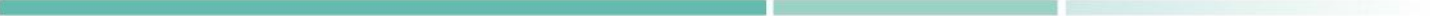




Audit of Passport Service Delivery



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1. Background

1.1. Context

A Canadian passport allows travel abroad and return to Canada. First-time applicants must prove citizenship, show photo ID, and provide a guarantor and references. Renewing a passport is simpler and usually does not require these documents again.

The program is overseen by Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada (IRCC), with services delivered by Service Canada at locations across the country.

In 2024–25, about 4.9 million passports were issued, up 11% from the previous year. As of 1 April 2026, adult passports cost \$122.50 for five years or \$163.50 for ten years, and child passports cost \$58.50. Extra fees apply for faster service. The program aims to process 90% of applications on time. If it takes more than 30 business days, applicants receive a full refund.

1.2. Audit Objective

The objective of this audit was to provide assurance on whether key controls were in place to support effective, efficient and accurate passport service delivery.

1.3. Scope

The audit reviewed how the Department managed passport services. It focused on controls used in 2025–2026 and used data from 2022–2025. It did not include incomplete Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) or IRCC modernization work, including the online application pilot. It also excluded scope areas covered in the Audit of ESDC Passport Revolving Fund Cost Recovery.

1.4. Methodology

The audit used the following methodologies:

- Documentation review and analysis
- Data analysis
- Process walkthroughs
- Observation of live client interactions
- Interviews with management and staff

2. Audit Findings

2.1. Redacted

Redacted

Recommendation

1. [Redacted]

Management Response

[Redacted]

2.2. Workload management practices have improved with the implementation of new organizational structures, tools and processes

Effective workload management helps the Program match application volume with its capacity. This supports the service standard target of processing 90% of applications on time and reduces applicant refunds. The Passport Program handled 3.5 to 5 million applications over the past four years and met service targets in two of those years. To improve results, the Program changed its approach. In March 2025, workload management moved to a national headquarters branch instead of regional offices. A national inventory tool launched in January 2026 to assign files and balance workloads. Early results were not yet available at the time of the audit, but the design should support effective workload management if it is used as intended. When service standards are not met, clients are to be reimbursed fees.

The program met service standards 91% of the time in 2025–26, 81% in 2024–25, and 90% in 2023–24. The transition to a mature, centralized workload management approach is expected to optimize passport processing across the network, resulting in improved compliance with service standard targets and reduced refunds.

2.3. Weaknesses in the Quality Assurance Program have limited its effectiveness in providing assurance over passport processing quality

The Service Delivery Agreement (SDA) outlines that ESDC operates the Quality Assurance Program (QAP) on behalf of IRCC for domestic passport service delivery. The QAP checks a sample of applications in real time. It helps confirm decisions are correct and training is applied properly. Some parts of the process may limit how well it works. Managers know which files are selected for QA in advance of assignment to a program officer and can choose who receives them. Passport Officers also know in advance when their file was selected for QA. This can affect how work is assigned and reduce reliability of the results. Quality results are tracked and shared with management. The National Quality Team reports results to IRCC every quarter. Corrective action is required if yearly quality results fall below 90%. IRCC recently changed how results are to be reported. Previously, ESDC reported how many steps were done correctly. In February 2026, IRCC required reporting on how many applications were fully error-free. While this change may lower reported quality rates, it gives a clearer picture of performance.

Recommendation

2. In collaboration with IRCC, Service Canada should enhance the Quality Assurance Program to improve its effectiveness and better enable continuous improvement.

Management Response

There is agreement that the QAP can be improved for effectiveness.

2.4. Quality indicators for passport intake and processing accuracy have been declining, demonstrating the need to strengthen continuous improvement efforts.

Several quality tools help track passport intake, processing, and printing. Many errors are fixed, but results show opportunities for process improvement. The Intake Quality Assurance Program (IQAP) that assesses adherence to procedures within the In-Person service channel began in June 2025, includes no performance target. Early results showed that only 41% of reviewed applications were error-free. Its value is limited given mail-in files are not included. Processing quality is measured through the QAP. The results fell below the 90% target in 2023-24 and in 2025-26, showing key steps are sometimes missed. After printing, every passport is reviewed by an agent. Errors require reprinting, which adds time and cost. While final passport quality is above 99%, fixing mistakes late creates extra work. There is no full review of all quality indicator results to find root causes or propose solutions beyond training updates. In addition, neither officer errors found through the QAP nor spoil statistics are shared with team leaders or managers, which limits targeted improvement.

Recommendation

3. Service Canada should strengthen and formalize the approach to continuous improvement by leveraging the various available performance results to analyze trends, determine root causes and identify remediation opportunities to minimize recurring errors.

Management Response

There is agreement that the Passport Program could formalize the approach to Continuous Improvement. The 2026-27 Financial Agreement with IRCC outlines the development of a Joint Continuous Improvement Action Plan that sets a shared, structured roadmap to drive measurable productivity gains and advance ongoing efficiency initiatives. This Joint Continuous Improvement Action Plan will strengthen operational oversight and support the long-term sustainability of the Passport Program, with progress and jointly identified priorities revisited on an annual basis.

2.5. ESDC has established a Business Continuity Plan for passport services that meets policy requirements

Business Continuity Management helps keep passport services running during disruptions. Plans and impact analyses are in place and updated regularly. Emergency exercises have occurred and follow-up actions were recorded. Formal testing of the BCP by the Program did not

occur during the audit period. Instead, the Program used lessons from real disruptions to reduce service delivery risk. For example, ESDC worked with IRCC to implement procedures to reduce the risk of system outages stopping service. Applications can still be received during outages, and a backup system supports urgent cases. Under the SDA, IRCC leads the Program-level continuity plan in collaboration with ESDC. Service delivery has stayed strong during recent events, but regular updates and testing would improve readiness for future disruptions.

3. Conclusion

While key controls are in place to support effective, efficient, and accurate passport service delivery, enhancements to REDACTED, quality assurance and the approach to continuous improvement would further strengthen the Passport Program.

4. Statement of conformance

This internal audit engagement was conducted in conformance with the Institute of Internal Auditors’ Global Internal Audit Standards and the Treasury Board Secretariat’s Policy and Directive on Internal Audit and is supported by the results of our Quality Assurance and Improvement Program.

Appendix A: Audit Criteria Assessment

Audit Criteria	Rating
REDACTED	REDACTED
It is expected that the Department monitors and oversees passport workload to support timely passport service delivery.	Sufficiently controlled; low-risk exposure
It is expected that the Department analyzes passport errors, feedback, internal data, and other sources of insight, and leverages the information to improve processes, procedures and the client experience.	Controlled, but should be strengthened; medium-risk exposure
It is expected that a program level business continuity plan for passport services is in place that meets all policy requirements, is up to date, and is regularly tested to help maintain timely service delivery or quickly restore it in the event of disruptions outside of ESDC’s control.	Sufficiently controlled; low-risk exposure