standardization efforts of the NNAS, have demonstrated success in streamlining licensure while reducing costs and processing times (Key Finding 5.1). However, regulatory barriers remain, including varying licensure processes and complex regulatory requirements, which hinder newcomers' ability to obtain credentials efficiently (Key Finding 7). Bridging initiatives have been particularly effective, with projects like the Internationally Educated Health Professional (IEHP) Pathway to Employment Program providing mentorship, job readiness training, and licensing guidance to support internationally educated professionals (Key Finding 1.3).*

Recommendation 3: The Program should strengthen Federal-Provincial-Territorial (FPT) governance in foreign credential recognition (FCR) by enhancing collaboration with provinces and territories.

Alignment of Findings to Recommendation 3: *The Program plays a role in addressing systemic labour shortages by supporting credential recognition and workforce integration for internationally educated professionals, particularly in healthcare, where vacancies remain high. Strengthening FPT governance may help coordinate efforts to streamline licensure and ensure better alignment between labour market needs and credentialing processes (Key Finding 1.1). The program has fostered interjurisdictional collaboration, with key informants emphasizing the need for enhanced coordination between immigration systems and regulatory bodies. Improving FPT governance may enable clearer communication of licensing requirements and professional standards to skilled newcomers, reducing delays in labour market integration (Key Finding 1.2). Some focus group participants noted that while the FPT forum has improved communication among provinces and territories, its impact on broader collaboration has been limited. Enhancing governance structures will provide clearer mandates, strategic direction, consistent coordination mechanisms, and accountability to drive collective action in foreign credential recognition.*

3. Program Background

The Foreign Credential Recognition Program (FCRP) is a contributions program that seeks to support the labour market integration of internationally trained professionals by providing funding to provinces and territories, regulatory authorities and other organizations to:

Improve foreign credential recognition processes and systems to make them faster and more efficient.

Provide loans and support services to help skilled newcomers navigate the credential recognition process.

Facilitate Canadian work experience (CWE) through employment supports, such as work placements, wage subsidies, training, mentoring and coaching, to help ITPs gain Canadian work experience in their field of study.

The Program also seeks to support collaboration among provinces and territories and other partners to improve the mobility of Canadian workers in regulated occupations as they seek jobs across Canada, a process referred to as labour mobility.

The objectives of the FCRP are to:

- develop and strengthen Canada's foreign credential assessment and recognition capacity; and,
- contribute to improving labour market integration outcomes of skilled newcomers and enhancing labour mobility in targeted occupations and sectors.

The program tracks and collects information on several indicators based on their logic model (Annex A). A crosswalk between Program Output/Outcome and Associated Performance Indicators outlined in the PIP can be found in Annex B.

3.1 The Complex Ecosystem of Foreign Credential Recognition

About 20% of jobs in Canada are regulated occupations (e.g., doctors, nurses, engineers, plumbers). For these occupations, the law requires that an individual obtain a certificate, licence, and/or register to use the reserved title for the occupation or to obtain the exclusive right to practice the occupation. Internationally trained professionals must have their foreign credentials verified and apply for licensure before they can practice or use the title designated for a given regulated occupation. FCR aims to protect the health and safety of Canadians and verify that the knowledge and skills are comparable to Canadian standards.

FCR is a provincial/territorial responsibility often delegated to regulatory authorities through legislation. Each jurisdiction establishes education, training and licensing standards and these vary from one jurisdiction to another. In most cases, provinces and territories further delegate this authority in legislation to regulatory authorities. There are approximately 600 regulatory authorities in Canada. The number of regulated occupations and compulsory trades varies significantly, ranging from around 65 to 275 per jurisdiction.

While both FCR and licensure are a provincial/territorial responsibility, the Government of Canada has an interest in advancing labour market efficiency to support productivity and economic growth.

As the federal lead for FCR, the Program aims to help develop and strengthen Canada's foreign credential assessment and recognition capacity, contribute to improving the labour market integration outcomes of skilled newcomers and support interprovincial labour mobility. The Program also aims to play a convening role to foster multilateral collaboration on FCR. Other federal departments also play an important role in FCR, including IRCC as the lead for immigration, pre-arrival and settlement programming and Health Canada as the federal lead in health human resources.

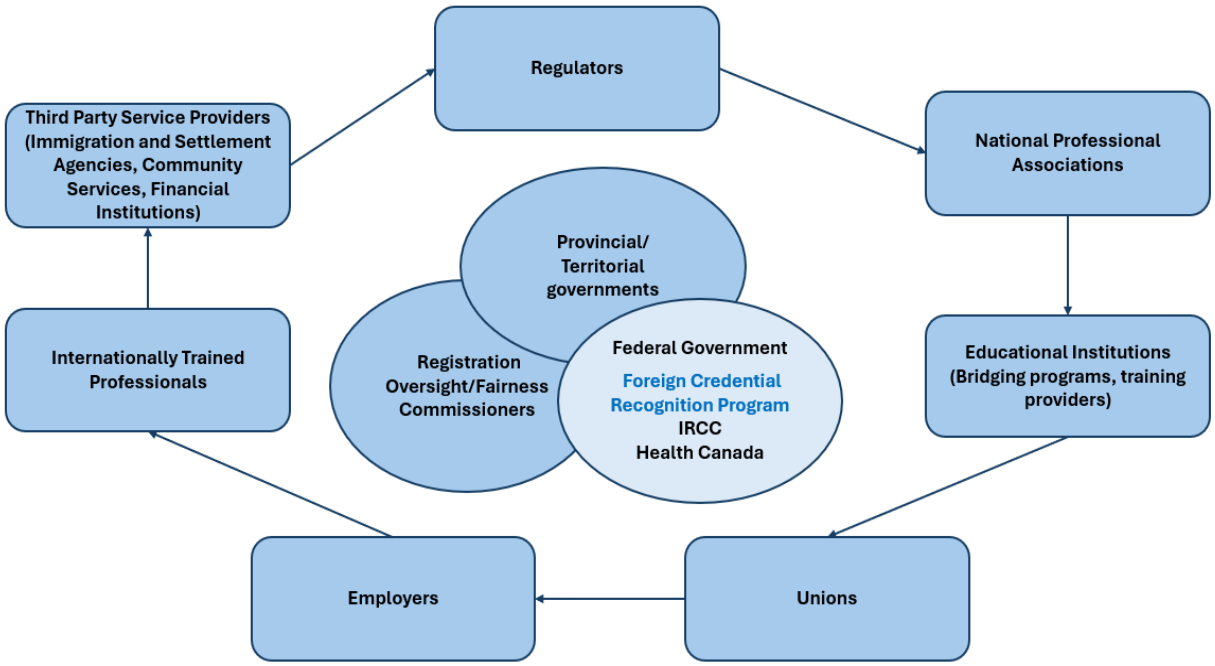
The influence and levers of the Program need to be considered in a context where federal efforts to improve FCR is a shared responsibility and in a context where FCR and licensure are primarily provincial/territorial responsibilities, often delegated to regulatory authorities. Addressing FCR challenges requires collaboration across federal, provincial, and territorial governments, as well as other key stakeholders in the FCR ecosystem, including regulatory authorities, Fairness

Commissioners[1], national professional associations, educational institutions, third party service providers, and employers.

A visual of the FCRP ecosystem, including key stakeholders, roles and connections, is presented in Figure 1 below, while brief explanation of each stakeholder is available in Annex D. The objective of this figure is to provide readers with a high-level understanding of FCRP's position, role, and key challenges (e.g., no direct access to end-users) within the shared ecosystem, rather than offering an exhaustive depiction of all stakeholders and their complex roles. This context may also help ensure that the results are interpreted appropriately within the program landscape.

Figure 1: FCRP Ecosystem: Key Stakeholders, Roles, and Connections

There are a large variety of organizations that impact an FCR applicant's journey towards licensure and employment. The key groups are displayed around the periphery of the circle. The organizations depicted in the centre of the circle interact with these sectors either through a funding, oversight, or partnership relationship.



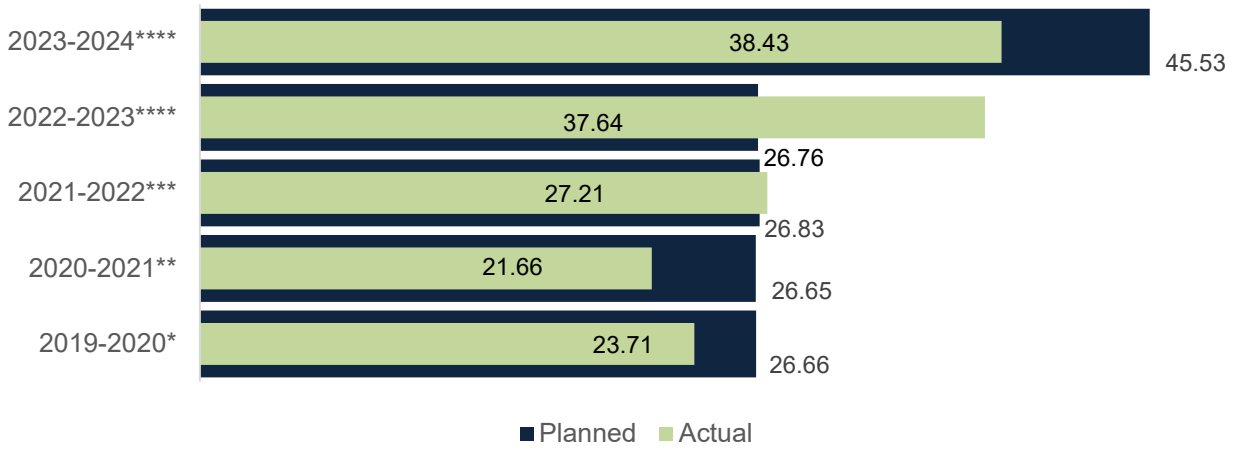
[1] The Fairness Commissioner office oversees the provinces' regulated professions to make sure that they are transparent, objective, impartial, and fair for anyone applying to practise their profession.

3.2 Program Expenditure

The Program operates through a contribution funding mechanism, providing project funding to provinces, territories, regulatory bodies, and other organizations[2]. These funds are used for projects to improve FCR systems and processes and to enhance labour mobility in targeted occupations and sectors. Additionally, the program offers direct supports to skilled newcomers through recipient organizations that provide Canadian work experience and provide loans and support services. The Program also plays a coordination role by fostering collaboration among stakeholders to advance FCR and share best practices.

The program's budget has increased over the evaluation period with new investments provided through Fall Economic Statement 2020 ($15 million in 2021-2022) and Budget 2022 ($115 million over five years starting in 2022-2023 and $30 million ongoing). In the fiscal year[3] 2019–2020, actual program expenditures were approximately $23.71 million. In 2023–2024, expenditures increased to about $38.43 million.

Figure 2. The program's expenditures (in million CAD) increased during the evaluation period



Source: GCInfoBase[4]

[2] Eligible recipients include Notforprofit organizations; For-profit organizations; Professional associations; Industry associations; Unions; Regulatory bodies; Municipal governments; Provincial/territorial governments; Public health institutions; School boards; Universities; Colleges; and Collèges d'enseignement général et professionnel (CEGEP).

[3] A fiscal year runs from April 1 to March 31 of the following year.

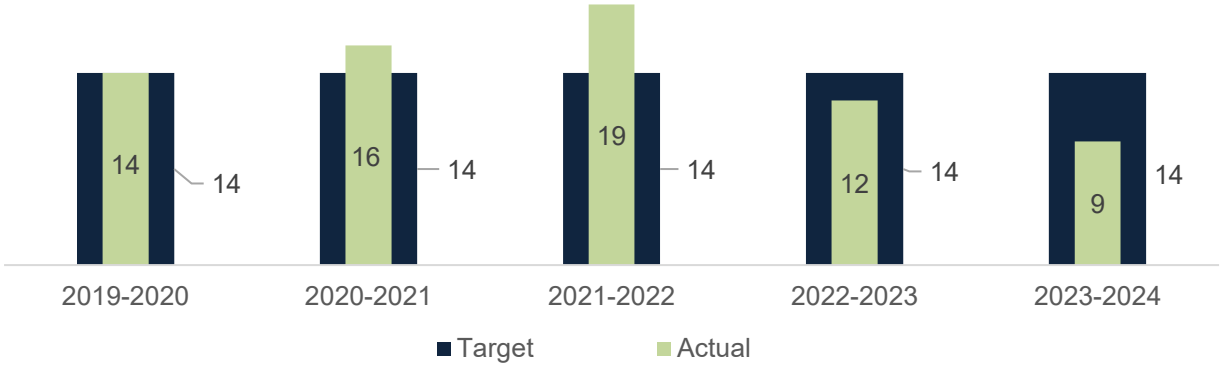
[4] GC InfoBase is an interactive online tool developed by the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat which aggregates financial and programmatic data from official government sources such as departmental plans, public accounts of Canada and departmental results reports.

3.3 Program activities over the Evaluation Period

As part of Program description, this sub-section presents PIP indicator data related to the program activities over the evaluation period, where available.

- ***Increased Coordination Efforts:*** The number of meetings and events supporting national coordination on FCR exceeded targets by 2 meetings in 2020-2021 (16 vs. 14, +14%) and 5 meetings in 2021-2022 (19 vs. 14, + 36%). However, the number of meetings was below targets in 2022-2023 by 2 meetings (12 vs. 14, -14%) and in 2023-2024 by 5 meetings (9 vs. 14, -36%).

Figure 3 : Number of meetings and events that support national coordination and information sharing related to FCR (in-person and teleconference)



Source: FCRP Performance Information Profile, 2022, Approved Version (Updated) and 2024 Draft Version

* The variance is largely due to lower-than-expected contribution expenditures, stemming from complexities in establishing FCRP agreements with regulatory bodies and provinces/territories, and delays in project implementation from the 2019 call for concepts.

** The variance between planned and actual spending is due to COVID-19, which significantly reduced client uptake on FCR loan projects.

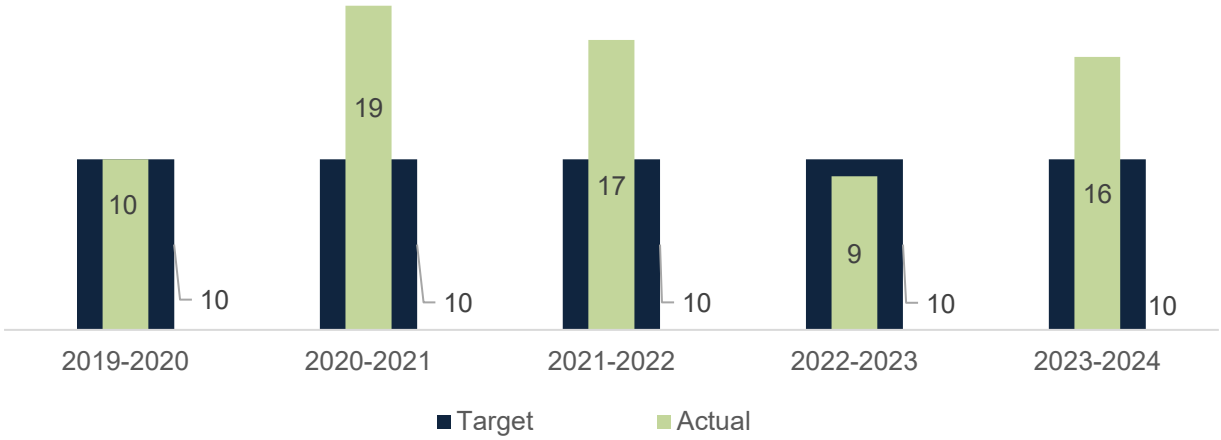
***No significant variance. Fall Economic Statement 2020 provided $15 million to the FCRP in 2021-2022.

****The variance between planned and actual spending is due to internal reallocations, including a $15 million transfer from the Sectoral Workforce Solutions Program (SWSP) to FCRP and a $6.3 million realignment from FCRP to the Canadian Apprenticeship Strategy (CAS).

****Budget 2022 investments of $115 million over five years starting in 2022-2023 and $30 million ongoing.

- ***Expansion of New Projects:*** The number of new projects implemented exceeded targets by 9 projects in 2020-2021 (19 vs. 10, +90%) and 7 projects in 2021-2022 (17 vs. 10, +70%). This dropped to 1 project below the target in 2022-2023 (9 vs. 10, -10%) but increased to 6 projects above target in 2023-2024 (16 vs. 10, +60%).

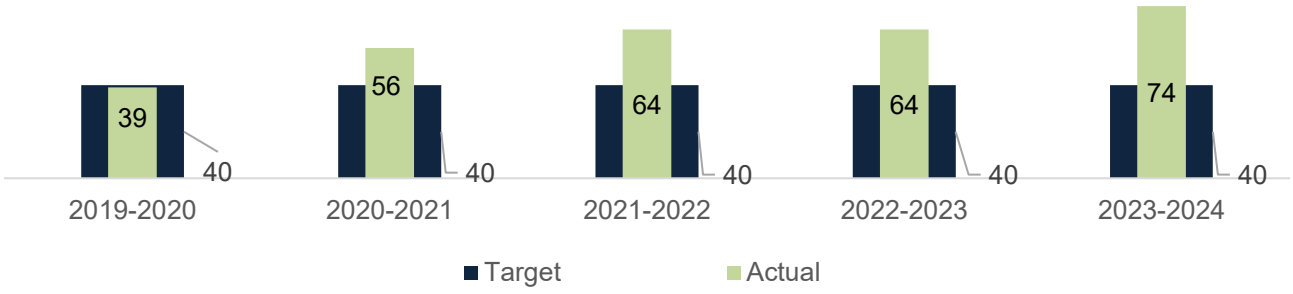
Figure 4: Number of new projects implemented



Source: FCRP Performance Information Profile, 2022, Approved Version (Updated) and 2024 Draft Version

- ***Growth in Active Projects:*** In 2020-2021, active projects surpassed the target by 16 (56 vs. 40, +40%), increasing further in 2021-2022 and 2022-2023 with 24 more projects than targeted (64 vs. 40, +60%). The highest growth occurred in 2023-2024, where active projects exceeded the target by 34 (74 vs. 40, +85%).

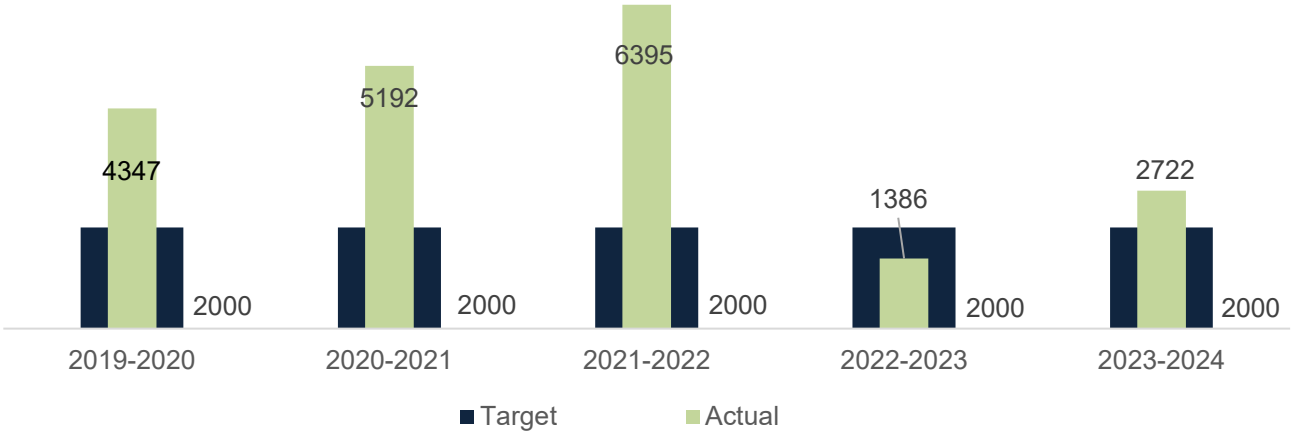
Figure 5: Number of active projects



Source: FCRP Performance Information Profile, 2022, Approved Version (Updated) and 2024 Draft Version

- ***FCR Loan Support Exceeded Expectations:*** The number of skilled newcomers receiving support through FCR loans significantly exceeded targets by 3,192 newcomers in 2020-2021 (5,192 vs. 2,000, +160%) and 4,395 newcomers in 2021-2022 (6,395 vs. 2,000, +220%). Participation dropped 614 below target in 2022-2023[5] (1,386 vs. 2,000, -31%) as new contribution agreements were under negotiation but climbed 722 above target in 2023-2024 (2,722 vs. 2,000, +36%).

Figure 6: Total number of skilled newcomers receiving support services from the FCR loans projects

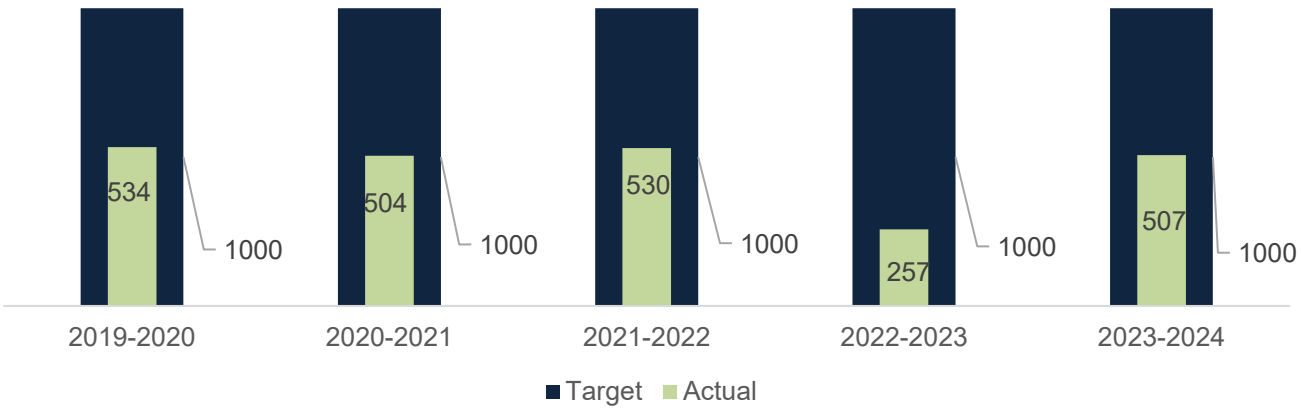


Source: FCRP Performance Information Profile, 2022, Approved Version (Updated) and 2024 Draft Version

- ***Loan Issuance Below Target:*** The number of loans issued to skilled newcomers consistently fell short of the 1,000 target. In 2019-2020, 534 loans were issued (466 below target, -47%), in 2020-2021, 504 loans were issued (496 below target, -50%), in 2021-2022, 530 loans were issued (470 below target, -47%), in 2022-2023, only 257 loans were issued (743 below target, -74%), before slightly recovering in 2023-2024 with 507 loans issued (493 below target, -49%).

[5]The drop in participation occurred in 2022-23 due to a gap period between loans agreements. The 2018 loans agreements ceased to offer new loans and support services in early 2022 and the 2022 loans agreements did not begin offering loans and support services until January 2023.

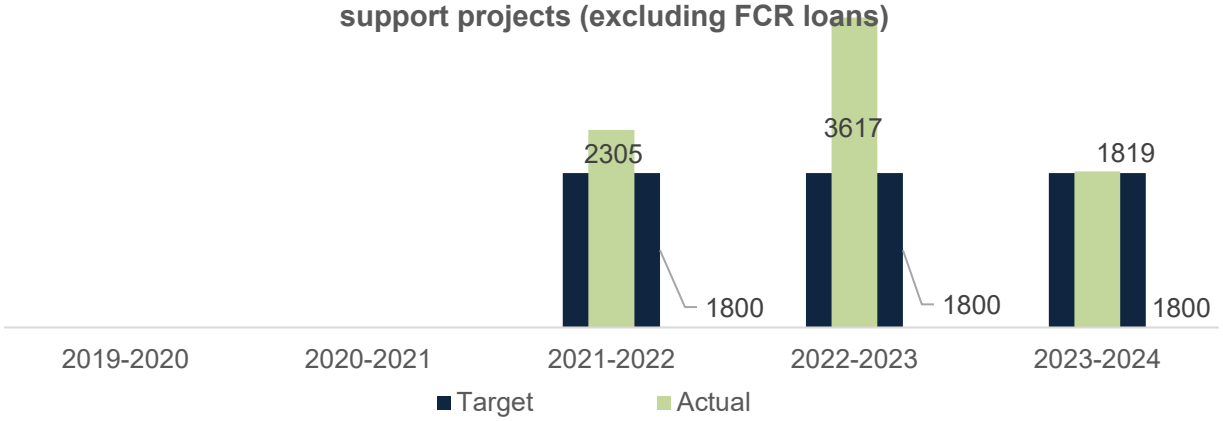
Figure 7: Total numbers of loans issued to skilled newcomers



Source: FCRP Performance Information Profile, 2022, Approved Version (Updated) and 2024 Draft Version

- ***Employment Support Participation Increased[6]:*** Employment support projects exceeded targets, with participation peaking at 3,617 participants in 2022-2023, surpassing the 1,800 target by 1,817 participants (+101%). In 2021-2022, participation exceeded the target by 505 participants (2,305 vs. 1,800, +28%). In 2023-2024, participation remained above target by 19 participants (1,819 vs. 1,800, +1%). Employment supports provided include facilitation of Canadian Work Experience via work placements and wage subsidies, as well as training, mentoring, and coaching.

Figure 8: Total number of skilled newcomers participating in employment support projects (excluding FCR loans)



Source: FCRP Performance Information Profile, 2022, Approved Version (Updated) and 2024 Draft Version

[6] Employment support projects did not start until 2021.

4. Key Evaluation Findings

This evaluation examines program relevance and the recent increased focus on internationally educated health professionals, federal/provincial/territorial relations, and project outcomes as they relate to improved employment outcomes for skilled newcomers.

Part A: Program Relevance

Key Finding 1: There is an ongoing need in Canada for a federal role in the FCR space, in helping address systemic labour shortages, enhancing collaboration among jurisdictions, and providing financial, employment and some pre-arrival support to internationally trained professionals.

1.1 The Program addresses systemic labour shortages, particularly in healthcare

Healthcare vacancies in Canada grew by 59.9% between 2019 and 2021 due to an aging population and pandemic-related pressures (Statistics Canada, 2021). Despite the overall unemployment rate declining from 9.5% in July 2020 (Trading Economics, 2024) to 5.8% by December 2023 (Statistics Canada, 2023b), the healthcare sector remains an exception, with job vacancies consistently outpacing available workers (Statistics Canada, 2023d; Canadian Institute for Health Information, 2023).

Several key informants (7/17) emphasized the necessity of skilled newcomer recruitment to sustain labour force growth, given that immigration is expected to account for 100% of labour force growth due to declining birth rates and increasing retirements.

The Program seeks to help to address these shortages by supporting improvements to foreign credential recognition and supporting labour market integration of internationally educated health professionals (IEHPs). Of the 61 FCRP-funded projects during the evaluation period, 41% (25 projects) targeted healthcare occupations, prioritizing high-demand roles such as nurses, physicians, paramedics, and medical laboratory technologists. Key initiatives include the Government of New Brunswick Bridging Program, which helps internationally educated nurses (IENs) obtain licensure as Registered Nurses (RNs) or Licensed Practical Nurses (LPNs), and the National Nursing Assessment Service (NNAS), which reduces costly assessments and long wait times. Both have played a crucial role in supporting IEHPs by streamlining credential recognition and improving access to the Canadian healthcare workforce.

National Nursing Assessment Service – On-going Success Story

Established in 2012, the National Nursing Assessment Service (NNAS) has emerged as a transformative force in Canada's healthcare landscape, playing a vital role in addressing the country's growing demand for qualified nursing professionals. Since 2012, strategic support and funding from the Foreign Credential Recognition Program (FCRP) enabled NNAS to significantly advance its mission to streamline and improve the assessment process for internationally educated nurses (IENs) seeking to practice in Canada. As a result, thousands of IENs from around the world have been able to begin their professional journey in Canada with greater efficiency and confidence.

The collaboration between NNAS and the FCRP serves as an example of how targeted investments in credential recognition can unlock human potential, drive systemic change, and strengthen critical sectors of the economy.

The Fall Economic Statement 2020 allocated $15 million to the Foreign Credential Recognition Program (FCRP) for 2021-2022, followed by $115 million over five years and $30 million ongoing in Budget 2022, prioritizing labour market integration for Internationally Educated Health Professionals (IEHPs)[7]. Over the evaluation period, $121.4 million was invested in 39 health sector projects, including $88.7 million for 16 projects in 2023-24, aimed at supporting 6,600 IEHPs through employment programs and several thousand more through systemic improvements.

Program representatives (N=3) reported that FCR Loans provided nearly $17 million to over 1,900 skilled newcomers between 2018-2019 and 2022-2023, two-thirds of whom work in healthcare, assisting with licensure and training costs. From April 2021 to March 2024, over 7,700 Internationally Trained Professionals (ITPs) have participated in Canadian Work Experience (CWE) projects, the majority of which are in healthcare, reinforcing the Program's strategic response to labour shortages. During the evaluation period, 41% of funded projects focused on integrating skilled newcomers into healthcare roles, aligning with sector needs. All key informants delivering healthcare-specific projects (7/7) confirmed this alignment, with some stakeholders highlighting the Program's ability to identify high-demand occupations and collaborate with entities like Health Canada to prioritize funding.

[7] FES 2020 stated funding was to expand existing supports to attract skilled newcomers to Canada's in demand sectors. Budget 2022 stated that this funding is intended to help internationally trained health care professionals get their credentials recognized and find work in their field. It is also intended to support projects—including standardized national exams, easier access to information, faster timelines, and less red tape—to reduce barriers to foreign credential recognition for health care professionals.

Program-funded projects effectively support skilled newcomers, as reported by the majority (16/17) of key informants. Most (14/16) emphasized that these projects facilitate community connections and career planning, aiding newcomers in navigating the labour market. Some (7/16) highlighted the importance of bridging programs and manageable loans in credential recognition and workforce integration. A few (4/16) noted that mental wellness support was a key aspect of these initiatives, while others (2/16) stressed the need for language assistance and support in completing the FCR process. Among health sector employers surveyed, 40% indicated that projects funded by the Program aligned with sector needs.

The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated the challenges relating to shortages of health professionals, disrupting FCRP-funded projects due to administrative backlogs, reduced employer capacity, and shifting regulatory requirements. Some organizations, such as the Progress Career Planning Institute, had to move IENs training online, while the Government of Saskatchewan's Immigration and Career Training project faced setbacks as employers scaled back operations and halted work placements.

Despite these disruptions, FCRP funded organizations adapted to sustain service delivery, with many leveraging hybrid models and virtual platforms. Programs like IEHP Pathway to Employment (IEHP-PEP) and YWCA Health Connect expanded mentorship and job readiness training, while Job Skills and the West Joint Electrical Training Society pivoted to career counseling and transferrable skills development. These adaptations helped mitigate barriers caused by the pandemic, ensuring continued support for skilled newcomers. However, the crisis exposed deep-rooted inefficiencies in Canada's credential recognition system, reinforcing the urgent need for more streamlined, consistent, and responsive regulatory processes to facilitate faster workforce integration (ActiveHistory, 2021).

1.2 The Program fosters collaboration and addresses interjurisdictional challenges

Some key informants from the FPT Multilateral on Foreign Credential Recognition Forum (N=6/14) felt that the federal government should play a central role in collaborating with provinces and territories on common or shared foreign credential recognition initiatives. They emphasized the need for better coordination between the immigration system and regulatory bodies to clearly communicate to prospective immigrants and skilled newcomers the specific requirements for working in various occupations in Canada.

A majority of key informants (e.g., funding recipients, program representatives and FCR expert) (N=11/17) highlighted the Program's role in fostering partnerships among provinces, territories, and regulatory bodies to align credential recognition practices and improve outcomes. It was reported that the Program is effective in convening various stakeholders and partners to share best practices and information regarding foreign credential recognition, as well as provide project funding to support the integration of skilled newcomers into the Canadian labour force. Key informants including program representatives, project recipients, and one FCR expert recommended continued work in this space at a higher systems-level to enhance international and national labor mobility, and foster harmonization

and alignment of practices where possible. It was recommended that the federal government work with provinces and territories and regulatory bodies to simplify the foreign credential recognition processes across occupations.

1.3 The Program offers some complementary pre-arrival supports to internationally trained professionals, while key informants emphasized the need for more

The program supports pre-arrival services by funding initiatives that help skilled newcomers understand credential recognition requirements, licensing processes, and employment pathways before arriving in Canada. These initiatives aim to reduce delays in credential recognition and employment, enabling newcomers to enter their fields more quickly. Bow Valley College's IEHP Pathway to Employment Program serves as an example of a pre-arrival support initiative, offering mentorship, job readiness training, and career pathway guidance to IEHPs.

A review of final project progress reports during the evaluation period found that self-assessment tools and pre-arrival competency evaluations, such as those provided by the Canadian Organization of Paramedic Regulators (COPR) and the Association of Canada Lands Surveyors (ACLS), played a key role in helping internationally trained professionals assess their qualifications before immigrating. This support improved their preparedness for licensing and minimized delays in credential recognition upon arrival.

Some key informants (e.g., funding recipients, program representatives and FCR expert) (N=7/17) emphasized the importance of systems-level pre-arrival supports to expedite the FCR process and enhance skilled newcomers' readiness for the Canadian labour market. They highlighted the need for centralized and accessible resources that provide clear and comprehensive information before newcomers arrive in Canada. These resources should include detailed guidance on licensing requirements for regulated professions, language proficiency expectations necessary to meet workplace and credentialing standards, and funding options such as loans, grants, or financial support for the FCR process.

Box 1: Pre-Arrival Support: Existing vs. Suggested Improvement by Key Stakeholders

Pre-Arrival Initiatives that FCRP currently supports	Suggestion from Key Stakeholders
The program funds pre-arrival initiatives to help skilled newcomers navigate credential recognition, licensing, and employment pathways before arriving in Canada.	• Support for centralized & Accessible Resources, focusing on, ○ Licensing requirements ○ Language Proficiency Guidance ○ Comprehensive career transition Pathways ○ Comprehensive funding options information ○ Better system level co-ordination

Source: Program Data & KIIs

As mentioned previously, IRCC is the lead in pre-arrival and settlement programming and Health Canada is the federal lead in health human resources. In that context, ESDC coordinates and works closely with IRCC and Health Canada to advance shared priorities and ensure complementarity. ESDC, IRCC and Health Canada meet regularly to consult and share information on relevant program activities, including stakeholder engagement, mandate letter commitments, policy documents, calls for proposals (CFP), as well as new projects. This approach helps facilitate alignment of program priorities and complementarity of funding.

Additionally, these key informants stressed the value of outlining career pathways that present alternative employment opportunities aligned with newcomers' skills and qualifications, ensuring the newcomers have a clear understanding of available options upon arrival.

Part B: FPT Relations

Key Finding 2: The Program's convening efforts have improved communication among provinces and territories by facilitating the sharing of resources and strategies, particularly in addressing healthcare workforce shortages. There is, however, a need for improved collaboration.

Convened by the Program, the FPT Multilateral Forum is a coalition of willing Provinces and Territories (PTs) to share information and best practices on FCR in support of greater collaboration between federal, provincial and territorial governments with a view to improve FCR across Canada.

Over the evaluation period, the Program has held contribution agreements with the Governments of Alberta, Saskatchewan, Quebec, New Brunswick, Price Edward Island, Newfoundland and Labrador, Nova Scotia, and Yukon for specific projects. While this includes most PTs, incorporating projects from all PTs, especially larger ones like British Columbia and Ontario, could significantly enhance the Program's impact. Ultimately, the Program's ability to support PTs depends on their willingness to submit project proposals and the Program's evaluation of those proposals.

Some focus group discussants (N=5/14) noted that the forum has improved communication, however, they did not see a significant impact on broader collaboration. These key informants felt there could be greater involvement from provinces and territories in establishing priorities for the forum. It was also suggested that more structured information be provided to forum members (e.g., jurisdictional scans, participatory agreements, terms of reference). One key informant provided the example that there is no guidance or information anywhere on how to expedite licensure pathways. There was a suggestion by one forum member to explore opportunities to include non-health occupations more in the forum discussions (e.g., engineering, teachers, and skilled trades).

> *I think the last couple of years, particularly the post pandemic era, led to a lot of experimentation to deal with FCR challenges and in that manner, I think the forum helped us to stay on top of what's happening in other jurisdictions…*
>
> *-Key informant respondent*

A majority (N=10/14) of the focus group discussants noted several barriers to collaboration, including:

- **A lack of a clear mandate and strategic direction**, reducing the forum's ability to drive collective action.
- **Top-down and limited information sharing,** which some described as insufficiently collaborative.
- **Inconsistent intergovernmental coordination,** with insufficient upfront consultation between federal and provincial governments, leading to project duplication and inconsistency.
- **Structural challenges** such as jurisdictional differences in regulations and regulatory complexities, which hinder cohesive action.

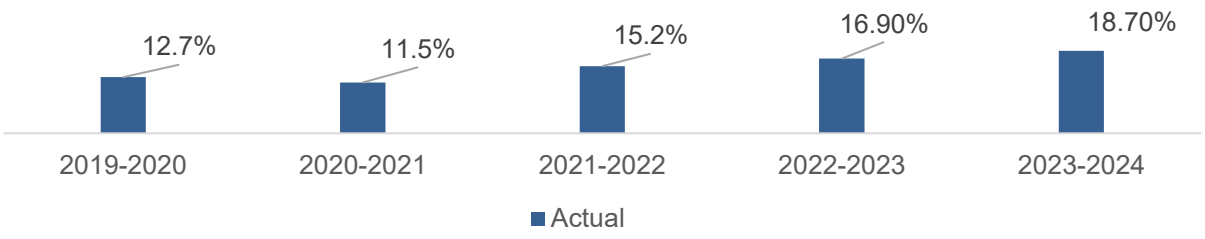
Part C: Program Contribution in Supporting Skilled Newcomers in Labour Market Participation

Key Finding 3: While there is room for improvement, the share of participants completing the credential recognition process and securing employment in their field of expertise following the intervention has been increasing.

A number of factors other than the Program are affecting participants' ability to complete a credential recognition process, these include the newcomer's country of origin, immigration category, level of education, prior work experiences in Canada and the occupation. The evaluation points to some progress in helping skilled newcomers achieve credential recognition and secure employment in Canada.

Program PIP data indicates that the proportion of participants in FCR loan projects who successfully completed their foreign credential recognition has increased over the evaluation period, with a cumulative target of 25% by Q4 2025-2026. In 2023-2024, the cumulative completion rate was 18.7% when considering both loan recipients (as shown in Figure 9) and those who only received support services (as shown in Figure 6). However, when looking exclusively at borrowers, the cumulative completion rate was significantly higher at 46.6%.

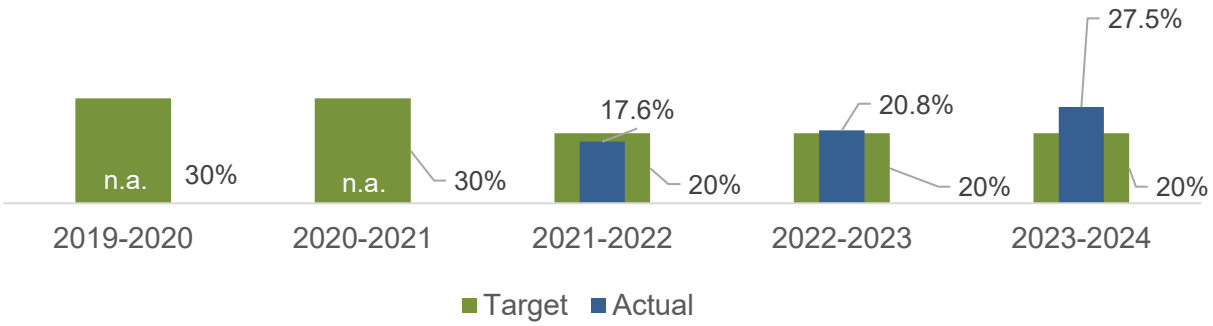
Figure 9: Proportion of Participants in FCR loans projects who complete their Foreign Credential Recognition



Source: FCRP Performance Information Profile, 2022, Approved Version (Updated) and 2024 Draft Version
Note: Completion rates are calculated on a cumulative basis since 2018-2019. For example, in 2023-2024, 18.7% is the ratio of the total number of participants who completed their certification from 2018-2019 to 2023-2024 divided by the total number of participants in FCR loan projects over the same period.

Beyond credential recognition, labour market integration of participants who took part in employment support projects (as shown in Figure 8) has also improved in recent years. The cumulative proportion of participants who found employment in their intended or related occupation increased from 17.6% in 2021-2022 to 27.5% in 2023-2024, exceeding the 20% target in both 2022-2023 and 2023-2024 **(Figure 10)**. As shown in previous sections, employment supports provided include facilitation of Canadian Work Experience via work placements and wage subsidies, as well as training, mentoring, and coaching.

Figure 10: Proportion of participants in employment support projects (excluding FCR loan) who found employment in their intended or related occupation



Source: FCRP Performance Information Profile, 2022, Approved Version (Updated) and 2024 Draft Version
Note: Completion rates are calculated on a cumulative basis since 2021-2022. For example, in 2023-2024, 27.5% is the ratio of the total number of participants who found employment in their intended or related occupation from 2021-2022 to 2023-2024 divided by the total number of participants in employment support projects over the same period.

Key Finding 4: Foreign Credential Loans and Canadian Work Experience projects have reduced barriers to employment for internationally trained professionals.

Some key informants (e.g., funding recipients, program representatives and FCR expert) (N=7/17) emphasized that FCR loans directly alleviated financial burdens, enabling newcomers to manage high credentialing costs and successfully complete their FCR process. Some funding recipients (N=5/13) further identified these loans as a critical resource, particularly in high-cost professions like healthcare and dentistry, where credentialing expenses are substantial.

Employers in the Health Care and Social Assistance sector, as well as the Professional, Scientific, and Technical Services sector, were the most likely to report that the program substantially reduced employment barriers.

Some employers who participated in the survey (39%, N=12/31) reported that CWE projects significantly reduced barriers to employment, while 32% (N=10/31) indicated they reduced barriers to some extent. Most key informants (e.g., funding recipients, program representatives and FCR expert) (N=13/17) emphasized the significance of CWE projects in facilitating initial Canadian work experience for skilled newcomers and helping them navigate cultural differences in the workplace.

Key Finding 5: System improvement projects[8] have advanced more consistent and transparent credential recognition processes with national reach, but evidence of their impact on timeliness and overall effectiveness remains limited.

5.1 System improvement projects have demonstrated national reach and notable successes in streamlining credential recognition processes across Canada

A review of final project progress reports during the evaluation period found that the Program contributed to system improvements by streamlining credential recognition processes. Notable initiatives, such as the National Nursing Assessment Service (NNAS) project, which standardized credential assessments, and Nova Scotia's competency-based licensure documents, helped reduce both the time and complexity required for internationally trained professionals to validate their skills. These efforts reflect broader systemic advancements by removing certification barriers and enhancing the efficiency of the FCR process, ultimately enabling skilled newcomers to obtain licensure more quickly.

All interviewed program representatives (N=3/3) identified the NNAS as a particularly successful program-funded systems-improvement project. This initiative, first established in 2012 and has since

[8] System improvement projects are initiatives designed to enhance the efficiency, fairness, and transparency of credential recognition processes in Canada. These projects focus on reducing time, cost, and complexity by working with regulatory bodies, professional associations, and provincial/territorial governments to develop standardized approaches, improve assessment frameworks, and create tools that facilitate foreign credential recognition. Some project examples include development of standardized occupational competency profiles (e.g.Association of Canadian Occupational Therapy Regulatory Organizations (ACOTRO) and Canadian Alliance of Audiology and Speech-Language Pathology Regulators (CAASPR) and tools such as self-assessment portals (e.g., ACLS). During the evaluation period, 51% of projects (31 out of 61) focused on systemic enhancements in foreign credential recognition, demonstrating a strong commitment to strengthening FCR systems.

received strategic support and funding from the Program, significantly streamlined the credential assessment process, reducing the time required from 12 months to six weeks and lowering costs from $1,250 to $750 per applicant. These improvements exemplify the long-term impacts of funded projects in enhancing the efficiency and accessibility of credential recognition for skilled newcomers.

One of the key themes that emerged from key informants' feedback on system-level improvements, however, was the need for an increased government focus on immigration pathways. Key informants emphasized the importance of educating skilled newcomers on the specific requirements needed to work in their field of expertise upon arrival in Canada. They also highlighted the necessity of addressing ongoing barriers that internationally educated healthcare professionals face, such as Canadian cultural differences, patient rights, and billing practices. These challenges can hinder their ability to integrate fully into the workforce, making targeted support and resources critical for their success.

5.2 The diverse scope and complexity of FCRP-funded system projects make measuring their impact challenging

All interviewed Program representatives (N=3/3) noted that assessing the impact of program-funded system improvement projects is challenging, not only in measuring individual project outcomes but also in consolidating results across a diverse range of system initiatives to report on broader program objectives. For instance, projects may range from developing a website to reformatting an exam**,** requiring evaluation on a project-by-project basis. While measuring impact is challenging, the significance of these projects cannot be overlooked. The evaluation provides some observations to capture this impact, as outlined in Annex E, for the Program’s consideration.

Key Finding 6: The Skilled Newcomer Training Incentive Bond Pilot appears as a promising way to incentivize hiring skilled newcomers, but final takeaways will be clear after completion in 2025.

During the evaluation period, the Bond Pilot engaged 120 employers, with participation divided between Achēv (formerly COSTI Immigrant Services) and the Immigrant Services Association of Nova Scotia (ISANS). Specifically, 50 employers from Achēv and 70 from ISANS were expected to participate. However, final employer engagement and hiring outcomes will be confirmed following the project's completion in June 2025.

The pilot aims to support 200 skilled newcomers, with 100 participants from each organization. Final participation numbers will be determined at the conclusion of the project. The program sets a target of 100% employment for participants in their intended or related occupations, though these outcomes remain projected until verified post-completion.

Program representatives (N=3/3) reported that preliminary results are promising. To date, over 67 employers have been engaged, and 131 skilled newcomer clients have participated in the initiative. Among these participants, 62 skilled newcomers have successfully obtained permanent employment.

Employer perspectives on the pilot's effectiveness varied. Among employers who participated in the survey, 29% reported that the Skilled Newcomer Training Incentive Bond Pilot helped reduce barriers to employment for skilled newcomers to some extent. Additionally, 32% of responding employers indicated that the pilot incentivized them to hire skilled newcomers to some extent. These findings suggest that while the initiative shows early signs of success, further evaluation will be necessary to determine its overall impact on employment outcomes and employer engagement.

Key Finding 7: Jurisdictional differences, varying licensure processes, and complex regulatory requirements continue to hinder progress.

Most of the funding recipients (N=11/13) reported that one of the biggest barriers to skilled newcomers entering the labour market is challenges created by the regulatory bodies, such as the lengthy application process for licensure and the differences in licensure requirements across provinces and territories. Specifically, it was reported that regulatory college and third-party exam schedules are a barrier as exam offerings and number of seats are limited. Funding recipients reported efforts to support their skilled newcomer participants by helping them to navigate career pathways, provide financial support, and exam preparation support.

A few key informants (N=2/17: 1 expert and 1 program representative) emphasized that a skilled newcomer's success in the labour market depends significantly on their chosen profession. While regulated healthcare professionals benefit from high labour market demand, and therefore more targeted initiatives meant to streamline the FCR process and integrate IEHPs into the Canadian workforce, individuals in other regulated occupations continue to face licensure delays, complex certification requirements and limited exam availability. These challenges have led some skilled newcomers to pursue upskilling or explore alternative career pathways to secure employment.

Survey data further highlights these employment barriers. Among skilled newcomers who completed the evaluation survey, 39% (N=23/59) were not employed in a field corresponding to their foreign-acquired professional credentials. The primary obstacles they identified included difficulties in passing board exams, a lack of information on the credentialing process, the necessity of returning to school, and non-recognition of their credentials.

> *I have entered Canada as an Health Care skilled worker applicant (Physician), in 2014, and with the many many obstacles in front of me, I have not yet started work as a Physician. Passed all the exams of Medical Council of Canada, but still jobless. I entered when I was 48 and now I am 58 years old.*
>
> - *Evaluation survey respondent*

5. Program Performance Reporting Challenges

The evaluation identified gaps in program performance reporting that limit its ability to fully assess effectiveness. These include a heavy reliance on output-focused indicators, challenges in measuring the contribution of system improvement projects, difficulties in attributing outcomes to the program, and limited data disaggregation.

The Program's performance reporting could be strengthened to better assess its effectiveness by adopting a couple of strategies such as:

1. shifting from output-based measures to indicators that assess outcomes and progress toward program objectives;
2. drawing on international best practices, to enhance the measurement of system improvement projects;
3. developing specific indicators to measure system-level impacts, and refining ultimate outcome indicators; and
4. collecting and analyzing program outcome data by key socio-economic and demographic variables.

A detailed presentation of Program Performance and Reporting Challenges as well as proposed improvements can be found in Annex E.

6. Overall Management Response

Recommendation #1

The program should expand complementary support for pre-arrival services for newcomers, by providing more support for initiatives facilitating centralized and accessible pre-arrival resources. This could be achieved through a collaborative effort with IRCC, recognizing IRCC as the primary lead for broader pre-arrival initiatives.

Management Response

Management agrees with this recommendation. The Program, in collaboration with IRCC as the primary lead for immigration and pre-arrival initiatives, is taking steps to identify and implement new approaches earlier in the FCR continuum that will set up immigrants, who are intending to work in regulated occupations, for success. To this end, the Program is collaborating with IRCC, as well as Health Canada, to explore opportunities to better inform applicants of FCR requirements, including during recruitment, and encourage internationally trained professionals to begin the FCR process pre-arrival. For instance, the Program launched a new FCR website in March 2025 that provides a centralized, reliable source of FCR information to prospective and new immigrants. The new centralized site helps to better inform applicants of FCR requirements pre-arrival, support navigation to the correct regulatory authority for their profession where they intend to work and promote available services, such as the Program's FCR Loans. The Program will continue to work with IRCC and Health Canada to increase awareness of FCR requirements and services and encourage internationally trained professionals to begin the FCR process pre-arrival.

Required Fields			Optional Fields	
Management Action Plan		**Estimated completion date**	**Status** [In progress, Yet to commence, or Complete]	**Accountable lead(s)**
1.1	Launch Government of Canada FCR website, providing centralized and accessible pre-arrival resources to internationally trained professionals. Canada.ca/foreign-credential-recognition Canada.ca/reconnaissance-titres	March 2025	Complete	FCRP Policy

1.2	Collaborate with IRCC and Health Canada to promote the new website and identify opportunities to better inform prospective immigrants about FCR requirements and encourage beginning the FCR process pre-arrival.	April 2026	In progress	FCRP Policy
1.3	Explore options with IRCC to pilot additional supports and pathways for immigrants who intend to work in regulated occupations in Canada.	March 2027	Yet to commence	FCRP Policy
1.4	Continue to fund projects via the FCRP that complement pre-arrival services delivered by IRCC.	March 2029	In progress (ongoing)	FCRP & Program Operations Branch

Recommendation #2

The program should continue providing and enhancing support for alternative pathways for licensure, such as fast-tracked recognition for high-demand professions, streamlined processes for provisional licensing, and bridging initiatives for international certifications.

Management Response

Management supports this recommendation. The Program supports a vision for systemic transformation of FCR through coordinated efforts across the entire FCR continuum, including in recruitment, pre-arrival, immigration, settlement, and labour market integration. In support of more streamlined processes, ESDC is working with IRCC to advance alignment of requirements in federal immigration levers and provincial FCR processes to reduce duplicative processes for immigrants wishing to work in regulated occupations. ESDC will continue to work with IRCC to explore opportunities to further streamline processes using federal levers. The Program will also scale-up and strengthen collaboration with provincial and territorial governments, regulatory authorities, and provincial Fairness Commissioners and Leads, to inform and guide actions to improve FCR across Canada, including investments through the FCRP. Beyond governance structures, the Program will also explore the use of incentives and outcome-based financing to drive innovation and alignment of processes across jurisdictions.

Required Fields			Optional Fields	
Management Action Plan		**Estimated completion date**	**Status** [In progress, Yet to commence, or complete]	**Accountable lead(s)**
2.1	Strengthen collaboration with provinces and territories, regulatory authorities and provincial Fairness Commissioners and Leads to identify and scale-up best practices and align federal efforts with shared priorities across the FCR continuum, including in recruitment, pre-arrival, immigration, settlement, and labour market integration.	March 2027	Yet to commence	Executive Director, FCRP
2.2	Fund sustainable initiatives through the FCRP that improve FCR systems and processes and support the timely labour market integration of internationally trained professionals, with a focus on priority occupations in key sectors (e.g., health care, education, construction) and as aligned with recommendations of provincial Fairness Commissioners and Leads, including through possible incentives and outcome-based financing models to drive innovation and alignment of processes across jurisdictions.	March 2029	In progress (ongoing)	FCRP & Program Operations Branch

Recommendation #3

The Program should strengthen Federal-Provincial-Territorial (FPT) governance in foreign credential recognition (FCR) by enhancing collaboration with provinces and territories.

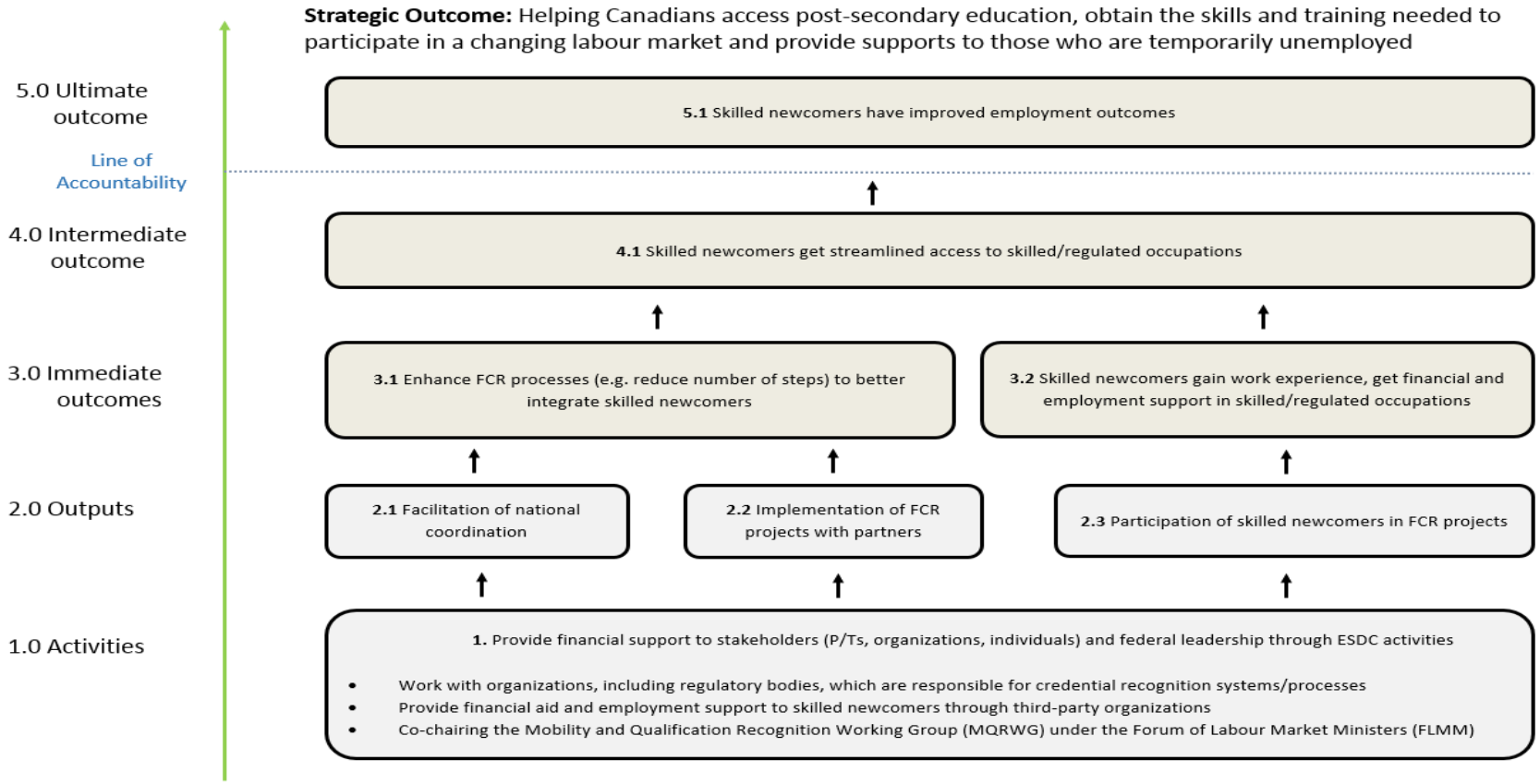
Management Response

Management agrees with this recommendation and acknowledges that improving FCR in Canada requires a coordinated and collaborative effort across the entire FCR continuum and ecosystem. To this end, the Program will work to strengthen interdepartmental governance structures within ESDC, IRCC and Health Canada to support a coordinated federal effort to advance FCR. The Program will also work to strengthen governance in multilateral fora (e.g., Forum of Labour Market Ministers and the Forum of Ministers Responsible for Immigration) to support coordinated FPT actions that address well known bottlenecks and issues across the entire FCR continuum, including within recruitment, pre-arrival, immigration, settlement and labour market integration.

Required Fields			Optional Fields	
Management Action Plan		**Estimated completion date**	**Status** [In progress, Yet to commence, or complete]	**Accountable lead(s)**
3.1	Strengthen governance by creating a coordinated federal FCR workplan with clear deliverables accountable to Deputy Ministers of ESDC, Health Canada, and IRCC to advance a continuum approach to FCR.	September 2025	Yet to commence	FCRP Policy
3.2	Advance a systematic and coordinated FPT approach through a strengthened multilateral governance structure (e.g., Joint Forum of Labour Market Ministers and the Forum of Ministers Responsible for Immigration table) to advance coordinated FPT efforts across the entire immigration continuum.	December 2025	Yet to commence	FCRP Policy

7. Annex

Annex A: Logic Model for the Foreign Credential Recognition Program



Source: FCRP Performance Information Profile, 2022, approved version

Annex B: Crosswalk between Program Output/Outcome and Associated Performance Indicators as outlined in PIP

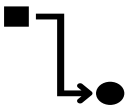
Program outputs and/or Outcomes	Program Indicators in PIP
Output 2.1: Facilitation of National Coordination	Number of meetings and events that support national coordination and information-sharing related to FCR (in-person and teleconference)
Output 2.2: Implementation of FCR contribution agreement	Number of new projects implemented
	Number of active projects
Output 2.3: Participation of skilled newcomers in FCR projects	Total number of skilled newcomers receiving support services from the FCR loans projects
	Total number of loans issued to skilled newcomers
	Total number of skilled newcomers participating in employment support projects (excluding FCR loans)
Immediate Outcome 3.1: Skilled newcomers benefit from FCR systems improvements and are directly supported in their labour market integration	Proportion of participants in FCR loans projects who complete their Foreign Credential Recognition
	Proportion of participants in employment support projects (excluding FCR loans) who gain Canadian work experience relevant to their profession or field of study
	Proportion of skilled newcomers in regulated occupations targeted by systemic foreign credential recognition intervention
Intermediate Outcome 4.1: Skilled newcomers are working in occupations in their field of expertise	Proportion of participants in FCR loans projects who found employment in their intended or related occupation
	Proportion of participants in employment support projects (excluding FCR loans) who found employment in their intended or related occupation
Ultimate Outcome: 5.1: Skilled newcomers have improved employment outcomes	Gap between the employment rate of landed immigrants and of Canadian-born aged 25 to 54 with post-secondary certificate or diploma

Source: Program Data

Annex C: Methodology

The evaluation used a mixed-method approach that included several lines of evidence. This approach ensured adequate data triangulation to support the robust evidence-based findings, conclusions and recommendations.

This evaluation addresses the following questions:

Part 1: Program Relevance	**1. To what extent does the Program respond to an ongoing need in Canada for a federal role in the FCR space?** **a.** To what extent did the FCRP's funded health projects align with health sector needs during the evaluation period? **b.** To what extent have the FCRP-funded health projects impacted employment outcomes for skilled newcomers? **c.** Are FCRP-funded projects aligned with the needs of newcomers across all program activity streams?
Part 2: FPT Relations	**2. How and to what extent have the FCRP's efforts to convene jurisdictions affected communication and collaboration in FCR among provinces and territories?** **a.** To what extent do the FCRP's convening activities respond to a demonstrable need?
Part 3: Program Impact 	**3. How and to what extent have the suite of funded initiatives under the Program contributed to the reduction of barriers faced by internationally trained individuals trying to enter the labour market at a level commensurate with their skills?** **a.** To what extent have FCR Loans Projects and Canadian Work Experience (CWE) Projects contributed to improved employment outcomes for skilled newcomers? **b.** How have system improvement projects contributed to the development of timely, consistent, fair, and transparent FCR systems in specific occupations? **c.** Based on early results, to what extent has the Skilled Newcomer Training Incentive Bond Pilot reduced barriers to employment for skilled newcomers? **d.** To what extent has the pilot incentivized employers to hire skilled newcomers?

Lines of evidence

1. Literature review
2. Document review
3. Administrative data review
4. Key informant interviews
5. Focus Group
6. Online survey with Employers and Newcomers

Scale used to report the findings

1. “Most” – findings reflect the views and opinions of at least 75% but less than 90% of key informants in the group.
2. “Majority” - findings reflect the views and opinions of at least 50% but less than 75% of key informants in the group.
3. “Some” - findings reflect the views and opinions of at least 25% but less than 50% of key informants in the group.
4. “A few” - findings reflect the views and opinions of at least two respondents but less than 25% of key informants in the group.
5. “One” – findings of one highly knowledgeable key informant

1. Literature review

A. Scope and Sources of the Review

The literature review was conducted to inform the role played by the Program in addressing labour market integration challenges faced by internationally trained professionals (ITPs). A targeted sampling strategy was employed, focusing on peer-reviewed journal articles, government reports, program evaluations, and policy briefs. A total of 49 sources were reviewed. Sources were selected based on their relevance to the FCRP’s objectives, particularly in the healthcare sector and credential recognition.

B. Limitations

Key limitations of the review included:

i. **Sectoral Focus**: The healthcare sector was overrepresented, with less evidence on other professions. However, this preference was intentional, as outlined in the evaluation plan and sub-questions.

ii. **Access to Internal Reports**: Restricted access to some internal program evaluations limited the comprehensiveness of the analysis.

To mitigate these gaps, the review was supplemented with findings from interviews, focus groups, and administrative data.

2. Document Review

A. Scope and Sources of the Review

The document review focused on assessing the Foreign Credential Recognition Program (FCRP) within the context of its key objectives, including addressing barriers to credential recognition, improving labour mobility, and enhancing employment outcomes for internationally trained professionals (ITPs). A diverse range of documents was reviewed, including:

i. Internal program documents: Policy reports, stakeholder feedback summaries, and program evaluations.
ii. External sources: Government publications, regulatory frameworks, and research studies.

A total of 45 documents were reviewed.

B. Key Limitations

The document review encountered several limitations:

i. **Data Gaps**: Certain areas lacked up-to-date information, particularly regarding long-term program impacts.
ii. **Uneven Representation**: Regional variations in documented approaches made it challenging to aggregate findings at a national level.
iii. **Access Restrictions**: Limited availability of some internal documents and detailed project-level data created gaps in understanding specific program outcomes.

To mitigate these challenges, findings were triangulated with other sources of evidence, such as stakeholder interviews and administrative data. This approach ensured a more robust and nuanced evaluation.

3. Administrative data review

A. Scope and Sources of Administrative Data

To address the measurement limitations related to alignment, coverage (including evaluation period and program scope), outcome, and the level of data disaggregation required for the evaluation, the evaluation team, in collaboration with the evaluation working group, developed and tracked additional evaluation indicators. Data for these indicators were manually extracted from final project reports within the evaluation period (April 1, 2019, to March 31, 2024). These reports were for projects funded and tracked in the Common System for Grants and Contributions (CSGC).

B. Data Selection and Sampling Approach

From an initial dataset of 105 active projects, filters were applied to ensure the sample aligned with the evaluation period and included projects of at least one year's duration. This resulted in a final sample of 64 projects, including two early-stage Skilled Newcomer Training Incentive Bond Pilot projects. Sixty-one projects were analyzed due to incomplete final reports for three projects.

The sample was designed to represent the program's diverse activities, including:

- **Loan and Employment Support Projects:** Focused on financial aid and Canadian work experience.
- **System Improvement Projects:** Addressing credential recognition and labour mobility barriers.

C. Key Limitations

Several limitations impacted the comprehensiveness of the administrative data review:

i. **Data Inconsistencies:** Variability in the format and detail of project reports, particularly final reports, limited the comparability of project outcomes.
ii. **Incomplete Reports:** Final reports for three projects and some Skilled Newcomer Training Incentive Bond Pilot projects were unavailable.
iii. **Lack of Personal Identifiers:** The absence of personal identifiers restricted linkages to external databases, preventing detailed demographic analysis.
iv. **Qualitative Bias:** Some data relied on open-ended reporting, leading to challenges in quantifying specific indicators (e.g., the number of support services).

D. Mitigation Strategies

- Triangulation with other lines of evidence, including interviews and surveys.

- Modification of evaluation questions to focus on the proportion and types of support services rather than absolute counts.

4. Key informant interviews

A. Purpose and Scope of the Interviews

The key informant interviews were conducted as part of the evaluation of the FCRP to gather qualitative insights into the program's impact, implementation challenges, and areas for improvement. The interviews aimed to assess how effectively the program supports skilled newcomers in overcoming barriers to credential recognition and labour market integration. The interviewees represented three primary stakeholder groups:

- Funding Recipients (N=13): Including representatives from not-for-profits, regulatory bodies, professional associations, and unions involved in delivering FCRP-funded projects.
- Program Representatives (N=3): Managers, directors, and analysts overseeing the program.
- Foreign Credential Recognition (FCR) Experts (N=1): Specialists from academia, provincial governments, or not-for-profits offering expert perspectives.

These stakeholders provided insights across various program streams, including FCR Loans, Canadian Work Experience (CWE) projects, Skilled Newcomer Training Incentive Bond Pilot Initiatives, and System Improvement Projects.

B. Key Limitations

Several challenges affected the interview process:

- **Non-Participation**: Some funding recipients declined or did not respond to participation requests, potentially leading to selection bias.
- **Sampling Bias**: The list of interviewees was developed in collaboration with the program, raising the possibility of bias in participant selection.
- **Limited Expert Input**: Only one FCR expert participated, limiting the generalizability of expert perspectives.

C. Mitigation Strategies:

- Efforts were made to ensure diversity in the sample, including geographic and sectoral representation.

- Findings from interviews were triangulated with data from administrative reviews, surveys, and document analysis to address potential gaps.

5. Focus Group Discussions

A. Purpose and Scope of the Focus Groups

The focus groups were conducted as part of the evaluation of the FCRP to assess its relevance, effectiveness, and impact within Canada's regulatory ecosystem. The primary objective was to understand how the FCRP's efforts to convene jurisdictions have influenced communication and collaboration on FCR among provinces and territories. Specifically, the focus groups sought to:

- Evaluate the effectiveness of the Federal/Provincial/Territorial (FPT) Multilateral Forum on FCR in promoting collaboration and addressing jurisdictional challenges.
- Identify gaps in the federal government's approach to FCR.
- Collect actionable feedback for improving system-level practices in FCR.

Participants were members of the FPT Multilateral Forum on FCR, representing provincial/territorial governments and local organizations in areas such as labour, immigration, adult education, and economic development.

B. Limitations

1. Participation Gaps:

- Not all provinces and territories were represented, as some participants declined or failed to respond.
- Potential selection bias, as feedback may not fully reflect non-participating jurisdictions.

2. Regional Disparities:

- Differences in regulatory frameworks and political priorities across regions posed challenges in identifying universally applicable findings.

3. Focus on Health Professions:

- Discussions heavily emphasized healthcare, limiting insights into other regulated professions.

C. Mitigation Strategies:

- Triangulated findings with other data sources, including administrative reviews and key informant interviews, to validate and enhance the robustness of conclusions.
- Employed regional grouping to ensure depth and relevance in discussions.

6. Online survey

The survey sample for this evaluation was derived from a range of intermediaries (funding recipients), each of whom provided contact lists of employers and skilled newcomers. The goal was to gather insights from a diverse set of participants across different provinces and sectors.

This sample provided a broad geographical distribution; however, there are several concerns about the representativeness of the sample and potential biases that may affect survey outcomes.

A. Key Issues

1. Selectivity and Representativeness

- ***Industry Representation:*** The contacts provided by intermediaries do not necessarily align with broader industry distributions as defined by Statistics Canada. For example, organizations like Biotalent Canada may disproportionately represent certain sectors (e.g., biotechnology), potentially skewing survey results.
- ***Geographical Representation:*** While there are contacts from multiple provinces, representation from certain regions (e.g., Atlantic provinces and territories) appears limited.
- ***Overlap and Duplicates:*** Some lists contained overlapping or duplicate contacts, complicating the overall representativeness of the sample.

2. Selection Bias: Since the survey relies on funding recipients and employers for distribution, there is a risk of selection bias. Recipients may recruit participants who are more easily reachable or have specific characteristics (e.g., those more engaged with the funding recipients' programs), which could lead to an unrepresentative sample.

Mitigation Strategy:

- Recipients were encouraged to randomly select participants or provide a comprehensive list to improve sample representativeness.

3. *Response Bias*: Participants might have felt compelled to respond in a socially desirable way, especially since the survey is being distributed by intermediaries with whom they have existing relationships.

Mitigation Strategy:

- To address this, the survey design ensures confidentiality and anonymity, clearly communicating to participants that their responses will not be shared with funding recipients. Additionally, the survey language was carefully crafted to be neutral and unbiased.

4. Non-response Bias: There is a risk of non-response bias, particularly given the reliance on intermediaries for survey distribution. Participants may not feel sufficiently engaged or motivated to complete the survey.

Mitigation Strategy:

- Follow-up reminders were planned, and incentives for participation were considered to help mitigate non-response bias.

5. Intermediary Influence: There is a risk that intermediaries may unintentionally bias participant responses based on how they present the survey.

Mitigation Strategy:

- A standardized communication template was provided to all intermediaries to ensure a consistent and neutral framing of the survey message.

6. Low Survey Response Rate:

The survey targeted two groups: newcomers and employers. It was distributed to a list provided by program funding recipients, comprising 1,909 newcomers and 696 employers. A total of 203 responses were completed, including 172 from newcomers and 31 from employers.

The employer survey achieved a 5% response rate, which aligns with the typically low response rates observed in employer surveys related to FCR. For instance, Damelang *et al.* (2020) reported an overall mean response rate of 12.3% in a survey experiment among employers concerning FCR.

The response rate for newcomers is unknown, as employers who participated in the survey were also asked to forward it to newcomers, and the total number of recipients remains unclear. Duplicate responses were identified and excluded from the final count of completed surveys. Duplicate identification involved first checking for duplicate user IDs, followed by duplicate email addresses. In cases of duplication, the entry with the most recent update was retained.

A. Employer Survey Representativeness

- The survey responses are skewed toward small employers (80.6%) and the Health Care and Social Assistance sector (32.3%), with limited input from medium and large employers (9.7% each).
- Geographically, responses are concentrated in Ontario (51.6%) and British Columbia (25.8%), with other regions underrepresented, impacting national representativeness.

B. Newcomer Survey Representativeness

- The newcomer survey responses are heavily skewed toward Health Care and Social Assistance (67%), with limited representation from other sectors (most at 1-6%).
- Geographically, responses are concentrated in Ontario (77%), with minimal participation from other provinces.
- In terms of occupations, 46% selected "Other" and 27% left it unselected, providing limited clarity on specific roles.
- Educationally, 41% of respondents hold university degrees, but 27% did not specify their education level.
- The majority of respondents are female (62%), and the age distribution is concentrated in the 35-39 age group (32%), with minimal representation of younger and older participants.

Mitigation Strategies

- To address the low response rate and representativeness issues, multiple sources of evidence were integrated into the evaluation. Administrative data provided some insights into program outcomes. Qualitative evidence from focus groups and interviews with employers and newcomers further complemented the survey results.

Annex D: FCRP Key Multi-Stakeholder Ecosystem

Key stakeholders involved include federal, provincial, and territorial governments, regulatory bodies, employers, and immigrant-serving organizations. The federal government (FCRP) coordinates with provinces to align federal policies, fund initiatives, and support credential recognition.

Provinces and Territories

Play a key role by regulating professions (most commonly via independent regulatory bodies who are delegated authority through legislation), overseeing credentialing standards, and managing foreign credential recognition. They also fund educational institutions to provide bridging programs, offer financial support, and facilitate workforce integration for internationally trained professionals. Additionally, provinces develop tailored solutions and provide funding to address local labour market needs.

FCRP Funding Recipients

Include provincial and territorial governments, regulatory bodies, educational institutions, non-profits, and employers. They collaborate with stakeholders such as regulatory bodies and professional associations to align credential recognition with labour market demands, employers and industry partners to facilitate workforce integration through mentorship and training, and educational institutions to deliver bridging programs and skills development. Community organizations and settlement agencies provide support services for internationally trained professionals, while federal departments and agencies help align services with national strategies.

Employers

Collaborate with funding recipients to integrate internationally trained professionals into the workforce. They may receive direct funding from the FCRP for initiatives in high-demand sectors such as healthcare, IT, and engineering. Employers play a vital role in mentorship, training, and overall workforce integration.

Newcomers/Internationally Trained Professionals

Are the end-users of this ecosystem. They navigate credential recognition processes and integration pathways, benefiting from supports provided by FCRP-funded organizations, provincial/territorial programs, and employer initiatives.

Annex E: Program Performance Reporting Challenges

The evaluation identified several challenges with the Program's current performance reporting, particularly regarding the usefulness and comprehensiveness of its Performance Information Profile (PIP):

Challenge	Description
Output-Focused Indicators	A majority of the program's data tracking/ indicators focus on program outputs (e.g., number of meetings or events, number of loan applicants, number of new participants provided with support services), which do not effectively capture program outcomes or demonstrate its broader effectiveness. For example, the indicator measuring national coordination tracks the number of events held but fails to inform whether coordination has improved as a result.
Tracking Challenges for System Improvement Projects	While immediate and intermediate outcomes for loans and employment support projects are measured, the long-term contribution of system improvement projects is difficult to track, particularly as outcomes may materialize beyond the funding period.
Attribution Challenges for the Ultimate Outcome	The program uses the employment rate gap between landed immigrants and Canadian-born individuals to measure its ultimate outcome. However, the indicator is influenced by external factors beyond the Program's control, making it challenging to isolate the Program's contribution to narrowing this gap.
Limited Data Disaggregation	Program data lacks detailed demographic breakdowns (e.g., country of origin, degree attained, occupation, education level, and age). Disaggregated data is essential for understanding how program outcomes vary across different participant groups and for informing program improvements.

To strengthen the Program's performance reporting and better assess its effectiveness, the following strategies are suggested:

Strategy	Description
Development of Outcome-Focused Indicators	Shift from output-based measures to indicators that assess outcomes and progress toward program objectives. For example, develop measures to assess improvements in national coordination rather than just the number of meetings held.
Strengthen Measurement of System Improvement Projects	Drawing on international best practices, the following approaches can enhance the measurement of system improvement projects: • ***Implementation Longitudinal Tracking:*** Develop mechanisms to monitor system-level changes over time, such as improvements in credential recognition timelines, stakeholder collaboration, or participant employment outcomes. ○ Example: Germany has utilized longitudinal surveys, such as the German Socio-Economic Panel (SOEP), to analyze the labour market integration of immigrants. A study using SOEP data from 2013 to 2019 examined welfare benefit usage among over 4,000 immigrants, providing insights into employment trajectories post-migration (Pavlopoulos et al., 2022).
Enhanced Indicators for System Outcomes	Develop specific indicators to measure system-level impacts, such as reduced credential assessment timelines, increased participation by regulatory bodies, or enhanced collaboration among stakeholders.
Refined Ultimate Outcome Indicators	Supplement the employment rate gap indicator with additional lines of evidence (e.g., participant surveys, longitudinal tracking) to better contextualize and attribute program impacts on employment outcomes.

Improved Data Disaggregation	Collect and analyze program outcome data by key socio-economic and demographic variables such as country of origin, occupation, education level, and age. This will provide a clearer understanding of program impacts on diverse participant groups and inform targeted improvements

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