ISED Departmental Evaluation Plan
2025-26 to 2029-30

Audit and Evaluation Branch

June 2025

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Deputy Head Confirmation Note

Note to the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat:

I approve the Departmental Evaluation Plan for Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada (ISED) for fiscal years 2025-26 to 2029-30, which I submit to the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat as required by the Treasury Board *Policy on Results*.

I confirm that this Departmental Evaluation Plan:

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

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

Philip Jennings
Deputy Minister
Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada

Departmental Context

Government and Departmental Priorities

The Department will continue working with the ISED Portfolio and other federal partners to bolster Canadian innovation by fostering competitive, sustainable and inclusive economic growth. ISED's efforts focus on improving conditions for investment, supporting science, helping small and medium-sized businesses grow, building capacity for clean and sustainable technologies and processes, increasing Canada's share of global trade, promoting tourism, and building an efficient and competitive marketplace. ISED will support these efforts by continuing to work with partners on the following areas:

ISED 2025-26 Departmental Plan

- Drive Canada's economic competitiveness through investments in critical and emerging industries, strengthening domestic industries and enabling global leadership.
- Support the development of Canada's artificial intelligence (AI) infrastructure while promoting AI safety.
- Accelerate Canada's transition to a net-zero economy, while building a resilient workforce with digital skills entrepreneurship support and work-integrated learning.
- Strengthen Canada's leadership in advanced research and innovation with a focus on health, climate resilience and digital industries.
- Expand broadband access to underserved communities in rural and remote regions, working towards Canada's target of connecting 100% of Canadians to high-speed Internet by 2030.
- Promote equity, diversity and inclusion by supporting underrepresented entrepreneurs, advancing STEM opportunities, and fostering inclusive economic participation.
- Reinforce Canada's international and regional relations and promote trade and investment, including through key initiatives during Canada's G7 presidency in 2025.
- Coordinate support for Canadian tourism as a key driver of economic growth for small and medium-sized enterprises, particularly in rural and remote areas.

Role of Evaluation and Governance

The evaluation function at ISED contributes to corporate reporting exercises such as the Departmental Plan and Departmental Results Report; informs decisions around program resources, improvements and renewal by conducting objective, evidence-based assessments of departmental program spending; and supports Treasury Board submissions and Memoranda to Cabinet.

The **Senior Management Committee** (SMC) is the advisory body to oversee ISED's performance measurement and evaluation function. The Deputy Minister is ultimately responsible for the approval of evaluations.

The **Head of Evaluation** (also the Director General of Audit and Evaluation Branch) is responsible for the evaluation function and reports directly to the Deputy Minister.

The **Director of Evaluation** supports the Head of Evaluation by leading the evaluation function.

2024-25 Completed Evaluations

Summary and Findings

The Evaluation Directorate conducted **four** ISED-led evaluations in 2024-25 with one approved and **three** to be approved in summer 2025. ISED also supported **one** horizontal evaluation led by ESDC. Two of the four ISED-evaluations were sunsetting programs resulting in lessons learned in place of recommendations.

Traditional Evaluations

1. Canada Digital Adoption Program (CDAP) Streams 1 & 2
2. Women Entrepreneurship Strategy (WES) - Initiatives delivered by Regional Development Agencies (RDAs)
3. Canada Foundation for Innovation (CFI)

Thematic Evaluations

1. Universal Broadband Fund (UBF)

Horizontal Evaluations

1. Digital Skills for Youth - led by ESDC as part of Youth Employment Strategy evaluation

100% of the evaluations included findings or recommendations related to **GBA Plus and EDI.**

21 Lessons Learned **2** Recommendations **1** Best Practice

Finding Highlights

Clear roles and responsibilities among program partners during program design promote better coordination and more efficient use of resources, leading to greater consistency of program delivery.

Tailored programming to meet the diverse needs of equity-deserving groups and regions across Canada enhances service quality and reach across the country.

The adoption of a digital and automated processes integrated into program design facilitates more effective and efficient program delivery, minimizes the administrative burden, is associated to a better client experience and enables real-time data monitoring and tracking.

Regional partners/representation supports increased access and more flexible program delivery to better address regional needs.

Departmental Evaluation Plan 2025-26 to 2029-30

The Departmental Evaluation Plan (DEP) is an information and management tool that reflects the results of ISED's annual evaluation planning exercise. The *Policy on Results* requires that Deputy Heads annually approve a five-year DEP and submit it to the Treasury Board Secretariat (TBS). The DEP also provides opportunities to support the Deputy Head to ensure that information on the Department's programs is available to inform policy and program development and decision-making. It includes **100% coverage** of all evaluations required under the *Financial Administration Act* and in TB submissions.

ISED's Audit and Evaluation Branch (AEB) implements the following approach to its annual evaluation planning exercise to determine its overall evaluation coverage of departmental spending:

1 Gathering Information on the Evaluation Universe

The universe of all possible programs and spending areas that could be considered for evaluation over the next five fiscal years is gathered from the Departmental Results Framework (DRF) and Program Inventory to determine evaluation coverage. The evaluation universe considers all departmental spending.

2 Identifying All Mandatory and Discretionary Evaluations

Mandatory evaluations are identified in accordance with the evaluation requirements in the *Policy on Results*. Risk factors such as departmental priorities, program materiality, the information needs of stakeholders, and optimal timing of evaluations are also considered in annual evaluation planning.

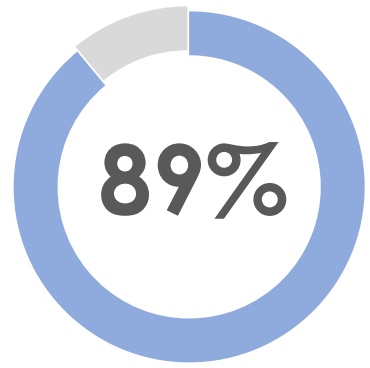
3 Conduct Annual Departmental Consultations

Consultations are held at the Director General level to discuss needs, timing, and innovative approaches such as thematic evaluations as well as with sector heads to validate risks, priorities, and the planned evaluations. The Internal Audit Directorate is also consulted to assess overall program coverage.

Five-Year Evaluation Plan

The Directorate has **25** program evaluations planned from 2025-26 to 2029-30 across the **3** Departmental Core Responsibilities. The full five-year evaluation schedule can be found in Appendix A and coverage relative to the DRF can be found in Appendix B.

The five-year evaluation schedule includes **20** mandatory evaluations to satisfy requirements in the *Financial Administration Act (FAA)* or Treasury Board (TB) submissions and **5** discretionary evaluations that are exempt from evaluation requirements of the *Policy on Results.* Of the **25** evaluations planned from 2025-26 to 2029-30, departmental consultations identified **2** thematic evaluations incorporating either a clustering of programs approach or targeted approach that focuses on key program areas.



of ISED's total planned spending is covered in the evaluations planned from 2025-26 to 2029-30.

Planned Evaluations for 2025-26

3 evaluations and 2 Evaluability assessments to determine scope are planned for 2025-26. These include:

Traditional evaluations

3

- Pan-Canadian Artificial Intelligence Strategy 2.0 (continued from 2024-25)
- Global Innovation Clusters
- Small Business and Entrepreneurship Support Initiatives*

  *May include:
  - Small Business Entrepreneurship Development Program
  - Women Entrepreneurship Strategy
  - 2SLGBT+ Entrepreneurship Program

Evaluability assessments

2

- Global Innovation Clusters
- Strategic Innovation Fund

Collaborations

Engagements with Regional Development Agencies and other Government Departments on horizontal evaluations will continue. The Directorate will maintain engagements with ISED's Corporate Management Sector, the Innovation and Policy Integration group on performance measurement and the Chief Data Office on common goals and initiatives.

MRAPs

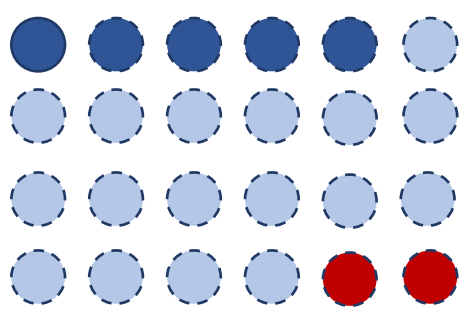
AEB will continue to follow up on Management Response and Action Plans (MRAPs) to ensure that evaluation recommendations have been closed by their planned due date.

Status of MRAP recommendations issued in 2024-25 (as of March 31, 2025):

5 Recommendation closed in 2024-25.

17 Open recommendations going into 2025-26 are on schedule.

2 Open recommendations are late/extended.



The Evaluation Directorate will continue its progress on the following actions in 2025-26:

Neutral Assessment Recommendations: The evaluation function undergoes a **neutral assessment every five years** and to Deputy Heads in monitoring the implementation of evaluation requirements in the *Policy on Results.* The externally led assessment was completed in March 2024. AEB has completed 4 of the 5 recommendations, with one in progress.

1) Peer review 2) preliminary findings and 3) sharing best practices and lessons learned has been incorporated into Evaluation project Plans; 4) broader strategic questions were examined during the DEP consultation process and will become an ongoing part of the process.

Data Visualization: Evaluation reports and summaries continue to leverage data visualization techniques to improve understanding and readability. The Evaluation Directorate has developed a style guide which ensures consistency and supports new team members. The guide has been presented at the Canadian Evaluation Society and shared with other departments.

Evaluability assessments and consultations: The Directorate will continue to engage with Programs and Sectors to inform the evaluability of the Strategic Innovation Fund, the Global Innovation Clusters, and the Strategic Science Fund, which have incorporated many formerly evaluated programs into a broader initiative. This will identify evaluation readiness, potential approach, data availability and determine resource needs.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) assisted evaluation: Evaluations will continue to explore, where appropriate, increased use of AI to support the planning and conduct of evaluations to facilitate evaluation efficiency.

Appendix A: Five-Year Evaluation Schedule

Year		Evaluation	Mandatory (FAA or TB Submission)	Discretionary (program-requested)	Horizontal evaluation
2025-26	1	Canada Foundation for Innovation (continued from 2024-25)	X		
	2	Pan-Canadian Artificial Intelligence Strategy 2.0 (continued from 2024-25)	X		
	3	Small Business and Entrepreneurship Support Initiatives*	X		
	4	Global Innovation Clusters	X		
2026-27	5	Canada Biomedical Research Fund and Biosciences Research Infrastructure Fund - led by ISED	X		X
	6	Strategic Innovation Fund	X		
	7	Cyber Security Innovation Network	X		
	8	Upskilling for Industry (UII)	X		
2027-28	9	Computers for Schools Program (**Thematic evaluation with #10 and #11)**		X	
	10	Computer for Schools Intern Program	X		
	11	Connecting Families Initiative		X	
	12	Strategic Science Fund	X		
	13	Digital Enforcement and Intelligence Branch		X	
	14	Canadian Consumer Protection Initiative (CCPI)	X		
	15	NextStar Energy	X		
2028-29	16	Futurpreneur	X		
	17	Horizon Europe		X	
	18	CANARIE (**Thematic evaluation with #19)**	X		
	19	Digital Research Infrastructure Strategy	X		
	20	Artificial Intelligence Compute		X	
	21	Health Emergency Readiness Canada (HERC)	X		
2029-30	22	Black Entrepreneurship Program (BEP)	X		
	23	Canadian Artificial Intelligence Safety Institute (CAISI)	X		
	24	Digital Skills for Youth (component of the Youth Employment & Skills Strategy) – ESDC Lead	X		X
	25	Universal Broadband Fund	X		

*The Small Business and Entrepreneurship Support Initiatives Evaluation may include:

- Small Business Entrepreneurship Development Program
- Women Entrepreneurship Strategy
- 2SLGBT+ Entrepreneurship Program

Appendix B: Evaluation Coverage by Departmental Results Framework Core Responsibilities

People, Skills and Communities

Support for Underrepresented Entrepreneurs

- Small Business and Entrepreneurship Support Initiatives (2025-26)
- Futurpreneur (2028-29)
- Black Entrepreneurship Program (2029-30)

Bridging Digital Divides

- Computers for Schools Program (2027-28)
- Connecting Families Initiative (2027-28)
- Universal Broadband Fund (2029-30)

Companies, Investment and Growth

Business Innovation

- Cybersecurity Innovation Network (2026-27)
- Strategic Innovation Fund (2026-27)
- Global Innovation Clusters Initiative (2026-27)
- Upskilling for Industry (2026-27)
- NextStar Energy (2027-28)
- Health Emergency Readiness Canada (2028-29)

Talent Development

- Computers for Schools Intern Program (2027-28)
- Strategic Science Fund*(2027-28)
- Digital Skills for Youth (2029-30)

Competition Law Enforcement and Promotion

- Competition Bureau: Digital Enforcement and Intelligence Branch (2027-28)

Marketplace Protection and Promotion

- Canadian Consumer Protection Initiative (2027-28)

Science, Technology, Research and Commercialization

Science and Research

- Canada Foundation for Innovation (2025-26)
- Pan-Canadian Artificial Intelligence Strategy 2.0 (2025-26)
- Canada Biomedical Research Fund and Biosciences Research Infrastructure Fund (2026-27)
- Strategic Science Fund* (2027-28)
- CANARIE (2028-29)
- Digital Research Infrastructure Strategy (2028-29)
- Horizon Europe (2028-29)
- Artificial Intelligence Compute (2028-29)
- Canadian Artificial Intelligence Safety Institute (2029-30)

*The Strategic Science Fund contains elements in both Science and Research and Talent Development Programs