



SUMMARY OF THE EVALUATION OF POST-SECONDARY INSTITUTIONS STRATEGIC INVESTMENT FUNDS

March 2019

ABOUT THE EVALUATION

- The evaluation examined the relevance, efficiency and effectiveness of design and delivery, and performance of the Post-Secondary Institutions Strategic Investment Fund (PSI-SIF) from 2016-17 to 2018-19.

WHAT THE EVALUATION FOUND

- Investment in PSI-SIF helped stimulate the construction sector's labour market by creating economic activity across Canada during an economic downturn. The program also responded to the capital and deferred maintenance needs of Canada's post-secondary institutions and enabled implementation of unfunded shovel-ready projects.
- The program's design and delivery capitalized on the provinces and territories' pre-existing knowledge and relationships with post-secondary institutions.
- Program application processes were clear. However, the short application timeline and the uncertainty some institutions faced while awaiting projects' extension decisions, were considered challenging.
- PSI-SIF's project progress reports helped identify projects at risk and enabled project monitoring. However, the frequency of reporting and level of detail required were considered time consuming in some provinces.
- PSI-SIF applied an advance payment mechanism that helped projects continue moving forward without delays. However, in some provinces, the funding disbursement schedule posed some challenges, causing cash flow issues, which affected some smaller institutions.
- PSI-SIF's actual operation costs were in line with the program plan. The program's ability to leverage other human resource capacity during peak operation times enabled efficient use of the operational budget.
- The medium and long-term outcomes of the program were not systematically assessed as the program was still running during the evaluation and limited outcome data was available. However, reported anecdotal evidence shows that PSI-SIF improved funded institutions' research and training capacity, enabled the recruitment of more students and allowed collaboration and synergies for networking with stakeholders and knowledge users. The program also improved the environmental sustainability of some institutions' buildings; hence, they were certified through the Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED).

LESSONS LEARNED

1. For any similar future programs, ISED's early consultation with the provinces and infrastructure experts during the program's design phase would mitigate implementation challenges.
2. Making the reporting requirements commensurate with the projects' risk level and streamlining federal and provincial/territorial reporting requirements would decrease reporting burden.
3. Planning and communicating the extension of infrastructure projects to funded institutions earlier would help reduce uncertainty and related financial burden on the institutions.

DESCRIPTION

- *PSI-SIF is a time-limited three-year program, launched in 2016–17 that aimed to generate direct economic activities, enhance the research and training infrastructure at post-secondary institutions and improve their environmental sustainability.*
- *It is funded by the federal government, provincial and territorial governments, post-secondary institutions and other profit and non-profit organizations.*
- *Through ISED, the Government of Canada contributed \$2 billion to PSI-SIF between 2016–17 and 2018-19.*