

Evaluation of the Passport Program

Executive Summary

Research and Evaluation Branch

Evaluation Division

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Executive summary

Purpose scope and focus of the evaluation

The evaluation of the Passport Program was conducted in fulfilment of requirements of the Treasury Board 2016 *Policy on Results*, as well as commitments in various Treasury Board Submissions. Led by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC), the evaluation was conducted in collaboration with Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) and Global Affairs Canada (GAC).

The evaluation assessed selected aspects of relevance and performance, covering the period since the program's transfer from GAC to IRCC (fiscal years 2013–2014 to 2017–2018)¹, and included the activities undertaken by IRCC, as well as by ESDC and GAC in accordance with their interdepartmental agreements with IRCC, primarily as they related to regular passports.

- As an area of focus, the evaluation examined client outcomes in Canada and abroad. It looked at the different approaches employed by partners (ESDC and GAC) in administering Passport Program services and considered how service delivery differs in Canada and abroad, as well as possible implications for client outcomes.
- It also examined the management of the Passport Program, synthesizing and building on findings from previous assessment work, with a focus on the effectiveness of service delivery partnerships and governance in support of program management and delivery in Canada and abroad.

The Passport Program Modernization Initiative (PPMI) and the sustainability of the Passport Program Revolving Fund were not assessed in the evaluation.

Overview of the Passport Program

The Passport Program provides passport and other travel document services to eligible Canadian citizens, permanent residents and refugees. The program is responsible for issuing, refusing to issue, revoking, withholding, cancelling, recovering and providing instructions on the use of Canadian passports and other travel documents.

At the time of the evaluation, the Passport Program issued seven different types of travel documents: regular passports, diplomatic passports, special passports, temporary passports, emergency travel documents, certificates of identity and refugee travel documents. Between fiscal years (FY) 2013–2014 to 2017–2018:

- a total of 24.97 million applications were received for travel documents, and a total of 24.89 million travel documents were issued; and
- the regular passport accounted for 99% of all applications received and travel documents issued.

In July 2013, primary responsibility for the Passport Program was transferred from GAC to IRCC. As a result, IRCC has full functional authority for the program, which includes: responsibility and accountability for program management, the administration of the Canadian Passport Order (CPO), and the provision of full program and policy support for program delivery. The department is also responsible for processing applications for diplomatic and special

¹ While the evaluation focused primarily on activities undertaken between 2013–2014 and 2017–2018, some data from 2018–2019 were also considered as part of the analysis.

passports, refugee travel documents, certificates of identity, and complex/high-risk applications for regular passports.

IRCC has negotiated Memoranda of Understanding (MOU) with both ESDC and GAC for the delivery of the Passport Program. The MOU with GAC was signed in 2009 and the agreement with ESDC was signed in 2013.

- ESDC, through Service Canada (SC), is the provider of passport services in Canada for regular passports. ESDC also manages the program's customer outreach and communication channels, including social media and the Passport Program call centres. At the time of the evaluation, in-person passport services in Canada were mainly delivered through a network of 34 SC Passport Offices and 315 Service Canada Centres (SCC) across Canada.
- GAC is the provider of passport services internationally for regular and temporary passports, as well as emergency travel documents. At the time of the evaluation, GAC offered 203 points of service through a network of Canadian missions abroad in support of the delivery of the Passport Program.

Conclusions and recommendations

Overall, the evaluation found that the Passport Program is aligned with IRCC and partner objectives and priorities and has demonstrated strong performance from a service delivery perspective, particularly in relation to meeting service standards for application processing times. Further, the program has implemented various integrity measures and established collaborative relationships with Canadian and international partners, which contribute to national and international security interests, as well as the recognition of the Canadian passport as a trusted and secure travel document. However, the evaluation also identified a few key challenges and areas for improvement.

Availability and accessibility of administrative data: The evaluation found that the administrative data that can be readily and reliably accessed on passport clients are limited, particularly for analysis purposes. Currently, administrative data on passport clients are primarily supporting operational needs to deliver the program. However, there are analytical needs which are currently underserved, such as those related to program integrity, policy, evaluation, performance measurement and reporting. While the department will be transitioning to the Global Case Management System (GCMS) with the PPMI, there have been delays and the current plan for the move to this new platform is not expected to address all of the data availability issues. Without a plan to address these data challenges, limitations will persist in IRCC's ability to appropriately support this type of work.

Thus, there is a need for a data management plan, including interim measures prior to program roll-out in GCMS as well as a plan for GCMS, to ensure that sufficient data on clients can be easily or reliably extracted and readily available to effectively support IRCC's broader departmental needs for robust policy development, program monitoring, measurement and planning, and reporting on results.

Recommendation 1: IRCC should put in place a data management plan to improve the availability of administrative data on passport clients for analysis purposes.

Passport Program client satisfaction survey: The evaluation found limitations with the methodology currently used for the Passport Client Satisfaction Survey which have led to challenges with reporting on survey results. While many of the tools needed to enhance the

survey methodology rely on the availability of administrative data on passport clients, there are also interim steps the department can undertake to enhance the quality and representativeness of the survey data. Further, the survey methodology must evolve in alignment with the Passport Program data management plan in order to continue to take advantage of the best available data.

Thus, there is a need for a plan to strengthen the Passport Client Satisfaction Survey methodology, so that survey results can be used with greater confidence in departmental reporting.

Recommendation 2: IRCC should develop and implement a plan to improve the survey methodology for the Passport Client Satisfaction Survey to ensure that survey results are robust and reliable.

Program management with partners: The Passport Program operates in a complex management and governance environment, with three departments, multiple committees, and different program delivery contexts. IRCC is responsible for program management and has functional authority for the Passport Program and the Revolving Fund, while ESDC and GAC are responsible for service delivery in Canada and abroad through MOUs with IRCC. The program is governed by several departmental and interdepartmental committees, each of which is responsible for some form of oversight, management and consultation. The evaluation found that program partners have varying understandings of program priorities, and there is a lack of clarity with respect to accountabilities and responsibilities, which has led to difficulties with program decision-making and coordination.

Thus, there is a need to re-examine the management and governance framework for the Passport Program, at the ADM and supporting levels, to ensure a common understanding of accountabilities and responsibilities, facilitate decision-making and coordination and establish clear leadership for the program.

Recommendation 3: IRCC, in collaboration with ESDC and GAC, should review and clarify departmental accountabilities and responsibilities for the Passport Program, as well as reconfirm decision-making authorities and governance processes to effectively support program management and delivery.

Understanding of passport application requirements: The evaluation found that there are challenges with clients' understanding of certain passport application requirements and responsibilities for safeguarding their passport. Although client survey results were generally positive, ESDC and GAC survey results raised client issues in relation to the clarity of the application forms, child applications, and documents and ID required. It was noted that clients are having difficulties, both in terms of understanding what is required in the application forms (e.g., guarantors), and the difficulties obtaining documents (e.g., court documents translated into English and French). ESDC and GAC survey results also suggested that clients do not always have an adequate knowledge of their responsibilities in safeguarding passports.

Ensuring that the Passport websites are coherent and up-to-date, and provide clear, easy to understand information, would support a greater understanding of passport requirements and responsibilities among clients.

Recommendation 4: IRCC, in collaboration with ESDC and GAC, should review and clarify the Passport information available to clients to ensure that the information is accurate, accessible, easy to find and reflective of the realities of applying for a passport in Canada and abroad.