



Evaluation of the Supports for Student Learning Program

Final report

June 2023

Evaluation of the Supports for Student Learning Program

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List of abbreviations

ESDC

Employment and Social Development Canada

“the Program” or SSLP

Supports for Student Learning Program

OECD

Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

Executive summary

The Supports for Student Learning Program (referred to as “the Program”) funds a broad range of youth-serving organizations. These organizations provide tailored financial and non-financial learning supports. Two core funding streams support learners that are at risk of educational disengagement.

Stream 1 – After-school and Wraparound Student Supports Funding – supports youth-serving organizations. These organizations help underserved students succeed in school, graduate high school, and transition to post-secondary education and the labour market. They are providing tailored after-school and wraparound supports such as tutoring, mentoring and coaching, various mental health, addictions, and well-being concerns, digital literacy, access to learning technologies, career and soft skills development, and other wraparound supports to help student families to improve access to basic needs.

Three main components compose Stream 1:

- Pathways to Education
- Indspire, and
- Support for Student Learning Program Agreements

Stream 2 – Outbound Student Mobility Supports: Funding – supports 2 national associations of post-secondary institutions. These associations work with post-secondary institutions to provide opportunities to students to study and work abroad.

While the Evaluation Directorate evaluates this umbrella Program for the first time, it builds on the ‘Evaluation of Pathways to Education’ (ESDC, 2019). Findings from this evaluation are covering the period from fiscal years 2019 to 2020 until 2021 to 2022. During this period, the Program issued grants and contribution totalling \$150.1M for the Stream 1 and \$18.2M for the Stream 2.

Key findings of Stream 1 – After-school and wrap around student supports

Canada has a high post-secondary education attainment rate compared to other developed countries. **However, some communities in Canada face additional barriers, are underserved, or are underrepresented in post-secondary education.** This has many consequences for students from these communities and for Canada.

Pathways to Education: From April 2019 to March 2022, Pathways supported between 6,209 and 6,512 students annually. Pathways had a positive effect on high school graduation and on post-secondary education enrollment. It also had a positive effect on employment readiness and labour market outcomes. In fact, high school graduation rates were 22.2% higher for participants in Ontario sites on average and 37.6% higher for participants in Quebec compared to non-participants. Also, from 2019 to 2021, between 68% and 74% of Pathways participants transitioned to post-secondary education or training depending on the sites.

Indspire distributed 12,839 bursaries and scholarships in the fiscal years 2020 to 2021 and 2021 to 2022. This represents a total of about \$43 million distributed to First Nations, Inuit, and Métis youth. Indspire participants have a higher post-secondary graduation rate than other Indigenous students. Three

quarters (75%) of Indspire scholarship and bursary recipients completed post-secondary education on time and 88.4% had graduated within four 4 years of their expected graduation.

Supports for Student Learning Program Agreements: From the fiscal year 2019 to 2020 until the fiscal year 2021 to 2022, approximately 34,648 students received after-school and wraparound supports through the Goal Getters agreements. In the same period, 16,505 students received similar supports through the COVID-19 emergency measures.

Given the recency of the projects evaluated, limited data is available on project participants demographic profile (as opposed to Pathways and Indspire). During the evaluation period, there was limited performance data on project outcomes as most projects are in their early stages and still underway (namely the Goal Getters agreements and the COVID-19 Emergency measures). Since most projects under the Supports for Student Learning Program agreements are relatively new, it is too early to examine youth outcomes given supportive evidence available.

Funded organizations identify and disseminate innovative practices to support underserved students. They also develop partnerships and networks with other youth-serving organizations. These smaller organizations gain access to financial and non-financial supports to better assist underserved students.

New agreements – funded as part of the 2021 call for proposals – introduced lower predictability for the service providers due to short-term funding. One-year agreements combined with delays in funding decision and allocation made it difficult to implement tailored supports to address systemic barriers difficult.

Key findings of Stream 2 – Outbound student mobility supports

There are benefits for students who would like to participate in outbound student mobility opportunities. This also benefits Canada. Still, students face financial and non-financial barriers to studying and working abroad. Some students face more barriers, particularly:

- students who want to study or work in non-traditional countries (for instance countries other than the United-States, United Kingdom, Australia, and France), and
- underrepresented students (for instance students from low-income households, Indigenous students, and students with disabilities)

Funded post-secondary institutions contributed to developing lessons learned and promising practices. This includes research on reducing barriers and wraparound supports for students to partake in international opportunities.

In 2020 to 2021, approximately 13,600 Canadian students directly benefited from these activities. In addition, funded projects developed partnerships with post-secondary institutions in nearly 50 countries.

Recommendations

1. Continue to gather evidence to understand the characteristics, challenges, and promising practices and to address any emerging needs and better support underserved or under-represented students in post-secondary education

2. Explore ways to improve the sustainability of projects beyond the Program funding by supporting the development of partnerships and by increasing the Program's role in generating and disseminating lessons learned and promising practices among all youth serving organizations
3. Continue to further improve and strengthen data collection strategy to inform results and support decision-making, including exploring ways to inform program impacts

Management response and action plan

Overall management response

Management accepts the recommendations outlined in the Evaluation of the Supports for Student Learning Program and will use the findings to inform the current work underway, and the policy recommendation on the future of the program post-2025. Due to the relative newness of the program, it is important to note that at the time of evaluation, dedicated work was underway to address many of the areas highlighted by the Evaluation report. Focused efforts include strengthening and standardizing data collection from funding recipients, refining the program's understanding of barriers that students are facing and developing an impact measurement framework for the program.

The objectives of the formative evaluation were to examine the relevance, program design and the effectiveness of the Program in achieving its objectives and intended outcomes between April 2019 and March 2022. Evaluating the program during that period proved challenging because, as noted above, the program was new, and the various funded initiatives were at different stages of implementation. Further, while there was a large injection of new funds over a short time frame for the Program pilot, significant implementation challenges resulted in agreements being signed beyond the period scoped into the evaluation. A 2-year extension of the Pilot via 2022 Fall Economic Statement allowed the Department to shift its focus to many of the critical elements identified in the evaluation, namely knowledge dissemination and data collection, that have been less of a focus due to the need to prioritize program renewal because of the short funding cycles.

This evaluation builds on a 2019 Pathways evaluation, but it is the first evaluation of the Program umbrella program. Overall, making sure students have the supports they need in their education to help guide them towards their future success is a priority for the Program. As the Evaluation noted, although Canada performs well in terms of post-secondary education attainment compared to other similar countries, some students still need additional supports in or outside the school system to succeed. Given the adverse consequences for individuals and for society at large associated with school disengagement, there is a critical need for the Program as it offers tailored support outside of the school system, and along the student's learning journey. With funding from the Program, a variety of national or regional or local organizations have been and continue to be well positioned to offer supports to students or to education organizations.

Recommendation #1

Continue to gather evidence to understand the characteristics, challenges, and promising practices and to address any emerging needs and better support underserved or under-represented students in post-secondary education.

Management response

Management agrees with this recommendation. Significant efforts were already underway during the evaluation period and since the time of the evaluation, to ensure that Program interventions support youth with the greatest needs and in the most effective way.

Management action plan		Completion date
1.1.	Engage with leading experts on barriers to education attainment for targeted groups and use findings from existing lines of evidence to inform program design and delivery	Summer 2023 and ongoing
1.2.	Implement an Impact Strategy Action Plan for short, medium and long-term actions, based on recommendations of an expert advisory firm	Fall 2023
1.3.	Assess impacts of Global Skills Opportunity on soft skills acquisition through external program evaluation and research. Continue to gather information and evidence to support Global Skills Opportunity implementation	Fall 2023 and ongoing
1.4.	Revise the Performance Information Profile to reflect recent changes to the umbrella program (including the 2 streams) and delineate associated outcomes and impact measurement	Fall 2023

Recommendation #2

Explore ways to improve the sustainability of projects beyond the Program funding by supporting the development of partnerships and increasing the Program’s role in generating and disseminating lessons learned and promising practices among all youth-serving organizations.

Management response

Management agrees with this recommendation. The SSLP Program is exploring new strategies to build on the promising practices implemented to date and increase the capacity of youth-serving organizations to better target equity-deserving learners with effective wraparound supports.

Management action plan		Completion date
2.1	The Program will develop an enhanced engagement strategy for building stronger partnerships with funded organizations and improve the program’s processes for	Fall 2023 and ongoing

	collecting and disseminating evidence including lessons learned from funded projects	
2.2.	Raise the program’s visibility by increasing management involvement in funded project implementation, through site visits and attendance at key events held by funding recipients. To be completed on an ongoing basis	Ongoing

Recommendation #3
Continue to improve and strengthen data collection strategy to inform results and support better decision-making, including exploring ways to inform program impacts.

Management response

Management agrees with this recommendation. During the evaluation period and since the time of the evaluation, the Program has already undertaken efforts to strengthen the program’s ability to demonstrate results and impact. The Program will continue to and explore new ways of collecting data within the constraints of policy objectives, privacy principles and jurisdictional boundaries.

	Management action plan	Completion date
3.1	Standardize the collection of data from funded organizations, and build a modernized reporting structure, with focused work examining project-specific outcomes	Summer 2023 and ongoing
3.2.	Pilot a new survey with learners receiving supports from SSLP the Program funded projects, to better understand program impact	Ongoing
3.3.	Continue Impact Strategy Action Plan lines of work (international outreach to peer countries; leverage administrative ESDC data)	Ongoing



1. Introduction

This report presents the findings from the formative evaluation of the Supports for Student Learning Program. The Supports for Student Learning Program, referred to as “the Program,” is an umbrella grants and contributions program. It aims to help underserved learners to complete high school and transition to and succeed in post-secondary education. It builds on the core supports offered by Pathways to Education Canada. ESDC already evaluated this agreement in 2019.

The objectives of this evaluation are to examine the relevance and the program design. It also aims to assess the effectiveness of the Program in achieving its objectives and intended outcomes. The evaluation covers the period between the fiscal year of 2019 to 2020 and the fiscal year of 2021 to 2022. The Evaluation Directorate completed it in compliance with the Financial Administration Act and the Policy on Results. The Evaluation Directorate developed evaluation scope, questions, and lines of evidence in consultation with the Learning Branch and the Program Operations Branch from ESDC.

2. Background

2.1 Program objective

The Supports for Student Learning Program funds a broad range of youth-serving organizations to provide a range of targeted non-financial and financial learning interventions. Two core funding streams support learners that are at risk of educational disengagement¹.

Stream 1 – After-school and Wraparound Student Supports – provides funding for youth-serving organizations. These organizations provide various after-school and wraparound supports to support underserved students² succeed in school and graduate high school. The Program’s objective is to support learners to transition to post-secondary education and the labour market. Three main components compose this stream, namely:

- the Pathways to Education Canada (or Pathways) agreement
- Indspire Agreement, and
- the Support for Student Learning Agreements (including the established Goal Getters agreements).

Stream 2 – Outbound Student Mobility Supports (also branded as Global Skills Opportunity) - provides funding to Universities Canada, and Colleges and Institutes Canada. Both organizations work with Canadian post-secondary institutions to provide opportunities to students to study and work abroad. The stream’s focus is on reaching underrepresented learners³ and students who seek to study or work in non-traditional countries⁴.

In addition, the Program supports collaboration with partners and stakeholders, including expert organizations to research, test and implement innovative solutions. The goal is to measure the direct impacts of the different funded initiatives. Therefore, the Program seeks to generate lessons learned and promising practices to use in improving their programming.

¹ As part of the Supports for Student Learning Program umbrella the definition of learners at risk of educational disengagement varies based on the stream and on the agreements. A detailed definition of learners at risk of disengagement is available in section 2.3.

² As part of the first Stream of the Program, underserved students is not restrictive and includes all students that face greater barriers to education, including (but not limited to): Indigenous students, visible minority and racialized students, students living with disabilities, students living in a low-income household and students identifying as 2SLGBTQI+.

³ As part of the second stream of the Program, underserved students include students from low-income households, Indigenous students, and students with disability.

⁴ As part of the second stream of the Program, non-traditional countries include all countries except most popular countries for outbound student mobility opportunities (such as United-States, United Kingdom, Australia, and France).

2.2 Program resources

From April 2019 to March 2024, the total actual and planned budget of the Program is \$341.1M (refer to table 1 and 2 for specific program expenditures).

Figure 1. Supports for Student Learning umbrella program structure

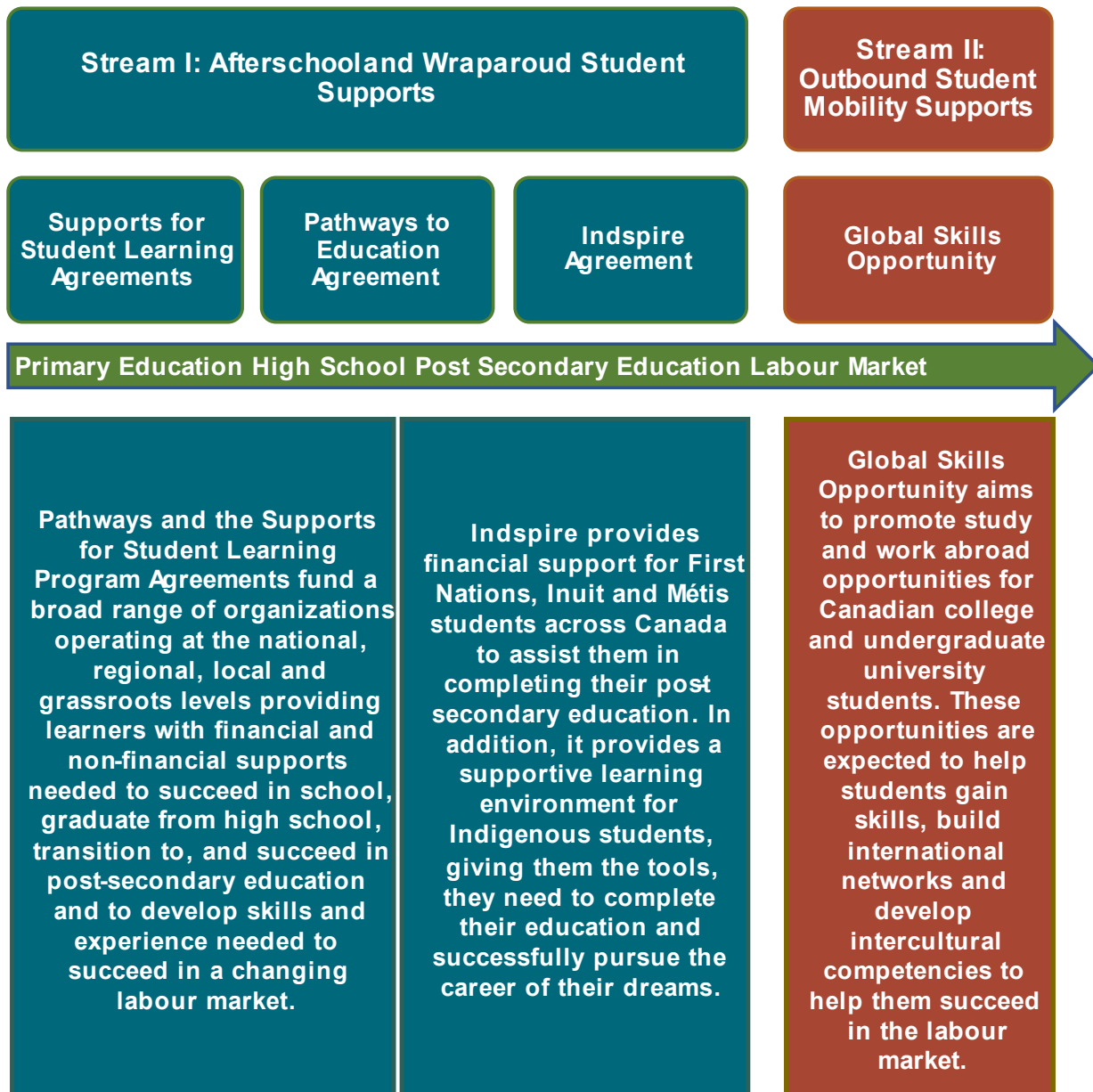


Table 1. Supports for Student Learning Program Stream 1 annual actual and planned expenditures information (in millions of dollars)

Program Components	2019 to 2020 (actual)	2020 to 2021 (actual)	2021 to 2022 (actual)	2022 to 2023 (planned)	2023 to 2024 (planned)	Total
Pathways	\$9.5	\$9.5	\$9.5	\$9.5	\$9.5	\$47.5
Indspire	\$3	\$11.8	\$11.8	\$16.8	\$11.8	\$55.2
Goal Getters	\$7	\$11	\$12	\$10	\$10	\$50
COVID-19 Emergency Funds	\$0	\$15	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$15
Other Supports for Student Learning Program announcements	\$0	\$0	\$50	\$48	\$10	\$98
Supports for Student Learning Agreements (total of the Goal Getters, COVID-19 Emergency Funds and other Supports for Student Learning Program announcements):	\$7	\$26	\$62	\$58	\$20	173\$

Source: Program Administrative data.

Notes: Indspire received \$8,817,000 from Indigenous Services Canada in the fiscal year 2019 to 2020 before all Government of Canada funding to Indspire was consolidated under ESDC. As part of Goal Getters, the Program re-profiled \$3M from the fiscal year 2019 to 2020 to the fiscal year 2020 to 2021, and \$2M from the fiscal year 2020 to 2021 to the fiscal year 2021 to 2022. The Budget 2021 provided funding to conduct a 2-year pilot expansion of the Program. These funds would support national and local after-school organizations who work to ensure that vulnerable children and youth can graduate high school, and do not become further marginalized because of the pandemic. In addition, in September 2022, the Fall Economic Statement announced funding for a 2-year extension of the Program at reduced levels. This represented funding of \$10M in the fiscal year 2023 to -2024 and of \$20M in 2024 to 2025. In addition, it included 1-year of renewed funding for Pathways and Indspire at existing levels (\$9.5M and \$8M in 2023 to 2024, respectively).



Table 2. Supports for Student Learning Program Stream 2 annual actual and planned expenditures information (in millions of dollars)

Program Components	2019 to 2020	2020 to 2021	2021 to 2022	2022 to 2023	2023 to 2024	Total
	(actual)	(actual)	(actual)	(planned)	(planned)	
Global Skills Opportunity	\$3	\$6.2	\$9	\$16.2	\$31	\$65.4

Source: Program Administrative data.



2.3 Program components

Stream 1: After-school and wraparound supports for student

Pathways to Education Canada: Since 2010, the Department provides funding, primarily via a public grant to Pathways to Education Canada or “Pathways”. This not-for-profit charitable organization supports learners in completing high school and in transition to post-secondary education, training, or employment.

Pathways partners with local host organizations (such as health agencies, community resource centres, youth-serving organizations, and Indigenous organizations) in communities. Partner organizations then deliver the Pathways program. Pathways targets youth from populations that have been historically underserved in post-secondary education, such as:

- Indigenous youth
- newcomer youth
- youth from low-income families, and
- youth from families without previous post-secondary education experience

Pathways’ program complements the public school system by working closely with community-based partners and volunteers. This partnership provides youth at risk of disengaging from education with a variety of after-school supports. These supports aim to lower high school dropout rates and to address systemic barriers to education. They include:

- one-on-one mentoring
- academic support
- social support, and
- financial support

Once it establishes a project site, Pathways works with the host organization to collect participant data and to report on progress measures. It also holds community-to-community knowledge and learning exchanges to share promising practices and ideas, and to provide support for local fundraising efforts.

Indspire: Since the early 1990s, the Government of Canada has provided funding to Indspire, a national, Indigenous-led registered charity. In 2019 to 2020 funding moved from Indigenous Services Canada to ESDC. This funding aims to support Indigenous students that do not receive post-secondary education financial support through other governmental programs. Indspire supports Indigenous students primarily with financial resources to pursue post-secondary education. Indspire dedicates most of the funding to Building Brighter Futures Program. This program delivers bursaries and scholarships for Indigenous students. Funding through this stream also supports other Indspire programming such as mentorship and career development.

Support for Student Learning Agreements: As part of Stream 1, the Program regrouped other agreements under the “Supports for Student Learning Program” Contribution Agreements, including:

- the Goal Getters agreements
- the COVID-19 Emergency Fund agreements, and
- new project agreements under the CFP (Supports for Student Learning Program contribution agreements)

Goal Getters agreements: Goal Getters builds on positive results and on the relationship that ESDC developed with Pathways to Education Canada. ESDC implemented the Goal Getters agreements in 2019 under the Youth Employment and Skills Strategy. However, the department transferred it to the Supports for Student Learning Program. This component provides contribution funding to youth-serving organizations to deliver comprehensive after-school supports. Goal Getters targets youth facing barriers to learn, succeed in school, complete high school, and to transition to post-secondary education or employment.

Funding for Goal Getters has focused on 3 main objectives:

- work with organizations that have proven results and a demonstrated growth potential to enhance and potentially scale up existing programs
- introduce a collective impact model. This model will leverage the expertise and strengths of organizations in the sector. In encourage collaboration on shared initiatives in several communities, and
- support innovation and test youth-driven solutions that can be rapidly prototyped, evaluated and, if successful, inform potential projects that can subsequently be scaled up.

COVID-19 Emergency Fund agreements: In April 2020, the Government of Canada’s COVID-19 Emergency Response Plan included specific measures. This plan was a response to the disproportionate impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on youth and at-risk learners. These included 1-year funding of \$15 million under the Supports for Student Learning Program. The goal was to enable youth-serving organizations:

- to transition their supports online
- address the digital divide, and
- expand critical resources for learners in need (for example distribution of various technologies, internet and broadband access)

Building on the Government of Canada’s COVID-19 Emergency Response Plan, Budget 2021 expanded the Program for 2-year expansion. It aimed to fund a diverse range of youth-serving organizations. This included the continuity of COVID-19 response programming and enabling new investments to reach youth among underserved populations and communities.

Supports for Student Learning Program Agreements: Budget 2021 also announced funding of \$118.4M over 2 years, the fiscal years 2021 to 2022 and 2022 to 2023. The goal of this funding is to

conduct a pilot expansion of federal investments in after-school programming. Also, it aims to expand learning and wraparound supports for youth under the umbrella Program.

The Supports for Student Learning Program pilot expansion only had a 2-year funding profile. Given that, ESDC pursued a 2-pronged approach to implement the pilot in a timely manner, including:

- renewing or amending some existing agreements with Goal Getters and COVID-19 Emergency funding recipients, and
- launching a competitive solicited intake process (ESDC approved 34 new projects)

In August 2021, the Program launched a call for proposals. The goal was to fund organizations with new projects of up to \$8.5M per year. The maximum project duration was of 59 weeks. Like Pathways to Education Canada and Goal Getter Agreements, this call for proposals sought to fund inclusive and flexible supports by funded organizations. The aim is to help underserved students stay in school, graduate on time, or go on to post-secondary education. Direct supports to students relate to at least one of the following 4 key themes:

- academic persistence and preparedness
- comprehensive mentorship and mental wellbeing
- building educational aspirations and resiliency, and
- increasing connectivity

Stream 2: Outbound student mobility supports

Global Skills Opportunity

The Government of Canada launched a new International Education Strategy in August 2019, a horizontal initiative led by Global Affairs Canada. The Strategy included investing in a new Outbound Student Mobility Pilot (now named the Global Skills Opportunity). This pilot aims to enable Canadian college and undergraduate university students to acquire in-demand skills through study or work abroad opportunities. In particular, the Global Skills Opportunity aims to:

- increase the participation of underserved students⁵ in study or work abroad opportunities (50% of funding)
- diversify the destination countries where Canadian students go to study or work abroad⁶ (40% of funding), and
- test innovative approaches to reduce barriers to study or work abroad (up to 10% of funding)

⁵ As part of the second stream of the Program, underserved students include students from low-income households, Indigenous students, and students with disability.

⁶ As part of the second stream of the Program, non-traditional countries include all countries except most popular countries for outbound student mobility opportunities (such as United-States, United Kingdom, Australia, and France).

Innovation Fund – Global Skills Opportunity

Due to COVID-19 travel restrictions, program implementation shifted to a phased approach. This approach started with the implementation of the Innovation Fund. This Fund supported post-secondary institutions to:

- to test innovative approaches, including virtual mobility opportunities,
- research on reducing barriers, risk management, and
- the testing of wraparound supports

These activities helped post-secondary institutions test new tools and approaches. It also helped to adapt mobility programming to COVID-19 and build the foundation for the launch of the full program.⁷

⁷ The Global Skill Opportunity fully launched in November 2021; however, activities initially focussed on virtual mobility until global travel advisories for non-essential travel were lifted in February 2022. Post-secondary institutions began offering study and work abroad experiences in March 2022, although these activities were not examined as part of this evaluation.

3. Evaluation context

3.1 Previous program evaluation

While ESDC evaluates this umbrella Program for the first time, this study builds on the ‘Evaluation of Pathways to Education’ (ESDC, 2019). The objective of this evaluation was to examine the extent of the program’s relevance and achievement of its outcomes. It also measured the incremental impact it had on its eligible students. The evaluation found that:

- Pathways programming addressed a demonstrable need by supporting disadvantaged youth in:
 - completing their education
 - transition to a successful future, and
 - reaching their potential
- Pathways contributed to increased enrollment to post-secondary education among participants. For instance, high school graduation rates were 10-19% higher for Pathways participants than for comparison groups of non-participants
- adapted programming provided by the Winnipeg site, of which 72% of Pathways students are Indigenous, positively affected Indigenous youth
- participation in Pathways was positively correlated with high school graduation rates, enrollment to post-secondary education and educational attainment, and
- the Program positively affected eligible participants’ labour market outcomes. For instance, a study by Lavecchia et al. (2018) matched school records to income tax data. This allowed to assess the employment outcomes of youth in the Pathways catchment area for the Regent Park site. It found that participation in Pathways increased adult earnings by 19%, employment by 14%. It also reduced welfare receipt by more than 30% relative to a comparison group⁸ (Lavecchia et al., 2018)

In addition, a cost-benefit analysis concluded that the individual net benefit for participating students was almost \$5,500 over 25 years. The total net social benefit to society of an eligible student participating in Pathways over 25 years was \$7,490 compared to a non-eligible student. This represented a total social rate of return of 50.1% over 25 years, or an average annual growth rate of 1.6%.

⁸ This study followed those eligible for Pathways and a comparison group of students living in other public housing units from the year they begin high school, through college and early into early adulthood. Results have been found using a quasi-random-assignment and difference-in-differences research design.

3.2 The 2022 program evaluation

This evaluation builds on the 2019 Pathways evaluation and on the funding increase since its publication. It includes findings from multiple lines of evidence to assess the impact of the Program between the fiscal years 2019 to 2020 and 2021 to 2022⁹. In addition, it examines recent modifications made to the application process (in the 2021 call for proposals).

The main lines of evidence comprise this evaluation:

- document and literature review¹⁰
- internal key informant interviews with Government of Canada officials
- external key informant interviews with established recipient organizations (under the Pathways, Indspire, Goal Getters and Global Skills Opportunity agreements)
- external key informant interviews with organizations solicited by the Program as part of the 2021 Call for Proposals, and
- survey of officials of youth-serving organizations (Stream 1), and
- survey post-secondary institutions (Stream 2) that have a partnership with Support for Student Learning Program agreement holder

The survey includes officials involved in delivering direct support to students, the management and coordination of the project, advertising the project or evaluating or conducting research activities.

A detailed methodology report is available in Appendix C.

Key limitations from this evaluation include the lack of direct engagement with students (end users) who participated in the projects. In addition, the Program has limited data available on the outcomes of participants for less mature projects and for projects impacted by COVID-19.

Also, the current evaluation could not include an impact analysis. However, the Program is working with Pathways to Education Canada, researchers, and Statistics Canada to explore Pathways' impact on health and crime. At the time of this evaluation, this research is still ongoing.

⁹ Due to COVID-19 travel restrictions, for the Stream 2, the Global Skills Opportunity shifted to a phased approach, starting with the implementation of the Innovation Fund. As of February 2022, this Fund, focused on helping institutions test new tools and approaches, adapt mobility programming to COVID-19, and build the foundation for the launch of the full program. For this reason, other phases, including the funding allocated to support underrepresented students work or study abroad and the funding allocated to support students work or study in non-traditional countries will be evaluated as part of the next evaluation cycle.

¹⁰ The Document Review includes a Literature Review to Better Understand Barriers and Facilitators to Educational Attainment in Canada produced by the Design, Impact and Outreach team in the Learning Branch, funded organization research, lessons learned and promising practices and other government and independent research and publications. The methodology contains additional information on the scope of the documents review.

In addition, for Stream 2, this evaluation does not include performance information to inform the impact of the work and study abroad opportunities. This evaluation only presents findings about projects funded as part of the Innovation Fund.

4. Stream 1 – Relevance

There is a need for tailored and case-by-case supports for each of the groups of underrepresented and underserved students. This is especially the case since each group of students face unique challenges. Youth-serving organization funded by the Program provide wraparound, flexible and case-by-case supports to alleviate these challenges (consult section 5).

4.1 Ongoing need for the Program

According to Statistics Canada, in 2019, the high school graduation rate (84.3%) was above the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) average (80.3%) (Statistics Canada, 2022d).

While Canada is ahead of many other countries in terms of post-secondary education attainment levels, sub-populations of students face unique barriers to education.

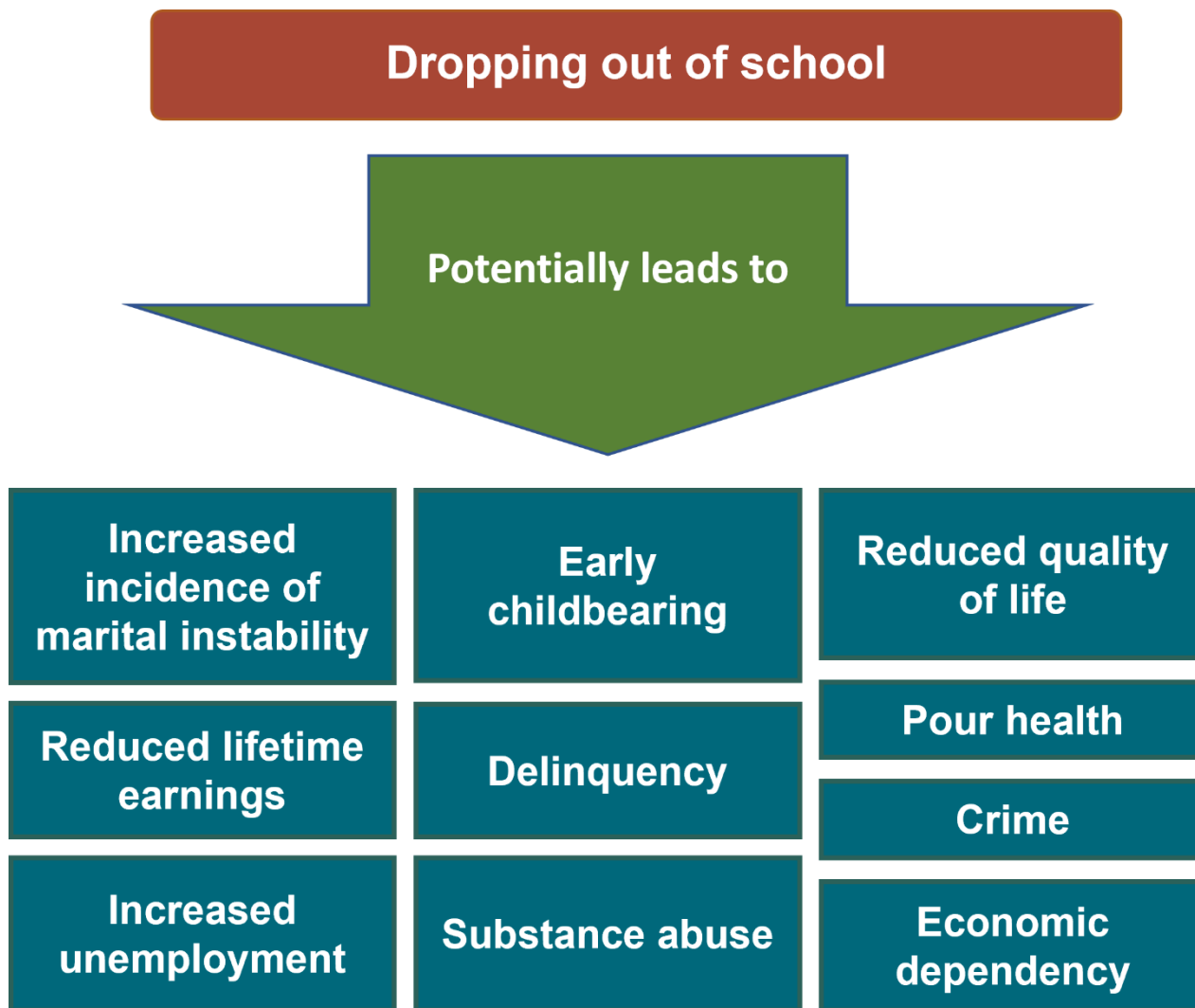
A recent fact sheet from Statistics Canada (2022e) shows that high school graduation rates vary across gender as well as provinces and territories. A higher proportion of young women (87%) completed high school on time than young men (81%). Statistics Canada observed this trend in all provinces and territories. Statistics Canada notes that comparisons of high school graduation rates between provinces and territories require a nuanced interpretation. Academic pathways, pass marks, subject requirements, and the groups of students under consideration may differ between provinces and territories. Still, high school graduation rates in 2019 to 2020 vary between 94% in Newfoundland and Labrador and 79% in Quebec. High school graduation rates are lower in the Territories (for example, 46% in 2019 to 2020 in Northwest Territories).

The literature also points to other intersectionality factors affecting students' ability to graduate from high school (but not limited to):

- students from low-income households
- Indigenous students
- students with disabilities
- racialized students
- immigrants (including newcomers and established immigrants)
- students identifying as 2SLGBTQI+
- students who have previously experienced or who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness, and
- students in or aging out of care

As noted in 2019 evaluation of Pathways to Education, dropping out of high school has many consequences for individuals and for Canada (refer to Figure 2).

Figure 2. Potential impacts of not completing high school



Source: Employment and Social Development Canada (2019) Evaluation of Pathways to Education.

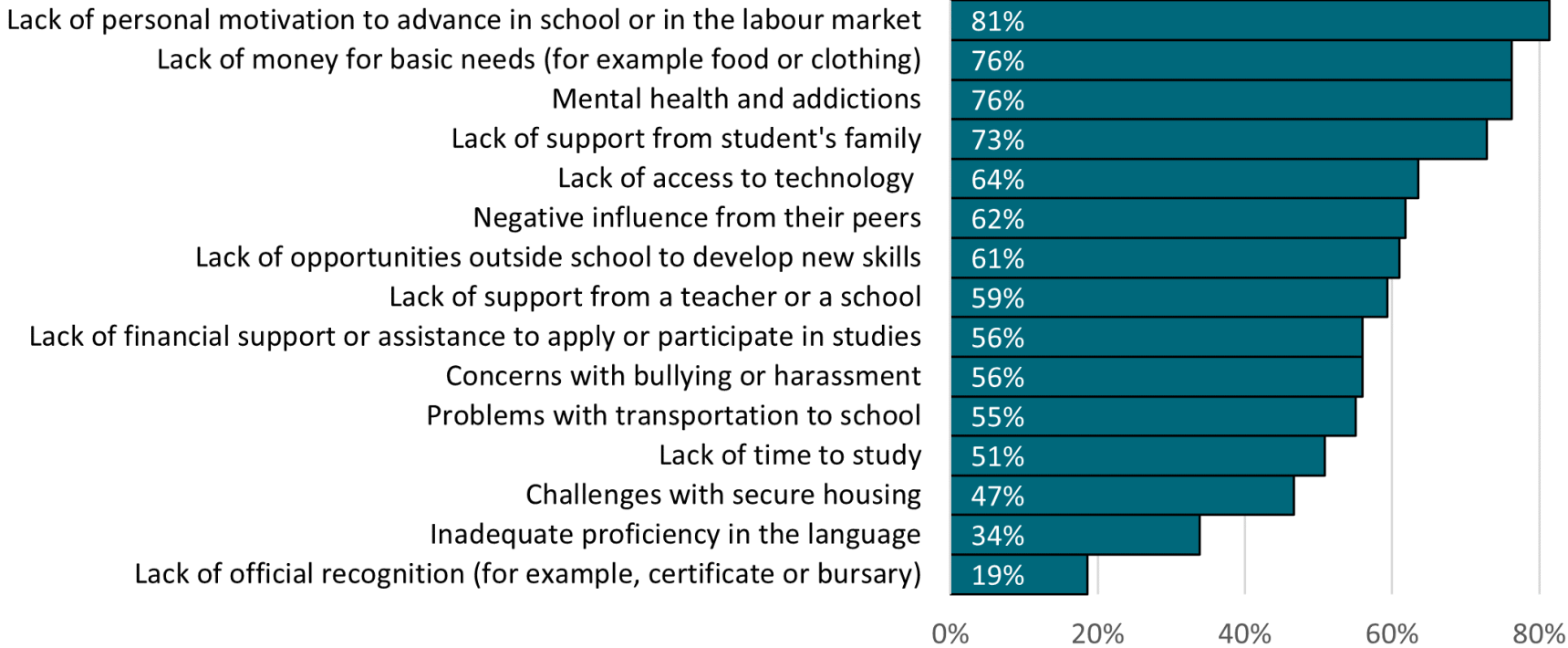
According to representatives of funded youth-serving organizations, more than three quarters of respondents (81%) identified the lack of personal motivation as one of the main challenges preventing youth from achieving their educational outcomes.

The second and third most frequently identified challenges are:

- the lack of money for basic needs, and
- concerns with mental health and addiction (refer to Figure 3)

These results reflect the main challenges noted by Statistics Canada (2002) as part of the Youth in Transition Survey.

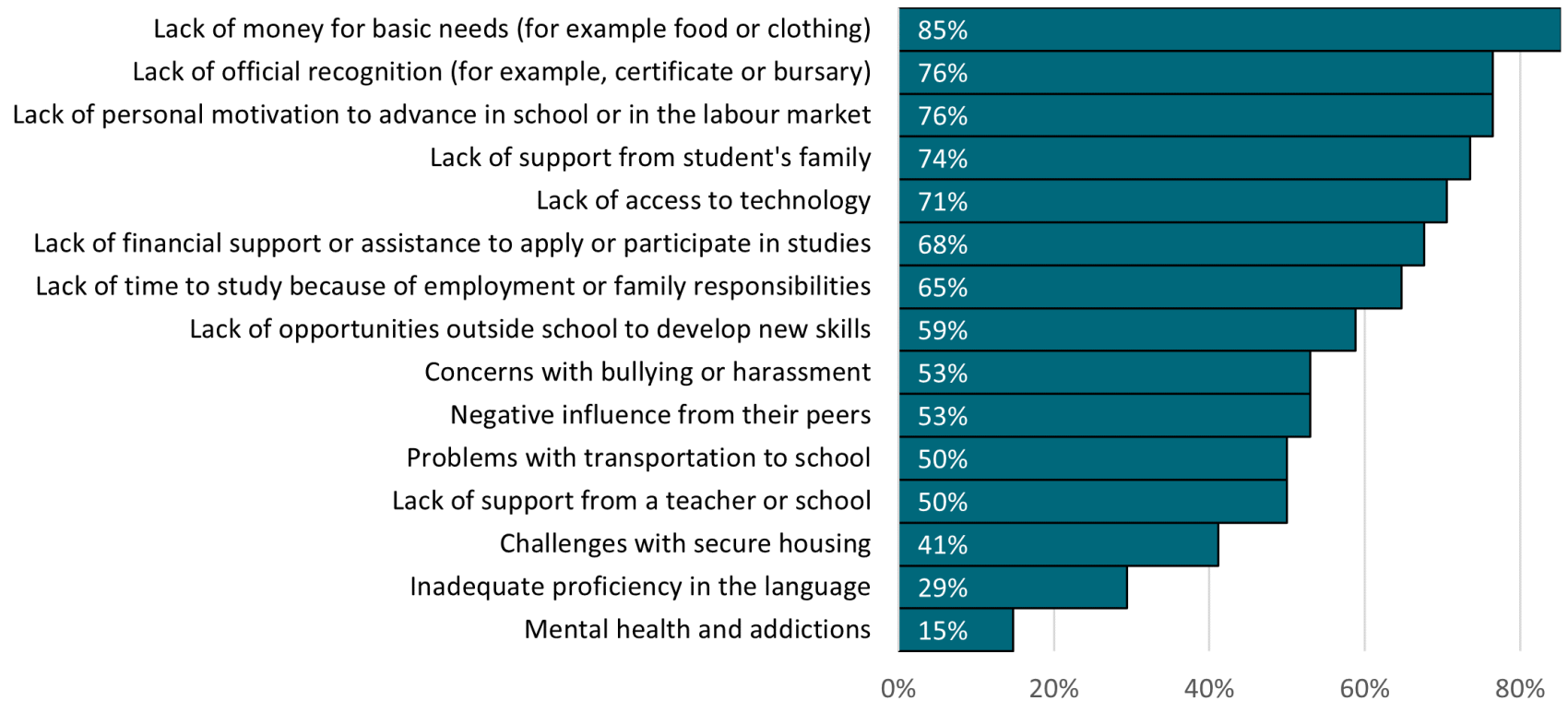
Figure 3. Main challenges that youth face in achieving their educational objectives



Source: Survey of youth-serving organization representatives (118 respondents)



Figure 4. The main challenges for students from low-income households in your project to achieve their educational objectives



Source: Survey of youth-serving organization representatives (34 respondents).

For low-income students, the lack of money for basic needs such as food, shelter and clothing are the most frequently identified barrier. In fact, 85% of service providers surveyed noted it as one of the main challenges. The lack of official recognition, lack of personal motivation, and lack of support from the student’s family were following (consult figure 4).

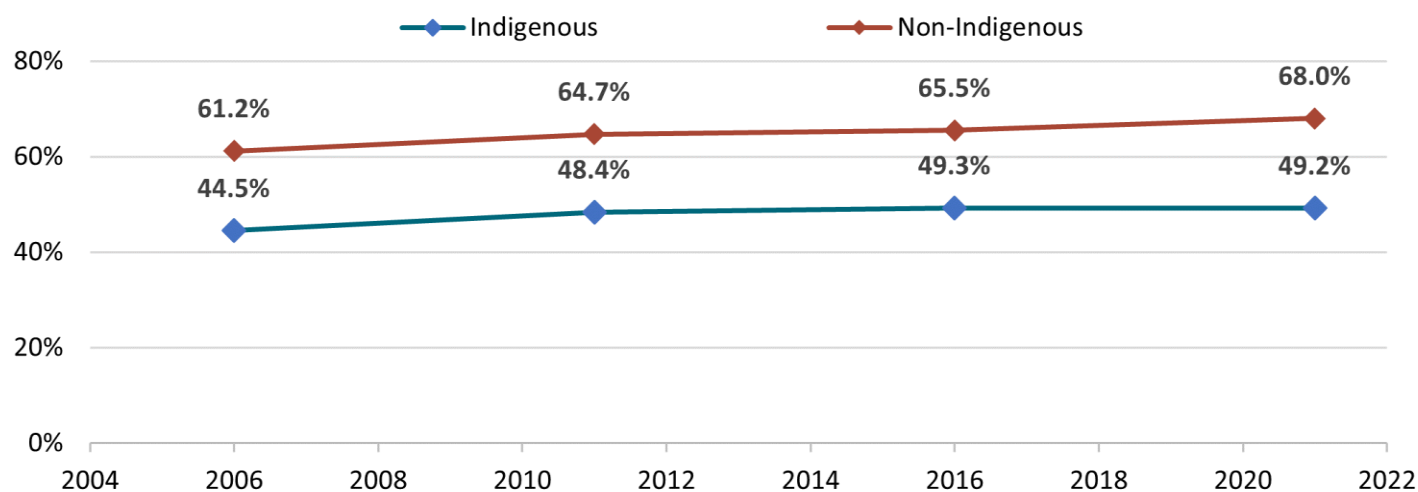


4.2 Indigenous students' participation in post-secondary education in Canada

Canadian Census data (consult figure 5) shows persistent lower post-secondary education attainment rates among Indigenous populations than non-Indigenous. The gap has consistently remained above 16 percentage points and widened to over 18 percentage points in 2021.

In addition, post-secondary diploma attainment also varies across Indigenous distinction groups. According to the 2021 Census, more than half (56.3%) of Métis individuals aged between 25 and 64 years had some post-secondary diploma. This proportion was less than half (45.3%) for First Nations population, and about one third (33.6%) for the Inuit populations (Statistics Canada, 2022).

Figure 5. Proportion of population aged between 25 and 64 years with post-secondary certificate, diploma, or degree, by Indigenous status



Source: Statistics Canada (2006, 2011, 2016, 2022b)

Therefore, even though levels of post-secondary education attainment significantly improved, the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations remains. In addition, according to the 2021 Census, Indigenous aged from 15 to 19 have a school attendance rate of 78.4% on average. This proportion was lower than for non-Indigenous students (87%). Statistics Canada (2022b) notes that attending school can predict lower post-secondary attainment in the future.

According to the document review¹¹, youth-serving organization officials surveyed, and funded organization representatives interviewed, Indigenous students face unique barriers, including the barriers noted below.

¹¹ The Document Review includes a Literature Review to Better Understand Barriers and Facilitators to Educational Attainment in Canada produced by the Design, Impact and Outreach team in the Learning Branch, funded organization research, lessons learned and promising practices and other government and independent

Institutional, systemic discrimination and intergenerational trauma

Colonial assimilative policies, such as residential schools, led to Indigenous peoples' mistrust of educational institutions (Indspire 2021b). Outcomes of these policies negatively affect the educational outcomes of the Indigenous youth. In addition, key informants recognize that Indigenous students have often been discriminated in the education system and in the labour market. This negatively impacts the quality of life and success, as well as self-confidence, mental health, and wellbeing (Goss Gilroy, 2021).

Lack of representation of Indigenous culture in curriculum and institutions

School systems in Canada prioritize Eurocentric and Western education approaches while Indigenous content is often optional (Indspire, 2021a). This systematic discrimination results in a lack of representation of Indigenous content in the curricula. Consequently, the education system reinforces the ideals and false narratives of the supremacy of colonial ways of knowing (Indspire, 2021b).

Lack of representation among school staff

Many employers and school boards have not yet established Indigenous culturally inclusive policies and hiring practices (Indspire, 2021b). Key informants also noted a lack of Indigenous representation in the education system as well as Indigenous role models.

Financial barriers

Indigenous youth face considerable financial barriers to achieving their educational goals. Financial constraints have direct and indirect impacts on:

- meeting basic needs (for example getting enough food and accessing housing)
- accessing to a workspace, Internet or a computer, and
- balancing work, school, and family or friend's requirements

Access to after-school services and technology

Youth may have difficulty accessing after-school services depending on their community's location. Indeed, due to remoteness and limited Internet in their community, some Indigenous learners have limited access to in-person or online learning supports. This can force Indigenous youth to leave their community before or after high school graduation. Moving away from their community, may result in the loss of family and community support (Indspire 2021a).

First-generation students

Indigenous Students are more likely to be the first in their family to complete a post-secondary education program. First-generation students are at a disadvantage in completing post-secondary education compared to non-first-generation students due to limited:

research and publications. The methodology contains additional information on the scope of the documents review.

- parental knowledge
- access to financial resources, and
- parental involvement

Promising practices to support Indigenous students

- Promotion of Indigenous culture in the education-related activities both for Indigenous students and non-Indigenous students. For example, this can include language, history, traditional knowledge, inclusion of Elder's knowledge
- Financial support to cover additional costs related to studying outside the community (for example transportation, housing, food)
- Increasing Indigenous representation among youth-serving organizations to increase awareness of Indigenous unique challenges and provide role models to Indigenous students
- Providing mentorship programs with a member of the community who can share their positive stories to talk about their success as Indigenous and who can promote Indigenous culture, and
- Development partnerships between youth-serving organizations, communities and families to better support Indigenous youth face community-unique barriers and promote post-secondary education participation

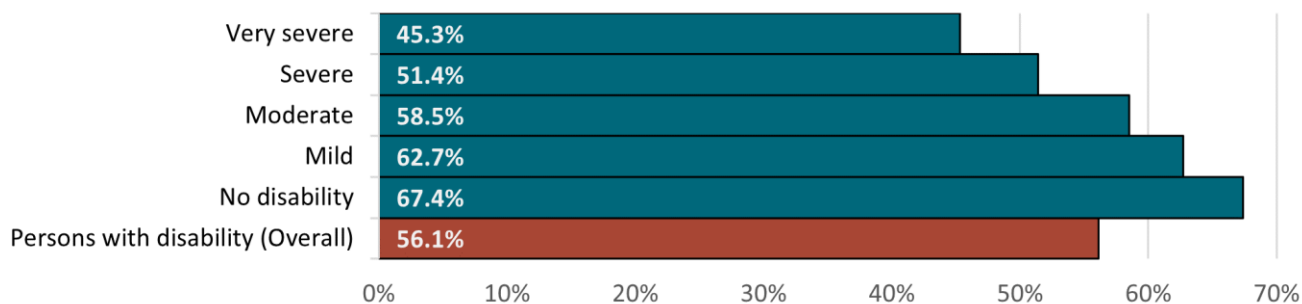
4.3 Students with disabilities participation in post-secondary education in Canada

According to the 2017 Canadian Survey on Disability, 56% of persons with disabilities aged between 25 and 64 completed some sort of post-secondary education. As a comparison this proportion is 67% for persons without disabilities. Over 540,000 youths aged 15 to 24 years (13%) had 1 or more disabilities, per the 2017 Canadian Survey on Disability. Among youth, mental health-related disability (8%) was the most common type of disability, followed by learning (6%), and pain-related disabilities (4%) (Statistics Canada 2017).

In addition, the severity of disability negatively impacts post-secondary education completion. As shown in figure 6, 45% of persons of aged 25 to 64 with a very severe disability completed some post-secondary diploma. As a comparison this proportion is 63% for persons with a mild disability¹².

¹² According to Statistics Canada Methodology used as part of the Canadian Survey on Disability, severity of disability refers to a ranking based on the presence and severity of 10 distinct types of disabilities related to a health problem or condition that has lasted or is expected to last for 6 months or more. The degree of severity increases with the frequency of the limitation and the level of difficulty. The more types of disability a person reports, the higher the global severity class. To make the severity score easier to use, severity classes were established. For example, people classified as having a very severe disability have a more severe disability than those people classified as mild, moderate, or severe disability. It is important to understand that the name

Figure 6. Proportion of persons with disabilities aged between 25 and 64 years with post-secondary certificate, diploma, or degree by severity (in 2017)



Source: Statistics Canada (2017) Canadian Survey on Disability

Document review¹³, surveys of youth-serving organizations, and interviews with funded organizations’ representatives found that students with disabilities encounter unique barriers, as listed below.

Financial barriers

Students with disabilities face additional expenses compared to other students including psychoeducational assessments, accessible accommodation, medical equipment and spending, and assistive technologies. However, financial aid supports for post-secondary students with disabilities are inconsistent across provinces and territories.

Moreover, access to financial aid is often conditional, tied to program criteria, and unique to costs it will cover. As a result, students with disabilities must go through the process of:

- identifying needed accommodation
- communicating the decision with teachers, and
- making sure their rights are respected

Some students report feeling uncomfortable disclosing accommodation supports they need to pursue their education. They also report encountering resistance to or disagreement with their identified accommodations. This leads to some students not disclosing their accommodation needs and, instead, try navigating a far more challenging educational environment without support.

assigned to each class is simply intended to facilitate its use. It is not a label or judgment concerning the person's level of disability.

¹³ The Document Review includes a Literature Review to Better Understand Barriers and Facilitators to Educational Attainment in Canada produced by the Design, Impact and Outreach team in the Learning Branch, funded organization research, lessons learned and promising practices and other government and independent research and publications. The methodology contains additional information on the scope of the documents review.

Accessibility of infrastructure

Another barrier to achieve education outcomes for students is the existence of physical barriers. These include, for example, accessible washrooms, staircase without ramps, emergency evacuation, parking location). This also includes information and communication technologies accessibility.

Lack of support from youth-serving organizations and lack of awareness among some staff

Students with disabilities need to get in a process to:

- identify potential accommodation
- communicate the decision with teachers, and
- make sure youth-serving staff respect their rights

Some students report feeling uncomfortable disclosing accommodation requirements to professors. They report encountering resistance or disagreement with their identified accommodations and fear of being discriminated.

Systemic discrimination and stigmatisation

On average, students with disabilities, who complete post-secondary education, have lower salaries. Consequently, they are unlikely to reach income parity with their peers without disabilities. This systemic discrimination against persons with disabilities negatively affects their motivation to complete a post-secondary diploma.

Some students report feeling uncomfortable disclosing accommodation supports they need to pursue their education. They also report encountering resistance to implementing or disagreement about their identified accommodations. This leads to some students not disclosing their accommodation needs and, instead, trying to navigate a far more challenging educational environment without support.

Promising practices to support students with disabilities

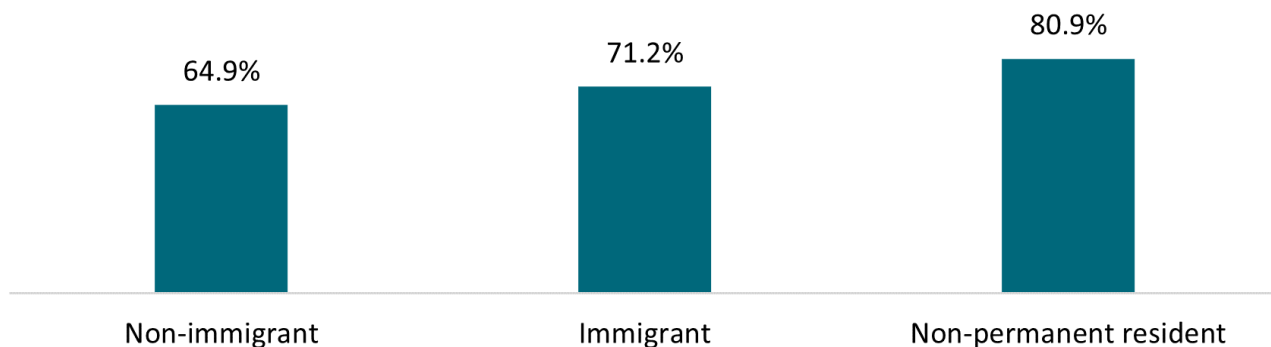
- Provide supports based on the type of disability and better equip staff to support a variety of (dis)ability
- Improving access to financial assistance
- Tutoring, and
- Community-based early interventions and bridging programs from high school to post-secondary sectors and from post-secondary education to the labour market

4.4 Immigrant, newcomer, and racialized students participation in post-secondary education

According to the 2021 census (consult figure 7), a higher percentage of immigrants and non-permanent residents aged 25 to 64 have a post-secondary education diploma compared to non-immigrants. One of the main causes is that Canada is leveraging the talents of highly educated

immigrants to meet labour market needs. This is an important selection criterion for immigration. As noted by Statistics Canada (2022a), it positively impacts the overall proportion of Canadians with some form of post-secondary education.

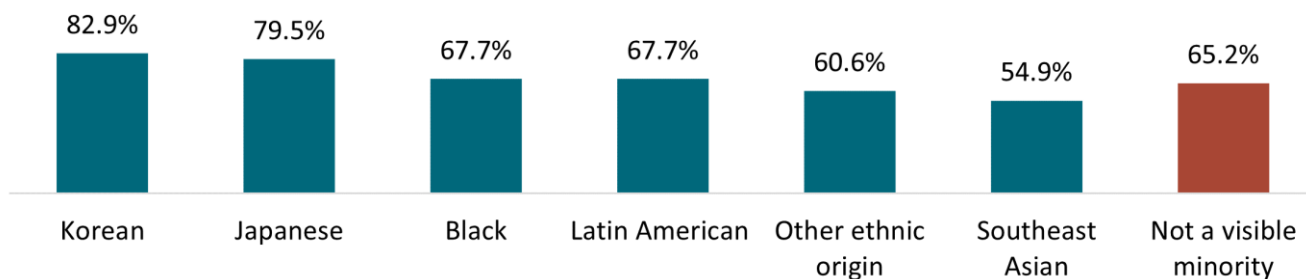
Figure 7. Proportion of population aged between 25 and 64 years with post-secondary certificate, diploma, or degree by immigration status, in 2021



Source: Statistics Canada (2022b) Census of population

In addition, according to the 2021 Census, 72.2% of visible minority population aged between 25 and 64 years old completed post-secondary education. In comparison, 65.2% of the population that is not a visible minority completed post-secondary education (consult figure 8). However, this is due to the ethnic origin and to the immigration generation status. As shown in the graph below, the Southeast Asian group has a post-secondary education attainment of 54.9%. This proportion is below the non-visible minority demographic (consult figure 8).

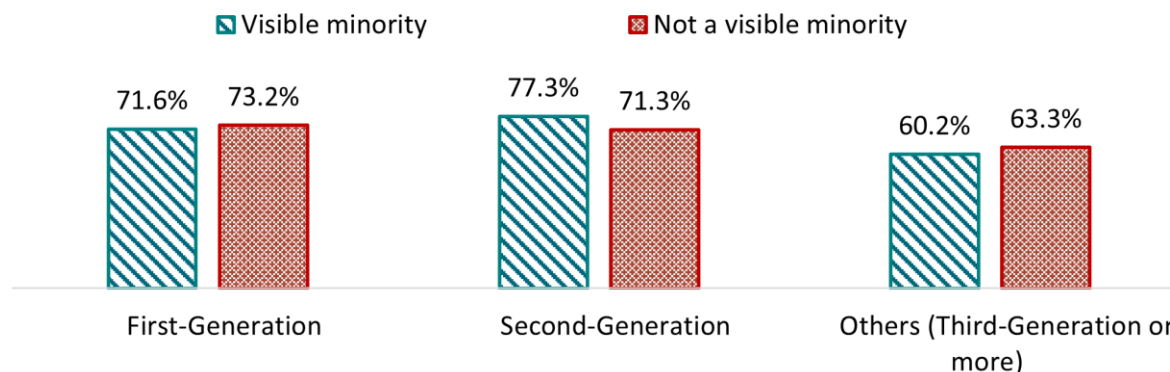
Figure 8. Proportion of individuals aged between 25 and 64 years with post-secondary certificate, diploma, or degree by ethnic origin, in 2021



Source: Statistics Canada (2022b) Census of population 2021

In addition, the immigration generation status significantly affects the attainment of a post-secondary certificate, diploma, or degree among various visible minority populations. Among visible minorities, about 71.6% of first-generation immigrants and 77.3% of second-generation immigrants have some post-secondary education. In comparison, this proportion is only two thirds (60.2%) for others, including third generation or more (consult figure 9).

Figure 9. Proportion of visible minority and non-visible minority population aged between 25 and 64 years with post-secondary certificate, diploma, or degree by immigration status, in 2021



Source: Statistics Canada (2022b) Census of population 2021

Compared to other populations, there was a greater difference in post-secondary attainment between immigrants and third generation or more immigrants. For Black population, more than two thirds (68.6%) of first-generation immigrants had a post-secondary degree. In comparison, this proportion was less than half (49.8%) of the third generation (or more). Similarly, the first-generation Latin American population had a higher degree of post-secondary attainment of 67.7% compared to 45.6% of the third generation (or more).

The document review¹⁴, survey, and key informants revealed that visible minority students, newcomer students, and second-generation immigrants face unique barriers to achieving their academic aspirations.

Lack of diploma recognition

Immigrants who obtained a post-secondary degree outside Canada are overqualified for their jobs. According to some key informants, this increases the feeling of inequity and decreases students' motivation to pursue education. Among immigrants who studied outside Canada, the over qualification rate was 25.8% overall. This proportion was 28.3% for the "Women+" category and 23.1% for the "Men+" category. This is significantly higher than the overqualification rate for Canadian-born individuals, which is 10.6% overall. This proportion was 9.8% for the "Women+" category and 11.7% for the "Men+" category (2022a).

¹⁴ The Document Review includes a Literature Review to Better Understand Barriers and Facilitators to Educational Attainment in Canada produced by the Design, Impact and Outreach team in the Learning Branch, funded organization research, lessons learned and promising practices and other government and independent research and publications. The methodology contains additional information on the scope of the documents review.

Limited support from parents due to the lack of awareness of the education curriculum

Both newcomer and second generation-immigrant parents are more likely to have limited knowledge on the education curriculum and services offered for their children.

Cultural barriers

Newcomer students, who have left their community, can experience a culture shock when they arrive in Canada. This creates anxiety or lack of social skills in a new or unfamiliar environment.

Systemic discrimination

Racial inequities in education and widening social inequities have a negative impact on school completion. Racial inequities include but not limited to racial bias, stereotyping and discrimination, linguistic barriers, issues of belonging and cultural ties, and alienation.

Promising practices to support racialized students and immigrant students

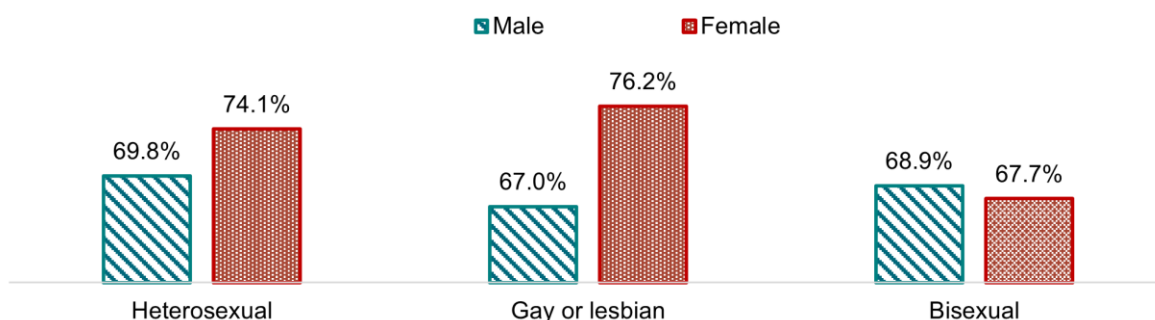
- Equip government officials, youth-serving organizations with race-conscious awareness and analytical tools to confront racism
- Develop lessons learned and promising practices to better understand the barriers to education achievement for Black students, and
- Support organizations that disrupt the "school-to-prison pipeline", focus on science, technology, engineering, and mathematics provide immigration services, address food security, offer supports to learners and families to navigate access to community resources, transition to and retention in post-secondary education, and offer legal support for youth in the criminal justice system

4.5. 2SLGBTQI+ participation in post-secondary education in Canada

According to Statistics Canada (2021b), 76.2% of Canadian lesbians aged 25 to 64 had completed post-secondary education, a percentage like that of heterosexual women, which was 74.1%. This is higher than the proportion for the:

- gay population (67.0%)
- male heterosexual population (69.8%)
- male bisexual population (68.9%), and
- female bisexual population (67.7%)

Figure 10. Proportion of post-secondary certificate, diploma, or degree between 2015 and 2018 by gender identity for students aged 25 to 64



Source: Statistics Canada (2022c) Educational participation and attainment of lesbian, gay and bisexual people in Canada.

In 2018, according to a Statistics Canada (2021b), Canada was home to approximately 1 million people who were LGBTQ2+. This population accounted for 4% of the total population aged 15 and older. The LGBTQ2+ population is relatively young. Youth aged 15 to 24 made up 30% of the LGBTQ2+ population compared with 14% of the non-LGBTQ2+ population.

The document review¹⁵ found that 2SLGBTQI+ students face unique barriers to achieve their academic goals.

Discrimination, harassment, and bullying

Students identifying as 2SLGBTQI+ are more likely to face discrimination in school settings compared to cisgender heterosexual youth. 10.8% of 2SLGBTQI+ post-secondary students reported experiencing sexual orientation discrimination in the past 12 months, as per Statistics Canada (2021b).

Promising practices to support 2SLGBTQI+ students include

- positive spaces and services (including as part of after-school supports)
- provide mental health services
- support youth serving organization staff to develop a curriculum that includes all sexual orientations, gender identities, and gender expressions (SOGIE)
- develop an educational campaign to raise awareness among school personnel and administrators, and

¹⁵ The Document Review includes a Literature Review to Better Understand Barriers and Facilitators to Educational Attainment in Canada produced by the Design, Impact and Outreach team in the Learning Branch, funded organization research, lessons learned and promising practices and other government and independent research and publications. The methodology contains additional information on the scope of the documents review.

- provide housing programs targeted towards 2SLGBTQI+

4.6. Impact of COVID-19 on underserved students

Representatives of youth-serving organizations surveyed as part of this evaluation¹⁶ reported that the pandemic had significant and lasting impacts on students. For instance, more than three quarters (83%) agreed or strongly agreed that the pandemic intensified challenges already faced by underserved population. Of those who agreed that COVID-19 exacerbated difficulties for marginalized students, 88% believed that these issues could persist and affect students in the future, according to the survey. COVID-19 related challenges identified by key informants, surveyed officials from youth-serving organizations, but also identified as part of the documents review¹⁷ include the following.

Disruption of school and afterschool learning services

Due to school closures, many students did not have access to learning services normally available to them.

Limited access to remote learning technologies

The increased use of various technologies in education affected some students' ability to partake in remote learning and to participate in various after-school supports.

Limited supports from parents

Some children received less support from their parents for several reasons including:

- parent's employment situation
- parent's level of education, and
- the level of support received by youth may also depend on siblings' needs or disability. For example, parents who have a child with a disability reported having less time to support their other children

¹⁶ The question "To what extent has COVID-19 intensified challenges for underrepresented students?", was answered by 116 employees of 6 partner organizations funded through the Stream 1 of the Program. The question "In your opinion, to what extent have these challenges become a long-term trend and will continue to impact student in the future?" was answered by 96 employees that had responded "To a good extent" or "To a full extent" to the previous question.

¹⁷ The Document Review includes a Literature Review to Better Understand Barriers and Facilitators to Educational Attainment in Canada produced by the Design, Impact and Outreach team in the Learning Branch, funded organization research, lessons learned and promising practices and other government and independent research and publications. The methodology contains additional information on the scope of the documents review.

Disruptions in school attendance and youth disengagement

Due to a sudden shift to remote learning, some students reported feeling overwhelmed by online schooling. As a result, academic milestones and outcomes were disrupted (for example credit accumulation, grades before graduation and application to post-secondary education). In addition, many youths aged between 15 and 29 disengaged from education and employment in the first months of the pandemic (Statistics Canada, 2021a, 2022f).

Mental health

COVID-19 had a negative impact on youth mental health, among other things, due to:

- isolation
- lack of face-to-face interactions, and
- loss of extracurricular activities

Additionally, key informants reported that certain sub-populations of students were affected by events that happened during the pandemic period:

- the Black Lives Matter movement and
- the discovery of Indigenous children's graves, and
- other stressful events unique to some populations

These of stressful events combined with COVID-19 created additional needs for emotional and psychological supports.

Financial barriers

Some students' family financial situation worsened due to job loss and increasing prices of basic needs, as reported by key informants and surveyed officials. Some students had to seek employment instead of pursuing education. This was because they were facing concerns related to food access, stable housing, and income security (Goss Gilroy, 2021).

5. Stream 1 – Program design and delivery

5.1. Flexible funding agreements and program design support targeted outcomes for students facing different barriers

The Program design under Stream 1 allows funded organizations to identify the needs of the population they serve. In addition, they can provide case-by-case supports to each group of students. Funding agreements are flexible and allow funded organizations to provide tailored supports for all types of underserved students.

Both internal and external key informants noted that the Program's design was flexible. They also noted that it allowed funded organizations to provide diverse types of supports tailored to individual student needs. Therefore, the Program's design allows them to support diverse types of students identified as underserved or underrepresented.

Among all 14 organizations funded through the Program¹⁸, organizations targeted the following learners:

- Indigenous students (12 organizations)
- students from low-income households (9 organizations)
- Black and racialized students (8 organizations)
- students living in rural, remote, or Northern areas (7 organizations)
- students who self-identify with a disability (7 organizations)
- students identifying as 2-spirited, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and questioning (2SLGBTQI+) (5 organizations)
- students from Official Language Minority Communities (3 organizations)
- students who are newcomers to Canada of less than 5 years (3 organizations)
- students experiencing or at-risk of homelessness (2 organizations), and
- students who are or would be the first in their family to attend post-secondary education (2 organizations)

¹⁸ This excludes organizations funded under the Global Skills Opportunity (stream 2) and funded organizations in the 2021 solicited competitive call for proposals (stream 1).

From the fiscal year 2019 to 2020 to the fiscal year 2021 to 2022, no projects targeted students aging in or out of care¹⁹. In addition, the Program did not collect data on the number of projects who were specifically targeting refugees or immigrants (more than 5 years).

The flexibility of the agreements also allows funded organizations to offer various after-school and Wraparound supports for students. According to the document review, organizations funded by the Program draw upon the set of promising practices mentioned in section 4.

Among the 14 funded organizations (excluding Global Skills Opportunity and funded organizations under the 2021 call for proposals):

- 11 provide academic persistence and preparedness related supports. These include tutoring and coaching, support in planning for and transitioning to post-secondary education, educational skills programming, training (for example, science, technology, engineering, arts, or mathematics), and mentorship (such as peer support). In addition, funded organizations offer a variety of wraparound supports to students to help them address challenges (as described in Section 4) that may impede their efforts in achieving their academic objectives
- 10 provide various support for mental health, addictions, and well-being. This includes extracurricular activities (for example traditional or cultural, sports, arts, nutrition, nature), general supports (such as peer support), evidence-based mental health programming, therapy, and addictions-focused prevention and intervention
- 10 provide online support or improving connectivity of students, including digital literacy and skills training, providing, or funding technology (for example, access to software and hardware), and developing partnerships as well as supporting local capacity to access internet services and study spaces
- 9 offer activities related to career development including mentorship, internships, career skills preparation (for example communication, self-regulation, interviews, career and CV workshops and support in securing employment)
- 8 work with the staff to improve their ability to better support students
- 6 support students to help them developing soft skills
- 5 offer direct financial support to students to help cover various costs related to secondary and post-secondary school participation (for example, tuition, cost of application to post-secondary institutions, cost of transportation to school, cost of student's lunch, costs related to accommodations)
- 4 support students' families, parents' skill development (parenting, financial literacy, pregnancy and prenatal courses), and navigation advocacy support (for example to secure housing,

¹⁹ However, at least 3 of the projects that reported on disaggregate target populations as part of reporting for the fiscal year 2021 to 2022, reported supporting students aging in or aging out of care and many projects are serving communities with a high proportion of immigrants.

accessing resources, reduce barriers to participation, reuniting youth with their children, links to childcare benefits and income supports)

Actual examples of Stream 1 projects are available in Annexe D.

5.2. Solicited competitive call for proposals for Supports for Student Learning Program Agreements

Funding agreements signed in 2022 to 2023²⁰ align with the Program's objectives. However, many of these organizations raised some concerns related to the stability of the projects. Indeed, as mentioned during the interviews, they try to address systemic and long-term challenges with short-term and unpredictable funding.

The evaluation found that 2022 to 2023 agreement holders rely on effective practices to support various subgroup populations of students. In addition, they offer programming that aligns with the objectives of the Stream 1 of the Program. Funded projects also support students from underserved groups identified by the program. They also have the potential to generate and disseminate innovative practices to support students.

However, most interviewed representatives from these organizations had concerns about the stability of the projects for 2 main reasons. Indeed, 1-year agreements made planning and addressing complex systemic barriers difficult for organizations. These barriers include poverty, homelessness, lack of support from parents, discrimination, accessibility for students with disabilities, lack of access to internet and technologies. Furthermore, as part of the call for proposals process, key informants noted delays in announcing successful proposals. This, in turn, delayed allocation of funds to organizations and supports to students.

The short agreement period combined with the delays in receiving funds resulted in additional challenges for organizations. This included from the most to the least important:

- difficulties in recruiting and retaining staff. This is due to the short period between the funding decision and the beginning of the activities. Also, it is due to the short term of employment
- delay of projects and cancellation of activities, and
- misalignment between the disbursement of the funding and the school calendar year

While the Program approved these funding agreements in March 2022, some organizations confirmed that they only received funding in August or September 2022. Consequently, they had to develop partnerships with youth-serving organizations and other partners over short timelines. Also, these organizations had to take on more financial risk by planning or carrying out activities without knowing if they would receive funding.

²⁰ While these agreements have been signed in 2022 to 2023, the call for proposals took place in 2021 to 2022.

Activities for 1 cohort of students (usually spanning from September to June) straddle 2 fiscal years. The uncertainty associated with receiving funding over 2 consecutive fiscal years was challenging for organizations to fully support 1 cohort.

ESDC officials and representatives from funded organizations noted that multi-year agreements could help organizations alleviate the impacts of the barriers mentioned above. With multi-year agreements, funded organizations could:

- establish longer term partnerships
- support cohort of students for more than 1 year
- have longer-term impacts
- hire staff on a more permanent basis, and
- advertise programming more efficiently

In addition, multi-year agreements can alleviate the following:

- delays related to budget approvals and funding allocation, and
- the fiscal year and the school calendar year are misaligned

One organization representative mentioned that the first year of the contribution agreement helped to develop a reputation among the targeted community and good practices. Most organization representatives voiced concerns about the Program's short-term funding structure and the risk of not renewing funding or finding other financial partners.

According to the non-applicant organizations' representatives interviewed²¹, reasons for not applying included:

- difference between the Program's objective and the organization's activities
- lack of experience or understanding of the federal government application process
- limited resources or staff available to fill the application and expand the organization's activities and,
- uncertainty whether the resources they put into applying would lead to funding

²¹ The number of non-applicant organizations that have agreed to participate in an interview is low (n=3); therefore, these results need to be nuanced and additional reasons for not applying can exist.

6. Stream 1 – Program outcomes

6.1. Pathways to Education Canada

Pathways to Education Canada positively affected the high school graduation rate of participants and contributed to increased enrollment in post-secondary education. It also had a positive effect on employment readiness and labour market outcomes for participants.

According to the document review, Pathways supported 6,386 students in 2019, 6,512 in 2020, and 6,209 in 2021. Pathways had a total of 31 sites in 2021 (compared to 27 in 2020 and 20 in 2019). In 2020 to 2021 school year, there were:

- 15 sites in Québec
- 9 in Ontario
- 2 in British-Colombia, and
- 1 in Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, New Brunswick, and Nova Scotia

Table 3 and table 4 provide additional information on the profile of participants over the period of 2012 to 2021, based on participants' self-identification.

Pathways sites in British Columbia had more male than female participants. This is in contrast with other provinces that had more female than male participants. Ontario sites had the largest proportion of participants born outside of Canada (28%). This was followed by the site in New Brunswick with 22% of participants. On the other hand, the site in Manitoba had the largest proportion of participants who were Indigenous (52%). It was followed by the British Columbia sites with 16% of Indigenous participants. Quebec sites had the largest proportion of participants with a physical disability (4%).

Table 3. Number and proportion of unique participants per province where there are Pathways sites, from 2012 to 2021

Provinces where there are Pathways sites	Number of unique participants	Proportion of participants in a province out of all Pathways participants
Nova Scotia	791	6.1%
New Brunswick	148	1.2%
Quebec	1,599	12.4%
Manitoba	896	7.0%
British Columbia	604	4.7%
Ontario	8,829	68.6%

Source: Goss Gilroy (2021) *Evaluation of the Pathways to Education Program*.

Table 4. Proportion of Pathways Participants by sub-population and region, from 2012 to 2021

Provinces	Female	Participants born Outside Canada	Indigenous participants	Participants with physical disability
Nova Scotia	54%	14%	<1%	<1%
New Brunswick	56%	22%	4%	<1%
Quebec	55%	3%	<1%	4%
Ontario	51%	28%	1%	<1%
Manitoba	59%	<1%	52%	<1%
British Columbia	44%	13%	16%	<1%

Source: Goss Gilroy (2021) *Evaluation of the Pathways to Education Program*.

Pathways positively affected the high school graduation rate of participants

According to Pathways activity reports²², in the evaluation period, graduation rates ranged between 69% and 77% on average. Across observed Pathways sites, graduation rates significantly improved compared to non-eligible students²³. According to Goss Gilroy's Third-Party Evaluation, compared to students with similar characteristics, graduation rates were 22.2% higher on average for participants in Ontario sites. This proportion was 37.6% higher for participants in Quebec²⁴. However, the average graduation rate for participants in the Halifax site was -17.9% lower than for non-participants²⁵.

Pathways contributed to increased enrollment to post-secondary education

The Pathways to Education Canada supported students to participate in post-secondary education. Pathways helped students to apply to post-secondary institutions. From 2019 to 2021, between 68% and 74% of participating students transitioned to post-secondary education or training depending on the cohort. According to the third-party evaluation done by Goss Gilroy Inc., there was qualitative evidence that the Program helped participants apply to, be accepted by, and enroll in post-secondary education. This is mainly due to the flexible and personalized financial and non-financial supports.

Pathways had a positive effect on employment readiness and labour market outcomes

According to the document review, the Pathways to Education Canada supported employment readiness of participating students. According to ESDC's evaluation of Pathways in 2019, the Program had a net positive social return on investment. The net social benefit for a single Pathways student resulted in a 50% return on investment over 25 years for both the individual and governments. This result was obtained when comparing participants' outcomes with a comparable population²⁶.

Based on this analysis, an investment in the Program "breaks even" (where the benefits equal the costs) after 22.5 years from a government perspective. The investment "breaks even" after 20.8 years when including both the benefits for students and for Canada.

²² These activity reports include graduation rates aggregated at for all Pathways sites from 2019 to 2021.

²³ For Ontario sites and for the site in Halifax, the control group consisted of students in project location one year prior the implementation of the projects. These students have not benefited from Pathways programming. Results from this analysis must be interpreted with caution since the observable and non-observable characteristics of the control group may differ from the group of Pathways participants and because results are from a single cohort of students.

²⁴ For Quebec sites, there were no comparison cohorts or sites that could be used for the impact analysis, the evaluators used a limited treatment group impact analysis to measure the net impact estimation.

²⁵ This unexpected result needs to be nuanced as it may be due to abnormally high graduation rate in the pre-program cohort year.

²⁶ The control group was composed of students at locations not served by Pathways to Education programming.

6.2. Indspire

From 2019 to 2022, Indspire participants had higher post-secondary graduation rate and labour market outcomes than other Indigenous students. According to Indspire activity reports, the organization awarded close to \$20 million through 6,240 bursaries and scholarships in 2020 to 2021. They provided over \$23 million through 6,599 bursaries and scholarships in 2021 to 2022 to First Nations, Inuit, and Métis youth. Based on Indspire administrative data, between 2013 and 2020, 62.6% of recipients identified as Status First Nation. In addition, 31.4% identified as Métis, 3% identified as Inuit and 2.9% identified as Non-Status First Nation.

Indspire positively affected the post-secondary education graduation rate of Indigenous students

According to Indspire administrative data, 90% of Indspire scholarship and bursary recipients graduated from post-secondary education. More than 75% of Indspire scholarship and bursary recipients graduated from post-secondary education on time. Furthermore, 88.4% had graduated within 4 years of their expected graduation. According to Indspire administrative data, nearly 60% of recipients held a bachelor's degree or above.

Indspire positively affected labour market outcomes

Most of Indspire scholarship and bursary recipients surveyed (89.4%) were employed in 2020, as per the Indspire's National Education Survey. This includes scholarship and bursary recipients between 2013 and 2020. In comparison, this proportion is 75.9% for the overall Indigenous population in Canada. In 2020 to 2021, more than 76% of scholarship and bursary recipients had transitioned to the labour market or continued their education or training.

6.3. Other Support for Student Learning Program agreements

From 2019 to 2022, funded organizations by the other Supports for Student Learning Program Agreements supported students achieving their educational goals. However, since most of the projects are relatively new (2-3 years in operation) limited data is available on project outcomes for end users.

Overall, 34,648 students benefited from projects funded under the Goal Getters agreements and 16,505 students benefited from projects funded under the COVID-19 Emergency Measures²⁷.

²⁷ These results are aggregated results combining various sources of data collected by the Program area, including quarterly and annual activity reports, from 2019 to 2020 to 2021 to 2022. Some participants in Supports for Student Learning projects may have taken part in activities over several years. Therefore, the total number of participants from 2019 to 2020 to 2021 to 2022 may count individual student more than once. In addition, the duration of participation varies greatly between projects while some projects are short-term interventions and others are multi-year interventions (see Annex A for details on the different projects). Finally, some participants have participated both in Goal Getters programming and in COVID-19 related programming.

However, it is not possible to provide aggregated data on participants by socio-demographic factors for many reasons including:

- variety of group served
- various levels of project maturity, and
- differences in the maturity levels of funded organizations

Also, due to the limited maturity of the project, the Program collects limited data to inform progress towards the intermediate and ultimate outcomes, including:

- graduation from high school
- access to post-secondary education, or
- transition to the labour market

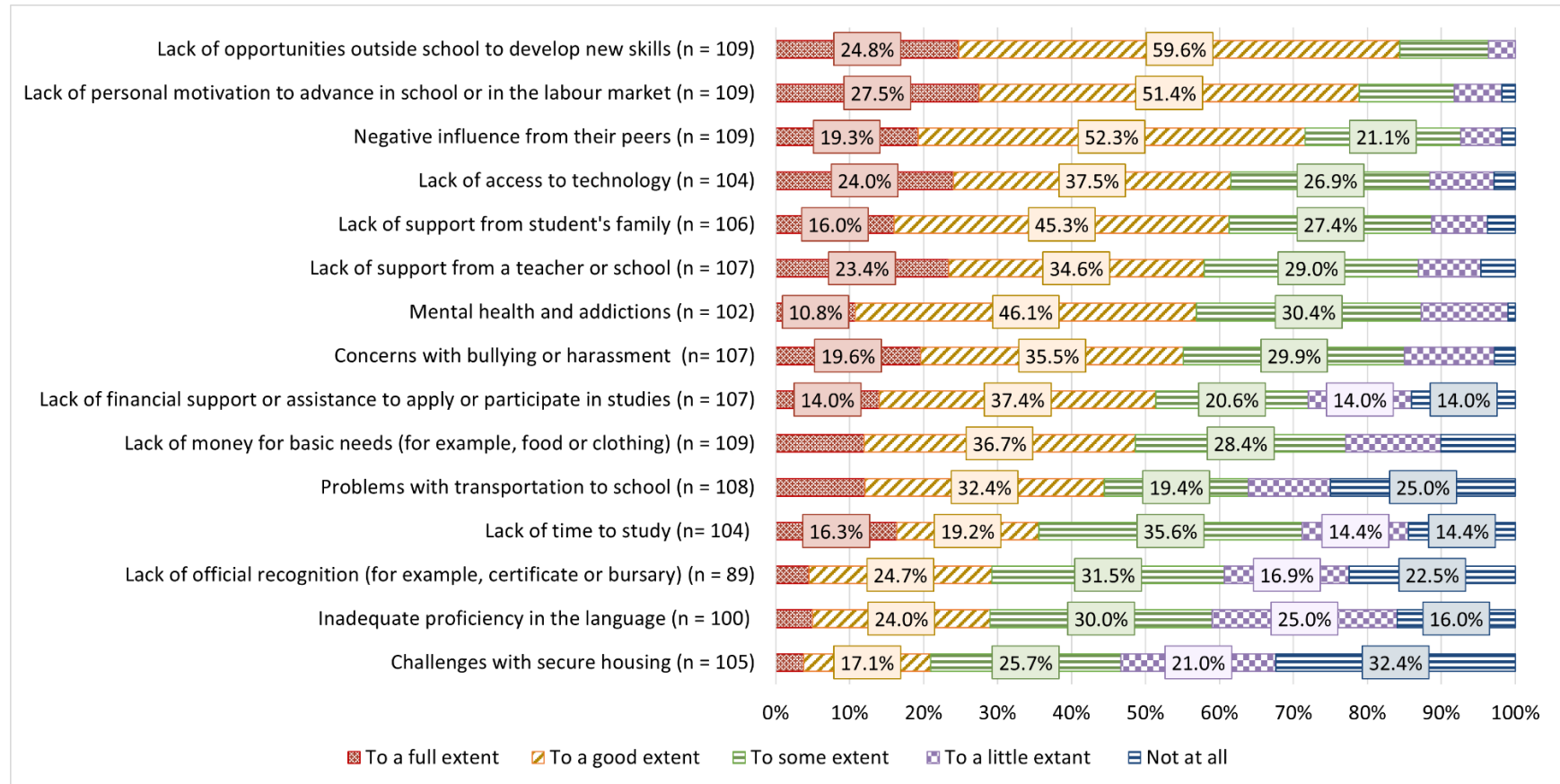
Detailed projects outputs and outcomes are available in Annex D as well as other performance information.

Among to representatives from youth-serving organizations surveyed²⁸:

- more than three quarters (84.4%) was of the view that their project was providing students the opportunity to develop new skills
- more than three quarters (78.9%) indicated that the projects supported students gain personal motivation, confidence or self-esteem
- more than two-third (71.6%) of officials felt that their projects helped students overcome the negative influence from peers

²⁸ This question was answered by between 89 and 109 youth-serving organization representatives, using a Likert scale. It is a snapshot of what organizations stated were challenges they overcame, recognizing that the listed challenges may not reflect their target area of focus of their projects. These results include respondents who responded, “To a full extent” or “To a good extent.”

Figure 11. Extent to which Supports for Student Learning Program project(s) support(s) students in overcoming various challenges



Source: Survey of Support for Student Learning Youth-Serving Organization Representatives (between 89 and 109 respondents)

6.4. Innovation, lessons learned and promising practices

To some extent, funded organizations under Stream 1 of the Program and their partners are identifying innovative practices to support underserved students. They also generate promising practices and lessons learned and share their findings via various dissemination tools or events.

According to the document review and key informants, many projects are generating promising practices and lessons learned through various approaches including research and evaluation. However, the ability of identifying lessons learned and promising practices depends on:

- the maturity of the projects
- the goals of the funded organizations, and
- the impact of COVID on the project and on the community served

According to key informant interviews, 2 groups of organizations were more likely to develop and disseminate lessons learned and promising practices:

- more mature projects or funded organizations, and
- projects or organizations that had the objective to develop and disseminate lessons learned and promising practices

Funded organizations are also sharing promising practices and lessons learned through:

- their websites (with quantitative and qualitative research reports)
- newsletter to partners and experts in the field
- hosting presentations and conferences, and
- sharing knowledge with partners and expert committees.

However, from a sustainability perspective, it will be difficult to maintain and update online knowledge sharing platforms if or when the funding ends.

Funded organization partners are also exploring or testing innovative approaches that either address persistent challenges that students face or improve outcomes for students. Three quarters of representatives from youth-serving organizations surveyed (75%) noted that their organization was developing lessons learned and good practices. Most of them (60.9%) are carrying-out research and studies. Among that group, the majority are conducting pilot projects (82%) or surveys (64%). Others relied upon other research techniques including semi-structured interviews, impact analysis, cost-benefit analysis or gathering anecdotal evidence.

About a third of surveyed organization (37.9%) are partnering with researcher and evaluation experts (for example academic or research institution).

The majority of representatives from youth-serving organizations surveyed (52.9%) noted that their organization is sharing lessons learned and promising practices. They share lessons learned and promising practices in a variety of ways:

- publications and research reports
- presentations at conferences
- presentations to partner organizations
- presentations to staff
- newsletters
- webinars or web-based information sharing, and
- social media publications

External key informants noted that the Program should organize more virtual or in-person events to disseminate promising practices and lessons learned. This is done locally, regionally and at the national level. According to key informants, the Program could be used as a hub to generate and disseminate good practices.

This would have multiple benefits including to develop partnerships with other similar organizations or with organizations that provide complementary services. Many organizations funded by the Program are already collaborating to better support students.

In addition, the lessons learned, and promising practices could serve organizations that are not currently funded by the Program. According to the surveyed representatives of youth-serving organizations, areas where their organization would benefit from learning would include from most to least cited:

- barriers and effective practices for underrepresented students to attaining education outcomes (63.2%)
- barriers to and effective practices for attaining education outcomes (53.8%)
- partnership development (50,4%)
- promising practices to address emerging challenges and barriers (50,4%)
- improve awareness about the project among underrepresented students (48.7%)
- identifying or finding potential participants (39.3%)
- risk management (39.3%)
- promising practices for reporting results (32.4%), and
- developing research and promising practices (25.6%)

6.5. Partnerships

The Stream 1 of the Program also benefits youth-serving organizations partnered with Supports for Student Learning Program funded organizations. Via their partnership, they have access to additional financial and non-financial supports. Also, partnerships increase the credibility and stability of their programming and increase their reach of new students. In addition, benefits include having access to

a pan-Canadian network of youth-serving organizations. They also have access to innovative practices to help them support students more efficiently.

According to surveyed officials, partnerships created as part of the Program were beneficial to both their organization and to Stream 1 funded organizations.

More than three quarters of representatives of the surveyed service providers (85.6%) believed that funded organizations were helping them to set common goals. This included setting a common strategy for the service provider and the funded organization to support students. A similar proportion (80.5%) believed that the partnership helped increase their capacity to support students. It also increased the credibility of their organization in the community (82.2%). Survey participants also noted that partnerships increased the reach of their organization (73.7%).

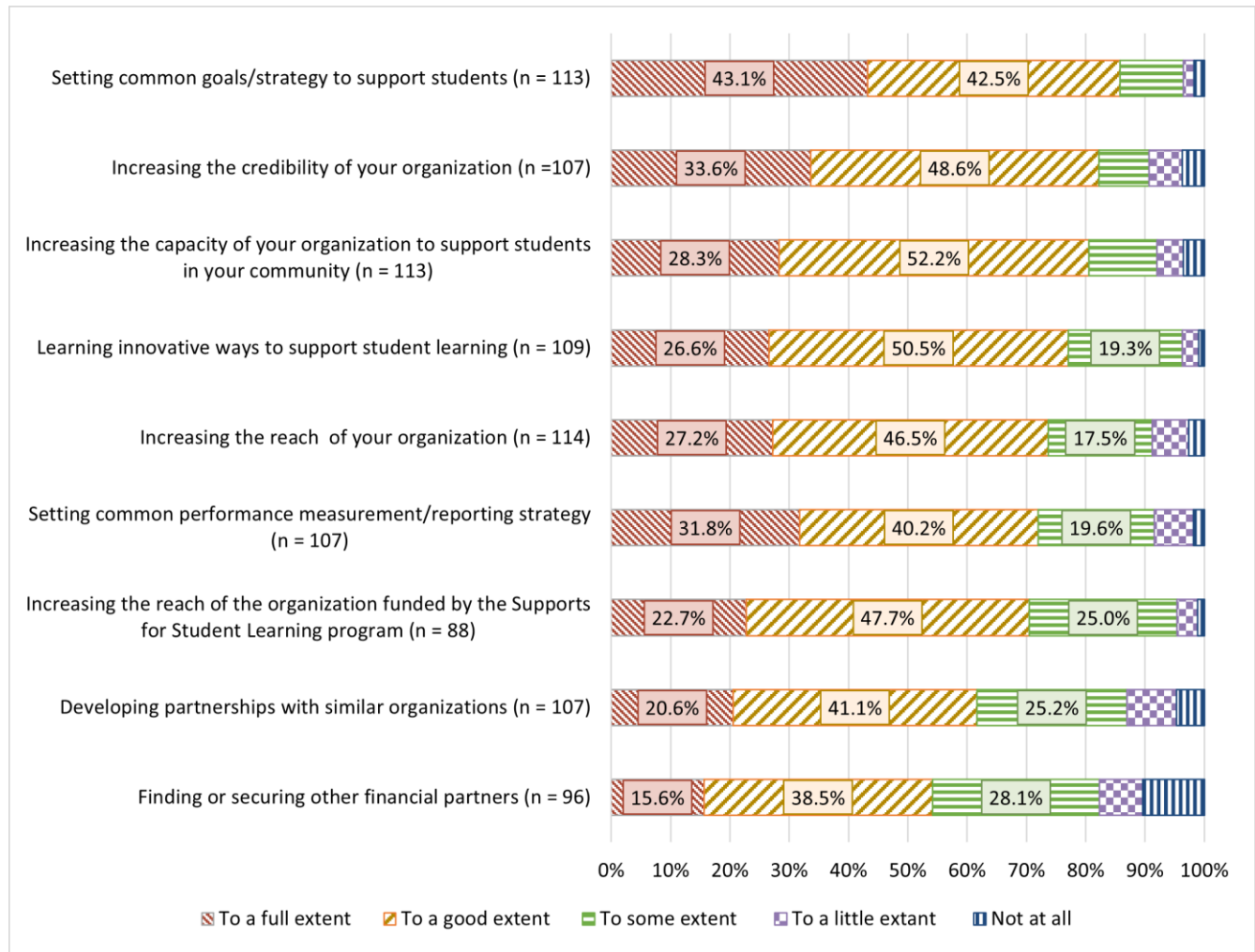
Finally, most youth-serving organization representatives surveyed believed that the partnerships were beneficial to:

- set common performance measurement or reporting strategy (72.0%)
- increase funded organization reach (70.5%)
- develop partnerships with other organizations (61.7%), and
- find or secure additional funding (54.2%) (consult figure 12)

Some organizations noted that the funded organizations provided equipment and supports that they could use outside the Program. This is particularly the case for organizations that served students who do not have access to technology.

In addition, representatives of youth-serving organization surveyed noted that they were benefiting from the network provided by their Stream 1 funded organization. Partner organizations now develop partnerships across the country. Stream 1 funded organizations share various learning materials and organize conferences, where partner organizations can exchange good practices and lessons learned.

Figure. Benefits of partnerships with Supports for Student Learning Program funded organizations



Source: Survey of Support for Student Learning Youth-Serving Organization Representatives (between 88 and 114 respondents).

7. Stream 2 – Global Skills Opportunity

Despite its benefits to the students and the country at large, fewer Canadian students' study or work abroad compared to other OECD countries. Early evidence suggests that students with disabilities, Indigenous students, and students from low-income families participate even less due to unique barriers. Constrained resources of post-secondary institutions limit their ability to offer tailored support for students to study in non-traditional countries.

During pandemic-related travel restrictions, the Global Skills Opportunity Innovation Fund contributed to developing lessons learned and promising practices. From 2020 to 2021, about 13,600 Canadian students directly benefited from Global Skills Opportunity Innovation Fund funded activities. In addition, funded projects developed partnerships with post-secondary institutions in nearly 50 countries.

7.1. Benefits of study and work abroad opportunities for students

According to the literature, 11% of Canadian students choose to study or work abroad. This is lower than students from France (33%), Germany (29%), Australia (19%), and the United States (16%). (Global Affairs Canada, 2019).

The document review and key informant interviews show that supporting study and work abroad opportunities benefits students and Canada. This includes the following benefits for students:

- developing soft skills (such as problem-solving, communication and teamwork skills)
- developing skills and competencies aligned with the skills required in the workplace
- refining academic and career direction
- increasing graduation rate and employment outcomes
- developing an international network, including with potential employers, and
- increasing understanding of economic regions of importance to Canada

It also includes the following benefits for Canada:

- adapting to the shifting global reality. Canadians must develop knowledge on increasingly important emerging countries and build an international network
- adapting to the changing nature of work
- strengthening values of openness. Global learning reinforces intercultural understanding and appreciating diverse societies, and
- remaining competitive among OECD partners. Other OECD countries have programs to support students travelling in non-traditional countries

7.2. Barriers for underrepresented students to study or work abroad

Limited data is available on the number of underrepresented students who participate in the study and work abroad opportunities. Based on evidence gathered as part of this evaluation, underrepresented

students face specific barriers to work or study abroad. This includes students with disabilities, Indigenous students, and students from low-income families.

Additional costs for underserved populations

According to surveyed officials from post-secondary institutions, the main barriers for underrepresented students to study or work abroad are due to their financial situation. Among surveyed officials, 91% was of view that 1 of the barriers was students' financial obligations. For example, this can include covering education-related costs, personal expenses, and support dependents.

In addition, 83% of surveyed officials identified the lack of financial support or financial constraints as a key barrier for underrepresented students to study or work abroad. For instance, travelling with disabilities may be associated with additional costs (for example transportation of equipment, additional equipment and aids required). For Indigenous students living in remote areas, costs associated with travel are typically higher. In addition, Indigenous students are more likely to live in low-income households.

Moreover, 80% of surveyed officials identified the lack of financial resources for Canadian post-secondary institutions as a key challenge to provide study and work abroad opportunities.

Awareness and lack of tailored support and information for underrepresented students

Among surveyed officials from post-secondary institutions, 66% believed students lack awareness of the financial support available. A review of the research on reducing barriers for students confirmed this finding. Resources and information on working and studying abroad are not tailored to the needs of underrepresented students. This affects students with disabilities, Indigenous students and students living in low-income households.

According to some surveyed officials, institutions lack knowledge on how to tailor their supports to the needs of underrepresented students. In addition, underrepresented students and their families are less likely to have travelled before. This results in a need for additional support for travel basics. This includes help with acquiring a passport and booking travel.

Insufficient resources pose a challenge for post-secondary institutions providing tailored study and work abroad programs for underrepresented students, as noted by 57% of surveyed officials. Post-secondary institutions in other countries may not have the resources to train staff to better support underrepresented students when they arrive.

Other barriers

According to surveyed officials, other reasons for underrepresented students not studying or working abroad include:

- concerns about availability of supports and resources abroad that are available at home (51%)
- family obligations (49%)
- competitive opportunities in Canada (43%)

- concerns about safety while studying and working abroad (43%), and
- lack of support from family (37%)

In addition, for students with disabilities, there are many challenges related to accessibility standards in other countries. These include among other things:

- accessible transportation options
- possibility to accommodate for several types of disabilities
- physical accessibility of the post-secondary institution locations, and
- adaptation measures taken by partners abroad

All these considerations require more preparation and support for students with disabilities. Although some post-secondary institutions can accommodate students with disabilities, many students prefer not to share their disabilities to avoid negative impacts. Many have concerns with being discriminated by staff or by other students.

According to surveyed officials from post-secondary institutions and research on reducing barriers, Indigenous students also face unique barriers. Some students find it difficult to leave their community. The history and trauma associated with residential schools may decrease family and community support for education outside of their community. For this reason, Global Skills Opportunity programming needs to include a wraparound approach that envelops the student's family and community.

7.3. Barriers to study or work in non-traditional countries

According to a review of the documentation, Canadian students that study abroad choose traditional education destinations comprised of the United States (56.3%), the United Kingdom (11.8%), Australia (5.39%), and France (5.73%)²⁹.

Few students decide to study in other countries, especially in emerging countries such as in Africa, Asia, or South America. However, as mentioned in section 7.1, studying abroad, especially in non-traditional countries benefits both the students and the country at large. This includes, among other things, developing strong partnerships and networks in emerging countries.

Many barriers exist for working and studying in non-traditional countries, as reported by officials from post-secondary institutions surveyed. Key informant interviewed also confirmed the existence of multiple barriers. While the Program focuses on non-traditional countries, most answered for barriers related to studying or working in emerging countries³⁰.

²⁹ Social Research and Demonstration Corporation (2020) Outbound Mobility Pilot Evaluation Framework.

³⁰ As part of the second stream of the Program, non-traditional countries include all countries except most popular countries for outbound student mobility opportunities (such as United-States, United Kingdom, Australia, and France).

Cost of working and studying in non-traditional countries

According to 84% of the surveyed officials, a key barrier is the financial constraint and the lack of financial support. Studying in some non-traditional countries may cost more in terms of transportation, visa, and vaccination. In addition, the majority of surveyed officials believe that students were not aware of the existing financial supports.

Safety

A majority (55%) of surveyed officials believe that safety was one of the main barriers for students to work or study in non-traditional countries. They reported that some underrepresented students may fear travelling in non-traditional destinations. In many of these destinations, mostly in emerging countries, their identity may put them at risk due to limited human rights protections. These populations include Indigenous students, 2SLGBTQI+ students, students with disabilities and female students. In addition, some non-traditional destinations are less politically stable. This may prevent students from completing their experience abroad or increase the risk to their safety once there.

Language and cultural barriers

Most surveyed officials (52%) mentioned that one of the main barriers for students is the insufficient language skills to study in non-traditional countries. Many respondents reported that students want to study in their first language. Indeed, most post-secondary institutions in non-traditional countries in Latin America or in Asia do not offer programs in French or in English. In addition, some surveyed officials reported that students must learn some basics about the destination's culture and political and administrative requirements. This may represent an additional burden for some students.

According to survey respondents, other barriers included:

- concerns about delays in graduation due to study or work abroad (42%)
- concerns about availability of supports and resources abroad that are available at home (42%)
- lack of support from family (42%)
- lack of information available to students (39%)
- lack of opportunities and programming abroad (36%)
- difficulties with the regulation (for example visa, legislation) (33%)
- lack of interest from students (24%), and
- challenges with credits being recognized (18%)

7.4. The Innovation Fund

Due to COVID-19 related travel restrictions, the Global Skills Opportunity in-person study and work experiences were delayed. As a result, funded organizations allocated a portion of Global Skill Opportunity's Innovation Fund to support innovative projects at post-secondary institutions. The original plan was to distribute the innovation funding to post-secondary institutions alongside the

funding for in-person study and work experiences. However, due to COVID-19, the Program distributed 50% of the funding (which is \$4.4 million) while travel restrictions were in place.

In 2020 to 2021, funded organizations contributed to carrying out a total of 130 innovative projects to identify lessons learned and promising practices. This included 117 individual projects and 13 consortia projects. Among the 171 projects:

- 51 on research on reducing barriers
- 49 on wrap around support
- 36 on virtual mobility
- 17 focused on marketing and recruitment
- 11 on risk management, and
- 7 on partnership development

Table 5. Number of projects and research completed as part of the Innovation fund in 2020 to 2021

Project Category	Colleges of Canada	Universities of Canada	Total
Marketing and Recruitment	9	8	17
Partnership Development	7	0	7
Research on Reducing Barriers	13	38	51
Risk Management	3	8	11
Virtual Mobility	17	19	36
Wrap Around Support	20	29	49
Total	69	102	171

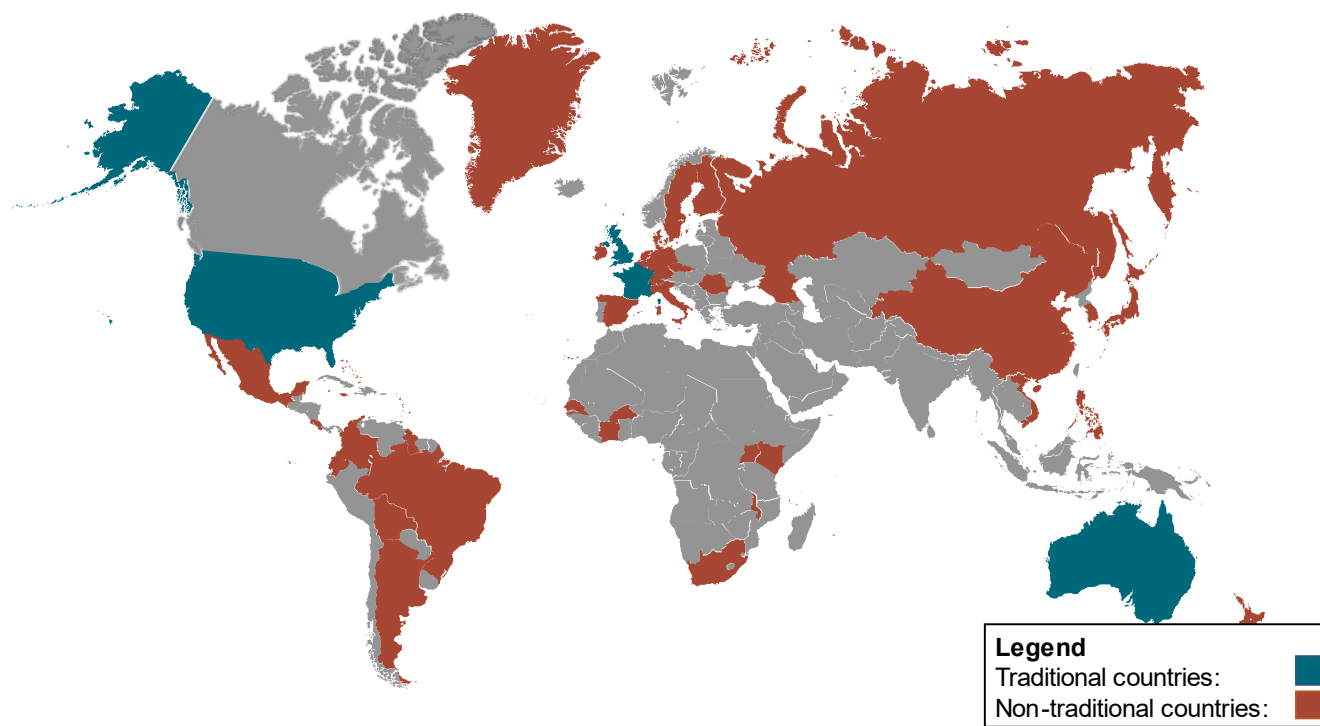
Source: Colleges of Canada (2021) *Innovation Fund Report, 2020 to 2021* and Universities of Canada (2021) *Innovation Fund Report, 2020 to 2021*.

From 2020 to 2021, 13,691 students directly participated in activities funded by the Innovation Fund. These projects included a high number of students from the targeted populations including:

- 1,348 Indigenous students (about 10%)
- 2,403 students with disabilities (about 18%), and
- 2,438 students in low-income family (about 18%)

Of note, these students did not participate in opportunities abroad due to travel restrictions. However, they participated in other opportunities in Canada (for example virtual mobility experiences). Also, as part of the Innovation Fund, post-secondary institutions funded by the programs developed partnerships with post-secondary institutions in 49 countries. This included 45 non-traditional countries (consult Figure 13). These partnerships will be beneficial for future opportunities offered abroad.

Figure 12. Countries where Canadian Post-Secondary Institutions developed partnerships as part of the Global Skills Opportunities



Source: Colleges of Canada (2021) *Innovation Fund Report, 2020 to 2021* and Universities of Canada (2021) *Innovation Fund Report, 2020 to 2021*.

8. Performance measurement

There are significant barriers to ensure availability, quality, validity, and reliability of performance indicators and information including their utility for evaluation. While the Program collects data on long-term outcomes for the Pathways and the Indspire agreements, it is currently limited for other Stream 1 agreements.

8.1. Indspire and Pathways agreements (Stream 1)

Pathways and Indspire have robust performance information to inform policy and evaluation. This includes high school completion, post-secondary education participation, post-secondary education completion and employment outcomes.

The incremental impacts and a cost-benefit analysis conducted in the last evaluation cycle was limited to 1 site in Canada. This research was done in collaboration with Lavecchia et al. (2018). These researchers are currently conducting additional analysis to inform the impact of Pathways on health and criminality. The data currently collected by the program does not allow ESDC to conduct an incremental impact analysis without collaborating with external partners. Also, because of the complexity of conducting such an analysis, no cost-benefit analysis was conducted as part of the current evaluation report.

In addition, the Program has limited data on the other agreements, including the Goal Getters, due to their recent launch. In particular, the data is not available on:

- intermediate outcomes (high school graduation) and
- ultimate outcomes (participation to post-secondary education or transition to the labour market)

Program officials indicated that the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated challenges around data collection. However, some data on the immediate outcome and outputs (targeted students receive supports to stay in school) is available.

8.2. Supports for Student Learning Program agreements (Stream 1)

All Goal Getters projects collect data on the overall number of participants from 2019 to 2020 to 2021 to 2022. However, ESDC has limited data on the number of participants by type of activities, by targeted population and by fiscal year.

In addition, ESDC has limited data to inform the effectiveness of the projects related to

- high school attendance
- high school completion
- post-secondary education participation
- post-secondary education completion, and

- employment outcomes

According to the internal and external key informants, this is in part due to several factors including:

- projects' maturity (time needed to have data on longer-term outcomes)
- limited or no access to data on education and labour market outcomes of participants
- the range of project delivery models (including the age range and education level of participants)
- types and nature of project activities, and
- project funding amounts

One of the key challenges for many projects is the limited access to school board and youth service organizations' data. Many funded organizations have no or limited access to data on:

- high-school graduation rate.
- post-secondary education participation
- post-secondary education completion, and
- labour market outcomes

Many do not have partnerships with the education sector to collect such data.

ESDC officials stated that inconsistent data on outputs and outcomes across projects is a challenge. This is due to the Program's flexibility and to the lack of a systematic data collection strategy. However, many funded organization representatives mentioned that they had a data collection strategy in place to report on longer-term outcomes.

8.3. Global Skills Opportunity (Stream 2)

Global Skills Opportunity agreement holders Universities Canada and Colleges and Institutes Canada coordinate their performance measurement and data collection strategy. This helps aggregated results for the component.

However, due to COVID-19 travel restrictions, there was data available only for the Innovation Fund as part of the evaluation period. This evaluation could not fully assess the extent to which performance information collected under the Stream 2 of the Program are meeting availability, quality, validity, and reliability standards. However, this is due to circumstances outside the control of the program area.

The document review found that there is no data on the participation rate of underserved students in study abroad in Canada. This lack of data makes it hard to assess if Global Skills Opportunity's targeted students are underrepresented in study abroad. It is also difficult to identify other groups that may also face barriers to work or study in other countries. In addition, it makes it difficult to assess the net impact of the Global Skills Opportunity projects on the participation of these student populations.

9. Conclusions

Canada performs well in terms of post-secondary education attainment compared to other similar countries. However, some students still need additional supports in or outside the school system to:

- succeed in school
- complete high school and,
- successfully transition to post-secondary education and the labour market

Given the adverse consequences associated with school disengagement for individuals and for the society at large, there is a need for the Program. It offers tailored support outside of the school system but along a student's learning journey. A variety of national or regional and local organizations are well positioned to offer supports to students or to education organizations.

There is evidence that organizations funded under Stream 1 of the Program contribute to support students facing existing and emerging challenges. The Supports for Student Learning Program funding agreements are flexible enough to support various groups of underserved students. As a result, it offers the supports they need to attain their education objectives. In fact, evidence shows that both Pathways and Inspire agreements contribute to improving post-secondary participation and graduation rates among underserved population. This leads to improving education and labour market outcomes of students.

Other funding agreements under Stream 1 build on the model and proven experiences observed under Pathways. Still, there is no sufficient data to inform whether these agreements are also associated with similar positive impacts on education and labour market outcomes of participants. In addition, representatives of most recently signed projects raised some concerns related to the sustainability of projects. For these organizations, the short funding period and the misalignment between the school calendar and the program fiscal years resulted in various issues. This includes difficulty to hiring staff, promoting student support activities and program planning.

Stream 1 of the Program had beneficial effects for youth-serving organizations partnering with the Program's funded organizations. It also had a positive impact on knowledge dissemination. The Program's helped to identify good practices and disseminate lessons learned across the country. Despite the fact that many organizational representatives noted that the Program could play a greater role in that area. They indicated that the Program could play a greater role in:

- fostering innovation
- disseminate lessons learned and good practices across Canada more systematically, and
- to organize networking and knowledge dissemination events among Supports for Student Learning Program agreement holders

For Stream 2, compared to other OECD countries, fewer Canadian students' study or work abroad. Despite limited data, early evidence suggests that some student's populations targeted by the Program participate even less in such opportunities due to unique barriers. For post-secondary institutions, it is difficult to offer tailored supports to underrepresented students due to limited

resources available. With the Innovation Fund, funded organizations developed lessons learned and promising practices to better support post-secondary institutions. These lessons learned and promising practices were in the areas of marketing and recruitment, partnership development, research on reducing barriers, risk management, virtual mobility, and wrap around support.

10. Recommendations

Recommendation #1: Continue to gather evidence to understand the characteristics, challenges, promising practices and reflect any emerging needs to better support underserved or underrepresented students in post-secondary education

The Evaluation Directorate recognizes that the Design, Impact and Outreach team within the Learning Branch developed a series of literature review to better understand barriers and facilitators to educational attainment. However, other groups of underrepresented students may also face unique challenges (for example refugees, the 'Men+' and 'Women+' subpopulations).

For some students, these barriers have been exacerbated during the COVID-19 pandemic. While some challenges were sporadic and occurred during school closures, some challenges could remain or increase in the coming years. The Program's funded organizations and their partners were well positioned to support sub-populations of students that faced COVID-19-related challenges. They also are well positioned to support underserved students face other emerging challenges.

Therefore, activities to stay abreast of current and emerging challenges for sub-population of learners would help better support after-school youth-serving organizations. They would also help identify potential funding priorities as well as potential funded organizations.

Recommendation #2: Explore ways to improve the sustainability of projects beyond the Program funding by supporting the development of partnerships and increasing the Program's role in generating and disseminating lessons learned and promising practices among all youth-serving organizations

Funded organizations under the Stream 1 of the Program and their partners are:

- identifying innovative practices to support underserved students
- generate promising practices and lessons learned, and
- share their findings via various dissemination tools or events

However, the Program could make additional efforts to disseminate good practices to support underserved students among youth-serving organizations. Still, the Program could do more virtual or in-person events to disseminate promising practices and lessons learned locally and at the national level. This would have multiple benefits including to develop partnerships with other similar organizations or with organizations that provide complementary services. To make a greater impact on underserved populations, the Program should disseminate lessons learned and best practices among all youth-serving organizations, including non-participant organizations.

When possible, as part of Stream 1, the Program should consider using multi-year agreements. This would better support youth-serving organizations and improve the predictability of agreements. This evaluation revealed many challenges with 1-year agreements. This is especially true for youth-serving organizations who support underserved students and who try to address systemic barriers.

Recommendation #3: Continue to improve and strengthen data collection strategy to inform results and support better decision-making, including exploring ways to inform program impacts

In the evaluation period, there was no systematic data collection approach. As a result, the evaluation was limited in its possibilities to report aggregated data for the overall program or for certain components. The Evaluation Directorate recognizes that the program area is developing a modernized reporting structure. This is done using the Interactive Fact-Finding System and exploring other options for the collection in a systematic manner to improve data availability.

Appendices

Appendix A: Supports for Student Learning outcomes, outputs and activities

Ultimate Outcome #1: Early Interventions: More program participants access post-secondary education and transition to the labour market.

Related Intermediate Outcome: More program participants graduate from high school.

Related Immediate Outcome: More students at risk of disengaging from their education receive supports to stay in school.

Related Outputs:

- services designed to improve academic outcomes are in place
- more youth have been reached, and
- annual, ad hoc, and evaluation reports

Related activities:

- direct student supports
- expanding program reach
- data collection and reporting

Ultimate outcome # 2: Supports for Indigenous post-secondary education: More scholarship recipients' transition to the labour market or pursue additional education or training.

Related intermediate outcome: more scholarship recipients graduate from post-secondary education.

Related immediate outcome: more Indigenous students have the financial means to access post-secondary education.

Related outputs:

- scholarships and non-financial supports are provided to students
- annual reports

Evaluation Directorate



Related activities:

- evaluate and approve student applications
- data collection and reporting

Ultimate Outcome # 3: Outbound Student Mobility Pilot: Pilot participants transition to the labour market.

Related intermediate outcome: pilot participants, including underrepresented students, gain portable skills and intercultural competencies to equip them to participate in the labour market.

Related immediate outcome: more PSE students, including underrepresented students, participate in the pilot to study or work abroad as part of their studies at a Canadian post-secondary education institution.

Related outputs:

- funds are disbursed to PSIs, and financial and non-financial supports are provided to students, and
- semi-annual progress and evaluation reports

Related activities:

- evaluate and approve PSI project proposals, and
- data collection, oversight, monitoring and reporting

ESDC's activities include negotiating agreements, Terms & Conditions, and reviewing projects. Related outputs include signing funding agreements and disbursing payments to agreement holders. In addition, ESDC is responsible for monitoring and oversight as well as researching and performing data analytics. Related outputs include program reports, performance data, audits, and evaluations.



Appendix B – Evaluation matrix

Evaluation question #1: What is the relevance of the program as part of the learning continuum?

Sub-questions:

- need for an after-school support to students from low-income families, including those underrepresented in post-secondary education, to access and participate in post-secondary education (Pathways and Goal Getters)
- continued need for financial support for Indigenous youth to succeed in post-secondary education and in the labour market (Indspire)
- need for financial support for youth who desire to study or work in countries other than the United States, United Kingdom, France, and Australia (Outbound Student Mobility)
- need for financial support for youth from low-income families, students with disabilities, and Indigenous students to study or work abroad (Outbound Student Mobility)
- need for the Program Covid-19 measures (Pathways, Goal Getters and Indspire)
- lines of evidence used as part of question 1 include:
 - literature Review
 - document review
 - key informant interviews (internal and external), and
 - surveys

Evaluation question #2: To what extent is the Supports for Student Learning Program achieving its objectives and intended outcomes (immediate and intermediate)?

Sub-questions:

- identification of knowledge needed to better support the development of projects to support students
- extent to which innovative approaches, lessons learned, or promising practices are generated by the funding organizations
- dissemination of promising practices and lessons learned
- factors affecting the implementation of the Program (Pathways, Goal Getters and Indspire)

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- students at risk of becoming dropouts stay in school, by targeted groups, students from low-income families, Indigenous (Pathways, Goal Getters and Indspire)
- extent to which the Program Covid-19 Emergency measured responded to the needs of the organizations and students

Lines of evidence used as part of question 2 include:

- literature Review
- document review
- key informant interviews (internal and external), and
- surveys

Evaluation question #3: Is the Performance Measurement Strategy generating valid and reliable data that informs results achieved and supports future evaluations and policy development?

Sub-question:

- data collection and reporting systems in place to support the next evaluation cycle

Lines of evidence used as part of question 3 include:

- document review, and
- key informant interviews (internal)

Evaluation question #4: Were the Supports for Student Learning Program delivery organizations able to effectively adapt to implementation challenges they faced because of COVID-19?

Sub-question: Implementation of the Program during Covid-19

Lines of evidence used as part of question 3 include:

- document review
- key informant interviews (internal and external), and
- surveys.



Appendix C – Methodology

Document and literature review

The objective of the document review is to provide contextual information on the relevance of the Program. This is specifically about the challenges affecting vulnerable students to:

- complete high school
- study or work abroad, and
- on barriers to access learning support due to COVID-19 sanitary measures

Information from the literature review will be used as the foundation to build on the other lines of evidence.

Also, the document review informs the design, delivery, and implementation of the Program as well as the effectiveness of the different components.

The document review consists of a review of administrative data and relevant literature review including:

- administrative documentation including activity reports, funding agreements, internal documentation, and presentations
- independent evaluation and research products
- lessons learned and promising practices publications available on funded organizations' websites
- governmental reports, and
- literature review to better understand barriers and facilitators to educational attainment in Canada. This review was produced by the Design, Impact and Outreach team within the Supports for Student Learning Program

Due to variation in data availability between the 4 components of the Program, performance indicators can only be reported for each component separately. This variation is caused by diverse levels of maturity of each agreement and by flexible terms and conditions of the Program.

Key informant interviews

The key informant interviews were used to gather in-depth evidence, including opinions, explanations, examples, and information that will contribute to addressing all the evaluation questions. Key informant interviews give the Evaluation Directorate the opportunity to gain valuable information on the Program's performance that is not available in files, documents. Evaluators had the opportunity to

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ask specific questions concerning how the Program components have been conceptualized, implemented, and delivered. Interviews were also used to further substantiate and supplement findings from other lines of evidence.

This line of evidence included both internal and external key informant interviews. The Evaluation Directorate carried out all interviews in-house.

The objective of the key informant interview is to provide evidence on the Program's implementation including, successes, challenges, and issues. It will also provide information on the relevance of the Program by identifying potential barriers for students a promising practice.

The Program distributed funding as part of a solicited competitive call for proposals for the first time. In addition to interviews with established organizations, the Evaluation Directorate also conducted interviews with organizations that were solicited or that have applied to the 2021 to 2022 call for proposals (including funded and unfunded organizations). Interviews with these organizations will allow to gather information on enabling factors and on potential challenges with the 2021 to 2022 call for proposals.

Internal key informant interviews

This sub-line of evidence is the only method through which government officials were consulted. As well, the internal key informant interviews offer an important perspective from those who are not direct beneficiaries of program funding. Interviewees were selected based on their level of experience, type of work, breadth of knowledge and previous experience with the program. They provided insight into the Program successes, challenges, and issues from policy, operational, and integrity perspectives.


The selection of the key informants was done in consultation with the Evaluation Working Group. For sampling purposes, 7 internal key informant interviews with government officials involved with the design, delivery and policy aspects of the Program were invited to participate in interviews. It included officials from the Program Operation Branch (n=3) and from the Learning Branch (n=4).

External key informant interviews

The external key informant interviews provided additional context and insights on the findings from the secondary data sources (document review); and helped validate the information provided by the internal key informant interviews. As well, this sub-line of evidence offered an important perspective from the funded organization perspective to identify potential successes, challenges, and issues with the current program structure.

The Evaluation Directorate invited at least 1 representative of all funded organizations under the Pathways, Indspire, Goal Getters and Global Skills Opportunity components between 2019 and 2021 to participate in a key informant interview. Among the 21 representatives invited, 17 participated in an interview.





In addition, the Evaluation Directorate invited at least 1 representative of all organizations (n=57) that have been solicited to apply or that have applied in the 2021 to 2022 call for proposals for the Supports for Student Learning Program. Overall, among that group, 12 representatives have participated in an interview, including:

- 7 representatives from the 34 organizations that have received funding as part of the 2021 to 2022 call for proposals
- 3 representatives from non-funded organizations, and
- 2 representatives for non-applicant organizations participated to a key informant interview

Survey of the youth-serving organization representatives

The survey targeted officials in charge of delivering direct support to students, management and coordination of the project, advertising the project or evaluating and researching about the project.


The goal of this survey was to better understand the barriers for underrepresented students to achieve their education objectives in Canada. It also tries to understand the impact of the Program, and how it could be improved.

The Evaluation Directorate carried out the web survey questionnaire and data analysis in-house. The survey was administered through ESDC's Interactive Fact-Finding Service's web survey platform. This platform is fully customizable and meets the departmental web accessibility requirements.

The survey was distributed in collaboration with the funded organizations from Stream 1 and 2. They had 2 options to distribute the survey:

- option A) ESDC could share an invitation letter template, including a link to the survey with funded organization. Then, they were responsible for sharing the survey with project partner organization representatives and report on the number of questionnaires sent, or
- option B) Funded organization could provide ESDC with contact information of the partner organization representatives, including their names and email addresses, and the name of their respective organization. ESDC was responsible to send invitations to project partner organizations to participate in the survey

Among the 14 organizations that received funding as part of Stream 1:

- 8 chose the option A
 - 1 chose the option B, and
 - 5 did not answer to Evaluation Directorate request
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Some organizations did not report the number of questionnaires sent. Also, some respondents shared the questionnaire with other representatives in their organizations without informing the Evaluation Directorate. For these reasons, it is impossible to know the exact number of individuals who have received an invitation to respond to the survey. Overall, 116 representatives of youth-serving organizations responded to the survey.

For Stream 2, all 2 funded organization chose the option A including employees of Stream 1 partner organization. Overall, 35 for representatives of post-secondary institutions that have received support as part of the Stream 2 response to the survey.



Appendix D – Support for Student Learning Agreements (as part of Stream 1)

Goal Getter agreement

BGC Canada (formerly Boys and Girls Club of Canada): BGC Canada's Youth Engagement Initiative is a nationwide commitment to creating spaces and opportunities that reduce barriers and enable youth to reach their potential. Through its service of over 50,000 youth in diverse Club communities across the country, the organization supports young people facing barriers to education to achieve: Insight about their interests and how to pursue them; A sense of discovery and excitement about the possibilities of knowledge; Career aspirations that match their interests, goals and abilities; Graduation from high school or CEGEP; and adequate credits and grades for the post-secondary program of their choice. The project also supports youth through the transition from the pandemic and into recovery and ensures that young Canadians do not become further marginalized because of the pandemic by enhancing the accessibility of critical supports for underserved populations. As of the third quarter of the fiscal year 2021 to 2022 the project served 3514 participants. Among them, 12% of participants were born outside Canada and 4.2% are newcomers (in Canada for less than 5 years); 49% identified as Female, 44% as Male and 5% as non-binary or other genders; 37% identified as Visible Minority; 22% reported living with a disability. The project is offered in 44 sites. As of January 15, 2021, 28 Clubs have applied for a total of \$275,000 in mental health grant funding. According to a survey distributed to 307 participant youth 90% of youth report learning about online safety through the Clubs.

Choices for Youth Inc.: Through this project, Choices for Youth aims to reduce risk factors leading to poor educational outcomes, unstable home environments, homelessness, and low labour market participation among at-risk children, youth, and vulnerable families. The objectives of the project are:

- prevention and early intervention
- building independence and labour market success, and
- systems evolution and project sustainability

Under the Prevention and Early Intervention objective of the project is providing funding for the Educational Engagement and Success program. It aims to prevent and eliminate youth homelessness through the coordinated efforts of schools and communities, by identifying young people at-risk of homelessness and providing them and their families with a suite of supports. 259 participants benefited from this project in 2 sites. From the first quarter of the fiscal year 2020 to 2021 to the fourth quarter of the fiscal year 2021 to 2022, there were 28 clients in General Educational Development, through the Employment Readiness Program, 47 clients transitioned to educational programs and 63 new referrals to Choices for Youth's Employment Readiness Program.

Digital Moment (formerly known as Kids Code Jeunesse): This project expands programming to serve often marginalized youth in communities across Canada, affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, with educational digital skills workshops in English and French. The project's objectives are to: deliver weekly online coding clubs that teach digital skills to youth, engage underserved and underrepresented groups in engaging coding activities, establish a Community of Practice for community groups, and deliver training through coding workshops to youth. In response to the COVID-19 pandemic, the Supports for Student Learning Program initially served underrepresented youth through their Code Clubs project, delivering supports such as online workshops, mentorship, increasing access to technology. 1560 participants benefited from this project. It included 49% of youth identified as Black, Indigenous, People of Color. 70% of participants completed the project. Among the 205 communities and organizations engaged in 125 sites, there were 60 francophone clubs, 12 Indigenous groups, 64 youth groups, 50 libraries, 28 schools, 62 community and family groups and 7 newcomer groups. In addition, 53 laptops were donated to 7 partners to increase access to technology in rural and remote areas.

Rideau Hall Foundation: The Rideau Hall Foundation launched the Access Innovation Fund, 1 component of their Catapult Canada Initiative. The Fund is focused on supporting youth-serving organizations in Canada to design, build, scale up and evaluate the impact of initiatives. Project objectives are to:

- support equity in educational opportunity in Canada by providing direct funding support for innovative projects to address systemic gaps related to raising the rates of secondary completion and for post-secondary education access, and
- support and grow an ecosystem of organizations that provide effective services to youth at-risk in support of their educational attainment

As of the first quarter of the fiscal year 2020 to 2021, 6000 participants benefited from the program in 77 sites. In the fourth quarter of 2021 to 2022, the Rideau Hall Foundation funded 28 projects (grantees). In addition, 3 are in innovative projects in exploratory phase of development.

Shad Canada: An organization developing youth in the areas of science, technology, engineering, arts, or mathematics through interactive summer programs and localized Indigenous knowledge sharing. 459 underrepresented students participated in 19 sites.

Sommet socio-économique pour le développement des jeunes des communautés noires : The goal of the project "Ensemble pour nos jeunes" is to promote the social and economic integration of young adults from Black communities who have dropped out of school, by reintegrating them into the school system and providing them with ongoing support to keep their motivation. Distance coaching will be provided via digital tools to support these young people's return to school, which will lead them to obtain their high school diploma and access post-secondary studies. A total of 55 participants took part in the project in 1 site during the evaluation period.



Tamarack Institute for Community Engagement: Tamarack Institute has implemented Communities Building Youth Futures in 19 communities across Canada to develop collective impact and system-wide solutions to help youth facing barriers transition from high school to post-secondary education, training, and employment. The project includes community youth initiatives, a national collaborative, an annual partner convening, an innovation fund, and evaluation and learning supports.

A total of 6515 participants took part in the project in 19 sites during the evaluation period. In addition, 15 innovative approaches were developed at the national level and 518 at the local level. Tamarack Institute developed 5 Case Studies/panel, 7 webinars and 2 guide/tools.

Ulnooweg Development Group Inc.: The project helps youth traditionally underrepresented in post-secondary education complete high school and facilitate their transition to post-secondary education to allow to access good quality jobs. The project's objective is to overcome multiple barriers to increase the number of students actively pursuing post-secondary education and professional careers. The project delivers a series of consistent, ongoing, and integrated activities to provide youth with skills, confidence, connections, and opportunities they need to flourish at the post-secondary level.

A total of 1550 participants took part in the project in 350 sites during the evaluation period. Among students surveyed, 62% of participants reported having an interest in pursuing STEM in post-secondary. In addition, the organization developed 15 new partnerships and engaged with 165 partners in targeted communities.

COVID-19 Emergency Agreements

BGC Canada (formerly Boys and Girls Club of Canada): BGC Canada's COVID-responsive pan-Canadian virtual programming, including support for low-income young Canadians in accessing Club-based virtual programs & services and connectivity support. The co-creation and launch of BGC Canada's Youth Hub, a multi-purpose platform for Club staff & youth that will enhance program access, quality, and youth member experience. 3515 children and youth benefited from the project, including 2,003 female, 1580 male, 27 non-binary, 191 parents and guardians. 6% were Indigenous individuals, 6% had a disability, 12% were newcomers to Canada, and 38% were from low-income households. The project is offered in 60 sites. 1,444 bursaries have been provided to students and families for increased connectivity, access to internet and devices. Most Club staff (57%) reported that their experience with virtual programming was either much better, slightly better, or about the same as in-person programming. The project helped students develop friendships with other members, improve relationship with other family members and improve relationships between participants and Club Staff.

Indigenous Disability Canada: The project supports learners to access post-secondary education, training and lifelong learning supports to gain the skills and work experience they need to participate in a changing labour market. The project's objectives are to: assist in addressing the technological and resource needs of Indigenous students across Canada with limited financial resources, prioritizing Indigenous students with disabilities, to enable students to study remotely and in formal educational settings and to have

the necessary equipment, and materials at home, outside of regular school hours, to successfully complete school work; and collect information and data in relation to barriers experienced by Indigenous students and suggest mechanisms to address them, including those living with disabilities and students' families as relevant. 64 participants benefited from this project in 13 sites. All identified as Indigenous (50 as First Nations, 2 as Inuit, and 12 as Métis), all were from low-income households, 55 students had a disability, 25 identified as men or boys and 38 as women or girls. Three students lived in rural, remote, or Northern areas.

National Association of Friendship Centres: The project served Indigenous youth and vulnerable community members in communities across Canada through the Friendship Centre network who are affected by the COVID-19 pandemic and continue to support equitable access to technology and learning supports. The project's objectives were to:

- support Indigenous youth to continue their studies, both academically and traditionally
- support Indigenous youth and vulnerable community members to have access to technology and learning supports, and
- enable the building of relationships between Indigenous youth, community members, mentors, tutors, and elders.

7141 participants benefited from this project in 85 sites. 138 project activities supported educational support such as promotion of education and career planning. 97 project activities helped Indigenous students overcome mental health and wellness challenges. 93 project activities focused on traditional learning practices, involving Elders and Knowledge keepers.

National Educational Association of Disabled Students: The Virtual Access for All project seeks to increase awareness and reduce barriers for students with disabilities. The project includes the creation of a virtual portal with resources, monthly webinars and in-person events, and a peer-mentoring program to support students with disabilities as they transition from high school to post-secondary education. The project provides supports to students facing unforeseen costs related to COVID-19, such as the transition to virtual learning, adaptive technologies, tuition fees, and other wraparound services. The organization will also engage with community stakeholders, student unions, and campus service providers to host events and broaden the project's reach to post-secondary education students. As of the third quarter of the fiscal year of 2021 to 2022, 200 participants benefited from the project via virtual activities available nationally (such as webinars). In addition, 40 participants received grants.

Taking IT Global Youth Association: The project strengthens supports for continued student engagement in learning throughout remote communities in response to the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic. The objectives are to strengthen the success of Indigenous middle and high school students in their pathways to high school graduation and post-secondary education, and support efforts to increase recruitment and successful completion of post-secondary education among Indigenous students. A total of 4100 participants took part in the project in 41 sites during the evaluation period.



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