Global Skills Opportunity
Expérience Compétences Mondiales

Global Skills Opportunity:
2021-2022 Annual Report

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Global Skills Opportunity (GSO), Canada's outbound student mobility pilot program, achieved significant milestones in the 2021-2022 fiscal year and is well-positioned to achieve its intended outcomes. By the end of March 2022, GSO had selected and signed agreements with 65 study/work abroad projects at Canadian universities. The first cohort of students participated in virtual mobility experiences in December 2021, while physical mobility experiences began in March 2022, once COVID-19-related travel restrictions were lifted. Monitoring and evaluation tools were developed, tested and implemented with Canada's universities and students. The program's name was selected and launched publicly, alongside social media pages and a website. Strategic discussions with potential partners were initiated. Learnings from innovation projects were shared within the post-secondary sector, publicly, as well as with the program funder.

These achievements occurred despite the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic that continued to disrupt program implementation and test Canadians' resiliency and agility. The launch of funding for mobility programming coincided with the emergence of the Delta variant and vaccine rollout across Canada. Projects gained momentum in the fall of 2021, only to be halted by the Omicron variant with travel restrictions in place from mid-December to end of February 2022. Russia's invasion of Ukraine at the end of February 2022 further threatened global stability and the future of international mobility.

This annual report details activities from April 1, 2021 to March 31, 2022. The report offers an overview of the program, discusses program operations, reveals results to date, imparts insights from universities, shares student success stories, and presents linkages and contributions to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). The report closes with a brief look ahead to the upcoming year.

2.0 PROGRAM OVERVIEW

The 2019 federal budget made a commitment to support Canada's new International Education Strategy with an investment of $95 million over five years, starting in 2019-2020, to provide international study/work opportunities for Canadian students through a new outbound student mobility pilot program, Global Skills Opportunity. As part of this strategy, Universities Canada and Colleges and Institutes Canada (CICan) were selected by the Government of Canada to design and administer the pilot program. Funded through Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC), this investment will provide thousands of post-secondary students with opportunities to study and work overseas, strengthening their global competencies and enriching Canada's economic prosperity.

GSO was originally intended to launch in April 2020. Due to COVID-19, the program pivoted to launch a call for proposals to Canadian universities for innovative outbound student mobility projects that reduce barriers to mobility. This upfront investment permitted Canada's universities to test new tools and approaches, adapt mobility programming to a COVID-19 environment, start achieving results towards the program objectives and build the foundation for the launch of the full program.

As the 2021-2022 fiscal year approached, conditions looked favourable to launch the larger RFP for mobility projects of up to four years in duration. Universities Canada advanced the implementation with an emphasis on a flexible and agile program design that could respond to the ongoing dynamic global environment, while prioritizing student safety. This phased implementation approach allowed Universities Canada to build key takeaways from innovation projects, such as virtual mobility, into the implementation of the larger program.

2.1 Program objectives and targets

GSO seeks to provide Canadian post-secondary students with international study/work experiences to obtain the skills and training needed to participate in a changing labour market. The overarching objective of the program is to increase the number of Canadian students studying and working internationally. Specific program objectives and their respective targets are outlined below.

Specific objectives	Program targets
1. **Widen access and equity to participation in outbound student mobility programming**	50% of student funding is to provide study/work abroad opportunities to target student groups (low-income students, students with disabilities and Indigenous students). The program aims to address inequality and representation in outbound student mobility through inclusive policy and practices.
2. **Diversify the destination countries where students choose to study/work abroad**	40% of funding is to prioritize activity in non-traditional countries (i.e. countries other than the U.S., UK, France and Australia).
3. **Test innovative approaches to reduce barriers to study/work abroad**	10% of funding is to be used to support innovative approaches to reduce barriers to outbound student mobility in Canada.

2.2 Program approach

The program is administered through a unique partnership with the Government of Canada, Universities Canada, CICan and Canadian post-secondary institutions. The program follows a decentralized project-based design where funds flow from the Government of Canada to Universities Canada and CICan who distribute the funds to successful Canadian institutions to support students.

The project-based design allows institutions to design and implement multi-year study/work abroad activity that is adapted at the institutional level to their unique needs, student groups, partners and areas of focus. Multi-year projects support universities to develop longer term relationships with

partners, allow program administers to allocate appropriate resources for staffing, promotion and recruitment, wraparound supports and services, and others, as well as raise the profile of the program on campus and to the general public.

3.0 OPERATIONS

3.1 Program implementation

Program implementation progressed significantly throughout 2021-2022 as we emerged from the pandemic. Universities Canada was pleased to close the 2020 innovation projects and launch funding for multi-year mobility projects. Activities related to both are detailed below.

3.1.1 Innovation projects

Universities submitted the final reports for their 2020 innovation projects on March 31, 2021. Universities Canada analyzed results of the 61 projects, following up as needed and noting key considerations. Final disbursements were processed and a final report was written, summarizing program results, lessons learned and success stories. The report and key findings were circulated with stakeholders including ESDC, program partners, university project leads and the advisory group. The report can be found on the univcan.ca website.

Innovation projects offered a unique opportunity for institutions to develop new study/work abroad tools and resources, as well as gather insights and learnings to strengthen mobility programming at the institutional level. A tool inventory was created to capture and share outputs from university innovation projects. The learnings and outcomes from the innovation projects continue to play an integral role in program implementation.

3.1.2 Mobility project request for proposals

On May 5, 2021, Universities Canada launched a request for proposals (RFP) for Canada's universities to submit multi-year project-based proposals that support study/work abroad activity. Proposals could include both virtual and physical mobility, with physical mobility serving as a mandatory component of every application. Activities to support the implementation of the mobility RFP are as follows:

Program launch
Universities Canada reviewed lessons learned from past and current mobility programs, incorporated input from advisory group members and considered strategies to integrate them into the design and implementation of GSO. The team designed the program application form, budget form and guidelines; collaborated with CICan to ensure alignment on key pieces; and liaised with ESDC on program parameters. Universities Canada developed the RFP documents into an online application management system and published the RFP on our website to launch the competition.

Request for proposals

The RFP was open to applications for seven weeks. Throughout the RFP period, Universities Canada responded to more than 110 questions from universities and published weekly FAQs in both French and English to our website. A webinar was held to give an overview of the RFP and answer questions. Over 185 university representatives attended the session from 76 member institutions (80% of Universities Canada's membership).

By the close of the RFP on June 30, 2021, Universities Canada received 92 proposals from 68 universities, including three consortium applications, with strong representation from across Canada, as well as diversity of size and type of institution. Fifty-six proposals included a virtual component, with all applications including a strong focus on low-income students, students with disabilities and Indigenous students.

Selection process

In August 2021, Universities Canada convened a 21-person selection committee comprised of members with a range of expertise and experience, including professionals specializing in global security, accessibility and diversity communities, indigenous global leadership, mobility wraparound services, international education, international development and scholarship management. The committee reviewed and scored the applications over a period of two weeks and then met virtually over three days to discuss and provide recommendations for funding based on merit. At the end of the selection process, 65 proposals from 56 universities were selected to receive funding. Successful institutions signed contribution agreements and completed initial financial and narrative workplans, that triggered initial project disbursements.

Onboarding successful projects

In October 2021, Universities Canada held a virtual kick-off event for successful GSO project leads. The one-hour session covered the program objectives, communication guidelines and monitoring tools, while also introducing the GSO team. Following the session, project leads received a handbook that detailed program parameters, policies, and procedures, as well as the communications toolkit. Universities Canada also convened individual meetings with all 65 project leads to discuss project-specific questions and build relationships with assigned program officers.

3.2 Program management

Over the past year, Universities Canada advanced program governance, monitoring and evaluation, communications, partnership and knowledge sharing. Activities for each are detailed below.

3.2.1 Program governance

- *Advisory group*: Universities Canada, in collaboration with CICan, convenes an advisory group composed of 16 education and business leaders across Canada. The group provides high-level strategic advice and guidance on the program design and implementation. Last year, three advisory group meetings were held virtually. Excellent recommendations on aspects of the program resulted from these discussions, which are being implemented by the GSO team.

- *Program management committee:* Representatives from ESDC, Universities Canada and CICan meet on a biweekly basis to discuss key issues related to the program design and implementation as well as consider areas of collaboration to enhance program delivery at the national level. The committee met on a biweekly basis throughout 2021-2022.

- *UC-CICan GSO team:* The GSO teams at both Universities Canada and CICan meet on a biweekly basis to collaborate on joint initiatives, ensure alignment on activities, and share insights and learnings to strengthen program management approaches. The team met on a biweekly basis throughout 2021-2022.

3.2.2   Monitoring & evaluation

Nine monitoring and evaluation tools were developed to capture program results, ensure activity is aligned with program criteria, and orient universities and students to program policies and processes. These tools are instrumental to the success of the program and assessing results to date.

- *Contribution agreement:* Universities Canada created an agreement template to sign with successful projects to clarify funding requirements, reporting schedule and other program parameters. Universities Canada signed 65 contribution agreements, one with each project.

- *Initial narrative and financial workplan:* Upon signing the contribution agreement, universities submitted an initial narrative and financial workplan that detailed activities for the upcoming year and triggered the initial disbursement.

- *Student pre-departure form and post-experience report:* Students are required to submit a pre- and post-experience report to Universities Canada as part of receiving GSO funding. These tools capture demographic information, study/work abroad experiences, motivations for participation and skill evaluations. Universities Canada monitors submissions on a regular basis to monitor activity and analyze program results to date.

- *University narrative report:* Submitted annually, universities report on completed activities, project partners, project impact, marketing and recruitment activities, knowledge sharing activities and others.

- *University financial report:* Universities report actual and forecasted financials on a biannual basis. Universities Canada reviews the reports, follows up as needed and, once approved, disburses funds to institutions to advance project activities.

- *Portal guide*: All the program M&E tools are submitted via Universities Canada's portal. A portal guide was developed to help universities navigate these new tools.

- *University handbook:* A handbook was created and circulated with universities to familiarize them with GSO policies, procedures and funding criteria.

3.2.3   Communications

- *Program name:* In early 2021, GSO conducted extensive research on possible names for the program in consultation with 420+ post-secondary students via surveys and focus groups, particularly with those identify as low-income students, students with disabilities and Indigenous students. In April 2021, Universities Canada, in conjunction with CICan, was pleased to announce the program name: Global Skills Opportunity/Expérience compétences mondiales. The name brings to the forefront the skills gained through these experiences while conveying a sense of growth, possibility and adventure.

- *Program brand & toolkit:* Once the name was finalized, a full brand was developed including logos, colours, typography, iconography, fonts and taglines in both official languages. A toolkit was prepared and shared with institutions to use for their own project promotion, recruitment efforts and communication materials. This included nine tools: a comprehensive brand guideline, social media shareables, short promotional video clips, templates (press release, PowerPoint, posters, etc.), key messages, stock photography, the GSO logo, design elements and the Canada wordmark.

- *Publications:*
    - Universities Canada wrote [13 articles about university innovation projects](#) detailing key takeaways, highlights and learnings.
    - [An op-ed jointly written by Universities Canada president, Paul Davidson and CICan president, Denise Amyot](#) was published in the *Ottawa Citizen* in November 2021, emphasizing the importance of international experiences for Canada.
    - In collaboration with the Rick Hansen Foundation, an [op-ed was penned by Mr. Hansen](#) about the importance of providing students with disabilities access to international work and study experiences. The *Vancouver Sun* published the piece in March 2022 and several Postmedia newspapers reshared it to their sites.
    - Forty-nine articles about the program were published in community, campus, national and international publications. Of those, eight were in French. There were also more than 14 news releases published by participating post-secondary institutions and one radio segment that aired on CBC. All articles can be found in the [GSO News Centre](#).

- *Website:* Universities Canada, in collaboration with CICan, designed and built a public website for GSO. The site provides information about the program, the benefits of global study and work for Canada and Canadians, as well as a searchable database of all the projects that received funding through the program, including from the Innovation Fund.

- *Public launch:* The program publicly launched on November 3, 2021, which included the launch of the GSO [website](#) and social media pages ([Twitter](#), [LinkedIn](#) and [Facebook)](#). A [press release](#) was issued to media outlets across Canada, and to foreign journalists and news sites dedicated to international education. The public launch was timed for early November as the global context was more receptive to the announcement of a new study/work abroad program.

- *Program overview:* A [two-page information sheet](#) was produced to give an overview of the program, including projected outcomes and key statistics. Intended as a leave-behind for meetings, events and outreach, the document is available on the univcan.ca and GSO websites.

- *Newsletter*: In March, we launched our inaugural GSO quarterly newsletter, *Global Horizons*. [The first edition](#) was sent to 420 recipients – primarily contacts at Canadian universities, colleges and CÉGEPs.

3.2.4   Partnerships

Strong partnerships are key to the success and potential permanency of the program. GSO seeks to gain partners that enrich the student experience, raise awareness of the program across sectors, and build support for more sustainable funding beyond 2025. The past year was dedicated to establishing the strategic direction of the partnership file to guide outreach. Activities were advanced in close collaboration with CICan and include:

- Refining the partnership development strategy and framework
- Surveying the 65 projects to understand partnership needs and gaps related to study/work abroad
- Building a partner triage mechanism on the GSO website for organizations interested in partnering with Canada's universities; in 2021-2022 over 10 organizations indicated an interest in partnering with GSO universities
- Developing a partnership package with background information on the program to share with interested parties
- Creating a partnership page on the GSO website to highlight the benefits of a GSO partnership and how they can contribute to the program's success
- Building relationships with the private sector; nine meetings were held with private sector companies to discuss partnership possibilities
- Strengthening relationships with government representatives; three meetings were held with Trade Commissioners in Latin America, more than 10 meetings were held with embassies expressing interest in the program
- Identified synergies and areas of collaboration with non-profit organizations; meetings were held with Canadian Bureau for International Education (CBIE), Canada World Youth, International Association for the Exchange of Students (IAESTE), International Experience Canada, Youth Challenge International, World Food Program, National Education Association of Disabled Students (NEADS) and Mitacs.

3.2.5   Knowledge sharing

All institutions that receive funding through GSO are required to participate in knowledge-sharing activities to build the capacity of Canadian post-secondary institutions to implement quality and inclusive outbound mobility programming. Knowledge sharing activities were conducted at the local, national and international levels.

- *Local level*: Universities participated in more than 1,251 knowledge sharing activities (353 webinars/online forums, 569 informal discussions, 187 teleconferences, 60 conferences and 82 other activities). Institutions created and shared over 100 products to impart learnings from their GSO project (52 reports, 25 case studies, 28 other products).

- *National level*: Universities Canada shared a list serve of GSO university leads amongst funded projects to build connections across projects. In collaboration with CICan, Universities Canada also partnered with the CBIE to collaborate on a learning series for project leads. As of March 31, 2022, GSO had co-hosted three 90-minute webinars with 414 participants from colleges, universities, international institutions, associations and school boards.

- *International*: Universities Canada participated in the Asia Pacific Association for International Education (APAIE) conference to promote the program to potential partners and collect partnership leads on behalf of GSO implementing institutions. Universities Canada also met with more than 20 stakeholders from embassies, high commissions, organizations and university presidents on the program.

Canada's universities are eager for more opportunities for dialogue on GSO. Universities Canada continues to bolster our knowledge sharing efforts. The "GSO Champions ECM" LinkedIn group was created to facilitate conversations between project leads across Canada.

3.3 Challenges

This past year, GSO achieved key program milestones, but it was not without challenges and lesson learned.

Travel advisories
All GSO projects are required to adhere to the Government of Canada's travel advisories. The advisory urged Canadians to "avoid all travel" since the onset of COVID in 2020. Projects navigated this uncertainty through the proposal writing process and initial onboarding. On October 21st, 2021, the advisory was reduced, allowing institutions to resume international travel. Institutions and students prepared to travel abroad for January 2022. On December 15, 2021 the Omicron variant forced another lockdown and the travel advisory returned to "avoid all travel." The advisory was reduced again on February 28, 2022 to allow travel.

The sudden halt of activity in December 2021 impacted GSO results for this year, and challenged institutions' resiliency and adaptability to change. As travel reopened in March 2022, institutions and students were apprehensive to move forward with international travel. Projects are confident to still achieve program results; Universities Canada anticipates numbers to grow exponentially over the coming year.

Actions taken:
- The maximum for virtual mobility was increased from $25,000 to $75,000 to allow programming to continue during peak COVID periods
- Institutions were given the opportunity to claim any sunk costs that they incurred due to the cancellation of physical mobility in December 2021 (ex. Costs of flights that could not be reimbursed, etc.)
- GSO cohosted a webinar with GAC to update project leads on travel advisory processes and consular services

Geopolitical context

In early 2022, Russia invaded Ukraine and captured the world's attention. Though students had not travelled yet due to the COVID-related travel advisories, it was clear this would still impact GSO planned projects. Five GSO projects had listed Ukraine as a potential destination, one listed Russia and many others had listed surrounding countries who had been impacted by the conflict.

Action taken:
- GSO allows universities to make changes to destination countries and partners in response to geopolitical, COVID-related or other project implementation challenges as needed and in communication with Universities Canada
- Project leads who listed Ukraine or Russia as a potential destination were contacted to see how they planned to pivot their projects. Most had several other destination countries listed in their proposal, making it easy for them to adapt.

Contract issues

Since October 2019, Universities Canada has signed five contracts and/or major amendments with ESDC to administer GSO. The multiple agreements are largely due to COVID-19 impacting the program timeline (the original launch was to be in April 2020) and includes reprofiling funds from 2020-2021 to later program years. Though this is an important process, it can be quite slow to be approved and has created confusion around budget amounts, contracting processes and program timelines. At times, the lengthy decision-making timelines have made it difficult for the program to advance its mandate.

New financial reporting system

A new financial reporting system was designed and implemented for GSO to increase efficiencies in the review, approval and disbursement cycle. This was quite a feat for our information management team as the platform was designed from scratch. Many of our project leads have experience working on other Universities Canada run programs like the Queen Elizabeth Scholarships program and were expecting a similar approach to financial management. It took significant time for GSO staff and project leads to learn and adjust to the new system.

Actions taken:
- Universities Canada connected individually with projects to orient them to the system
- Training resources will be developed and shared in the coming year

Changes to personnel at Universities Canada

In preparation for the launch of the funding for mobility projects, the GSO team expanded in the spring of 2021 to include a business and partnerships development officer, a second program officer, a new financial analyst and a new team manager. Onboarding new staff took substantial time and impacted team effectiveness, particularly at this important time in the GSO program.

Heavy upfront activities

Over the last year, GSO developed many program tools including an institutional contribution agreement template, four project reporting templates, two participant surveys, a program handbook, a GSO portal and an accompanying instruction manual. This is a key step in starting the program off on the right foot, but resulted in an intense period of content development. We're now in a great place to continue to improve these tools and focus on effectively using the data we're collecting.

3.4 Lessons learned

Virtual selection committee
Prior to COVID-19, all selection committees at Universities Canada were conducted in person. An in-person meeting was not possible for the 2021 RFP; the team piloted a virtual selection committee instead. This was also the first time Universities Canada convened a selection committee of this magnitude; the committee was composed of 21 members from six different times zone and lasted over three half days (see section 2.1 for more details). The selection committee was a great success and was significantly less expensive than in-person. We will continue to use virtual selection committees when possible.

Collaboration with CICan
Universities Canada and CICan work closely on the design and implementation of GSO. While each association administers the program to our respective memberships, there are key files that overlap and are managed together (i.e. program advisory group, public communications, partnership development, etc.). This requires frequent communication and collaboration to ensure alignment and avoid duplication of effort. The larger team meets monthly to collaborate, find efficiencies and share learnings to implement a strong, high-quality study/work abroad program.

Frequent communication with key stakeholders
Throughout the constant changes to travel advisories and other COVID-related issues, it was pivotal to communicate clearly and frequently to project leads, ESDC and other key stakeholders. Emails are sent on a regular basis to project leads with program updates. Institutions have open lines of communication with their project officer. Bi-weekly meetings are held with ESDC and CICan to provide program updates, ask key questions and share any concerns.

4.0 PROGRAM RESULTS

Emerging results give promising signs that the program will achieve its intended objectives. Participation this past year was lower than anticipated due to COVID-related travel restrictions. The low participation impacts results as many projects delayed program implementation to the next fiscal year. Key highlights for 2021-2022 are summarized below, followed by detailed progress for each immediate outcome.

Key highlights:

1. Enhanced skills acquisition with 100% of participants indicating an increase in soft or technical skills
2. More inclusive international programming with 84% of participants identifying as a low-income student, student with a disability or as an Indigenous student

3. Increased diversification of destinations with 76% of students studying/working abroad with a country other than Australia, UK, U.S. or France
4. Increased capacity of institutions to provide innovative and accessible international programming to students, with more than 60% attributing the increase to GSO funding.
5. Improved cooperation within the post-secondary education sector with 100% of GSO universities participating in knowledge sharing activities
6. Enhanced program reach and visibility through new communications tools, practices and newly formed private sector partnerships

Immediate outcome 1110: Increased access and equity to participation of Canadian post-secondary students (particularly target student groups) in international study/work opportunities as part of their academic program, especially in non-traditional countries.

Indicator	Progress for April 1, 2021 – March 31, 2022
Number and annual percentage change of participants in pilot	**63 students** (53 virtual, 10 physical)
Annual percentage change of the number participants who identify as belonging to target groups (i.e., low-income, Indigenous, students with disabilities)	**84%** identify as one of the target groups: • low-income students (54%) • Indigenous students (30%) • students with a disability (15%)
Percentage of participants who report that they could not otherwise afford to participate in an outbound mobility experience without the pilot	**68%** (65% female, 30% male, 5% prefer not to say)
Percentage of participants who are satisfied with activities supported by the pilot (disaggregated by target group and gender)	**93%** (45% identify as low-income, 27% identify as Indigenous, 9% identify with a disability) (85% female, 15% male)
Number and annual percentage change of student experiences in countries other than Australia, France, the U.K. and the U.S.	**48 students (76%)** (77% female, 19% male, 2% prefer not to say)

Early results demonstrate strong uptake in the program from underrepresented students (84%) with 54% of participants identifying as low-income students, 15% as students with a disability and 30% as an Indigenous student. GSO tracks intersectionality; 17 of the 63 students identify with more than one of these categories. Most students (68%) noted that GSO funding was essential to participate in study/work abroad, with almost all students (93%) satisfied with the program.

Students appreciated the opportunity to collaborate on international projects with students from a variety of backgrounds, connect with peers all around the world and immerse themselves in different cultures. Projects have adhered to the program objective of diversifying destinations; the vast majority (76%) of students participated in projects with 25 non-traditional countries. The top three destinations were Argentina, Germany and Fiji.

University activities to achieve this outcome include:

- Simplifying application process to remove barriers for students
- Surveying existing partners to determine what supports they offer, their accessibility standards and best practices; publish findings on website for students to identify which opportunities best suit their needs
- Maintaining a flexible project design to accommodate differing needs (i.e. including virtual mobility, short-term experiences, group experiences, etc.), reduce barriers to participation and ease anxieties around travel
- Creating and/or updating pre-departure and post-experience content in collaboration with equity and inclusion offices to ensure material is accessible and reflective for all students
- Conducting a needs assessment to understand student needs and barriers
- Including opportunities for professors or elders to accompany students to help students feel more supported, particularly those who have not traveled before

Immediate Outcome 1120: Increased knowledge of intercultural competencies, professional networking skills

Indicator	Progress for April 1, 2021 – March 31, 2022
Percentage of participants who feel the experience significantly enriched their post-secondary learning	**77%**
Percentage of participants that report making professional connections with a colleague or peer in a foreign country (e.g., global networks)	**69%**
Percentage of participants reporting acquisition of portable and transferable skills (e.g., improvement of intercultural competencies, critical thinking, adaptability) and type of skills developed	**100%**
Percentage of participants who report feeling more prepared for the labour market as a result of mobility experience	**23%** (57% identify as low-income; 14% identify as Indigenous; 14% identify as student with a disability) (75% female 25% male)
Percentage of participants who are interested in pursuing an internationally focused career as a result of the mobility experience	**16%** (45% identify as low-income, 36% identify as Indigenous, 9% identify as a student with a disability) (85% female, 15% male)
Percentage of participants who, upon graduation, plan to continue their advanced studies as a result of their mobility experience	**8%**

Percentage of participants reporting improved knowledge of global issues	71%
Percentage of participants who report feeling more interested in pursuing international mobility experiences	62% (63% identify as low-income, 13% identify as Indigenous and 13% identify as a student with a disability) (75% female, 25% male)

Overall, 77% of participants reported that GSO had a positive impact on their post-secondary learning experience. All participants (100%) reported an increase in their communication skills and self-confidence, with nearly all (93%) indicating strengthened critical thinking, adaptability and intercultural skills. Most participants (69%) made professional connections with colleagues or peers during their study/work abroad experience; of these, 56% identify as low-income students and 22% as Indigenous students (75% female; 25% male).

Students reflected that these connections would help secure meaningful professional references, integrate new ways of thinking into their work and strengthen their career prospects. Virtual participants were grateful for the opportunity to work with professionals in other countries, particularly while travel was not possible. Students increased their time management as they learned to work from home with minimal supervision. As a York University student shared *"Working with international colleagues who live in different time zones, whose primary languages are different than mine has been an eye-opening experience. It has exposed me to different communication approaches and strengthened my problem-solving skills."*

University activities to achieve this outcome include:

- Incorporating opportunities for reflection before, during and after the GSO experience to deepen the learning process
- Offering cultural sensitivity training and equity, diversity and inclusion training for students to mitigate intercultural challenges and encourage students to check their biases and question notions of privilege
- Mapping pre-departure content and other wraparound supports to the student's journey to ensure information is delivered at the appropriate time instead of in one session up front
- Collaborating with co-op office to educate students on the linkage between study/work abroad and increased employability
- Offering workshops on key topics including international networking skills and how to speak to employers about study/work abroad experiences
- Hosting networking events for students to build connections and exchange information

Immediate Outcome 1210: Strengthened capacity of Canadian post-secondary institutions to test innovative and accessible opportunities and supports for students to participate in study/work abroad opportunities.

Indicator	Progress for April 1, 2021 – March 31, 2022
Number of new documents and tools developed/tested to promote outbound mobility and improve quality of programming	**193**
Percentage of university administrators who agree that funded projects have strengthened capacity to deliver international mobility programming	**62%**

To date, 62% of participating institutions reported that GSO funding has strengthened institutional capacity to deliver international programming. Some institutions successfully recruited more students than anticipated.

Western University reported: *"We recruited more post-secondary students than anticipated. Our target was three per category, per year. We exceeded the target to low-income (8) and students with disabilities (4) but were under the target for Indigenous students. We have also learned what is required to further build capacity, especially for Indigenous students."*

Other institutions delayed activity due to COVID-19, reflecting that while participation advanced slower than expected, universities are now better equipped to effectively recruit and support low-income students, students with disabilities and Indigenous students.

For instance, OCAD University shared: *"Through this initiative, we have built a centralized model for support for all international programming at the institution, which has allowed for a more informed effort in program assessment, support and promotion. We have also mandated that all of our courses developed out of this initiative must directly connect to the themes of diversity, decolonization or sustainability. We are also working closely with other offices to help target to those students including the Indigenous student centre, financial aid and student accessibility services."*

To help improve program implementation, 193 new tools, documents and practices were developed to improve program implementation. Some examples include:
- Revamped wraparound supports with an accessibility and inclusion lens
- Redesigned recruitment material with the objective of ensuring students see themselves in the program material and messaging
- Revised risk management tools, policies and practices to ensure student safety remains top priority
- New processes and practices that integrate collaboration across campus
- Incorporated learnings and outcomes from innovation projects
- Equity, diversity and inclusion training for staff to ensure the team has the expertise needed to effectively deliver the program
- Documentation of program principles, best practices and communication standards for specific student groups

Immediate Outcome 1220: Improved collaboration, information sharing and reporting on outbound mobility experiences across Canadian post-secondary institutions to improve the delivery of outbound mobility programming.

Indicator	Progress for April 1, 2021 – March 31, 2022
Number and percentage of Canadian post-secondary institutions that participate in knowledge sharing activities	**100%**
Number of program-delivery partnerships established in Canada and abroad, including in non-traditional countries	**633**

All universities administering GSO projects are required to participate in knowledge sharing activities to disclose insights and learnings, and strengthen the capacity of outbound mobility programming in Canada. Activities included:

- Participating in more than 1,251 knowledge sharing activities (353 webinars/online forums, 569 informal discussions, 187 teleconferences, 60 conferences and 82 other activities)
- Connecting with other GSO project leads via the listserve circulated by Universities Canada
- Engaging in GSO knowledge sharing sessions
- Co-creating projects with partners, collaborating and consulting with key stakeholders
- Collaborating with partner departments (ie accessibility office, Indigenous student centres, co-op offices, etc.) on program design and implementation

Partner institutions in Canada and abroad are instrumental to the creating a quality, successful program. To date, GSO projects are partnered with 49 partners in Canada and 584 partners abroad, including universities, private sector companies, non-profit organizations and local governments. For example, some of the partners working with The University of British Columbia on its project *Forest Livelihood International* in Ecuador are: Universidad San Francisco de Quito, Arauco (a global manufacturer of forest products) and La Hesperia Cloud Forest Reserve in Ecuador. University of Windsor partners with Community of Seaford Towne (Jamaica), Kititimo Center for Orphaned and Vulnerable Children (Tanzania) and Lertlah School Division (Thailand).

Output 1111: Participants receive grants to study/work abroad, including in non-traditional countries.

- 52 participants in the underrepresented student category
- $142,045 provided for underrepresented students
- 63 participants; type of experience: 21 work abroad, 16 study abroad, 10 both, 16 other with 53 virtual and 10 physical experiences
- Six long-term (17+ weeks), 30 medium term (5-16 weeks), 23 short term (-4 weeks), four unsure
- 48 participants with an experience in a non-traditional country (ie a country other than the U.K., France, Australia or the U.S.)

- 25 countries engaged in the program
- $144,500 provided to pilot participants to go to countries other than the U.K., France, Australia or the U.S.

Output 1121: Participants receive pre- and post-departure briefings and supports, including international networking skills training, safety briefings and tailored wraparound supports for students in target groups.

- All students are to receive pre- and post-departure supports, including safety briefings
- All students who identify as part of our target groups are to receive wraparound supports
- $334,595 provided for non-financial supports to participants (pre- and post-departure supports, wraparound supports, project administration, etc.)
- 92 project proposals received
- $472,507 is the average funding amount to be transferred to a post-secondary institution for the duration of 2021 mobility projects

Output 1221: Key results, impacts, implementing strategies, best practices and lessons learned documented and shared across the Canadian post-secondary sector.

- 103 outbound mobility experience-sharing knowledge products produced
- Three (3) outbound mobility experience-sharing events held by Universities Canada, with 414 participants

5.0 LEARNINGS FROM UNIVERSITIES

Institutions have many key takeaways from the first year of program implementation. Sample best practices and lessons learned from Canada's universities are as follows:

Cross-campus collaboration
Incorporate partner offices at institutions in program design and implementation (i.e. co-op office, student services, accessibility office, experiential learning office, Indigenous student services, wellness services, financial aid office, etc.). This approach strengthens program delivery, raisies awareness of GSO opportunities across campus and better supports underrepresented students before, during and after their GSO experience. Some projects created advisory committees with partner offices to ensure a wholistic program design and execution.

"Working with our partner offices on campus to develop not just wraparound supports, but to think about program design from the start. This has been especially important regarding accessibility best practices for international mobility programs, as well as for creating culturally safe field school courses for Indigenous students." – Concordia University

Recruitment and promotion
Engage student ambassadors with previous mobility experience to authentically communicate the value and benefits of study/work abroad, emphasizing the need for the spokesperson to be reflective

of the target student groups. Universities also recommended regular and consistent communication on mobility opportunities, more time for recruitment and student selection, and engaging faculty to reach specific student groups.

"We learned to recruit students better if we target specific academic departments, clubs and societies, or other groups with goals in common with our project." – St. Thomas University

Inclusive programming
Ensure the program staff, material and messaging is reflective of the intended participants; it is important for students to see themselves in all promotional material, wraparound support content, risk management practices, etc. Many projects leaned on the expertise of other departments as this is a new element to mobility for most universities. Projects also engaged in training to increase self-awareness of unconscious bias and strengthen inclusion practices.

« Avant de procéder à l'affichage des bourses et à la préparation des questions posées aux candidats, nous avons échangé avec des collègues ressources en EDI, des collègues du Centre d'aide aux étudiants et la représentante du Cercle des Premiers Peuples pour valider que nos initiatives et nos manières de communiquer étaient respectueuses et optimales pour rejoindre nos publics cibles. » – Université Laval

Project management
Ensure the university team is equipped with adequate staff and necessary expertise. Some institutions invested in training, such as EDI and risk-management training, and a few added new staff to their team. Others stressed the importance of accurately assessing resources on hand to develop a clear and realistic understanding of the project's timeline. Universities also emphasized the value of cocreating and implementing the project with local and/or international partners to ensure project is driven by community interests and priorities; meaningful engagement takes time to implement and build relationships.

"We know that having strong partners that share common values toward equity, diversity, and inclusion, a commitment to global citizenship, and a high level of engagement in experiential learning and transformative educational practices, is the key ingredient for success. We have learned that establishing strong faculty pairs who agree on a common vision and approach; ensuring necessary faculty COIL (Collaborative Online International Learning) training; having regular and open communication; and providing strong wraparound supports for both students and faculty are some of the key elements for a successful COIL Collaboration." – Capilano University

6.0 HIGHLIGHTS AND SUCCESS STORIES

Student success stories

"Participating in the virtual internship has been extremely valuable; [It was] definitely one of the most rewarding experiences of my professional career. The knowledge, experiences and connections I have gained will remain professionally and personally close to my heart. As a low-income student, I am grateful for the support I have received from GSO"
– Student participant in Carleton University's International Student Mobility – Enhancement and Expansion Project, Nepal.

"Through my internship in Costa Rica, I practiced language skills, increased my knowledge of global health and politics, and built strong professional contacts that may open doors in the future. Since completing my internship, I have been actively looking to return to work in Costa Rica to continue working in my field. I feel much more prepared to enter the workforce after GSO, I learned valuable skills and it helped solidify my career path."
 – Student participant in St. Thomas University's International Experiential Learning Program, Costa Rica.

"I had the opportunity to engage with social justice issues and learn about the SDGs, which I did not previously have experience in or awareness of in the past. This helped with future-forward thinking and problem-solving skills."
– Student participant in York University's Go Global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Action Student Challenge, Sri Lanka.

 "Through my GSO experience, I developed cultural awareness and international learning skills for the first time. I look forward to applying these skills in my career. This also showed me the importance of taking the time to learn about the country and culture prior to travelling."
– Student participant in Algoma University's Global Learning and Leadership Skills Development Program, Fiji.

6.1 Project highlights

"Many of the students who are participating in the upcoming International Field Course for Indigenous and Black Student Global Leaders have never traveled abroad and may not have had a chance to if not for this project. Notably, six participants are single mothers, many of whom are being supported throughout [the process]: getting passports for the first time and organizing necessary childcare during their trip. These are all substantial challenges to overcome, but [the experiences] are made possible with the support of this project."
– Dalhousie University, International Field Courses for Indigenous and Black Student Global Leaders

"The planning and development of our Sweden Field School, entitled, 'Conversations with the Sami on Revitalizing Indigenous Lands and Cultures' has been a wonderful exercise in bringing Indigenous faculty and staff together to create a new experiential learning opportunity. The program has connected Guelph to a new partner in the Sami community in Sweden. The program will visit both urban and rural Sami people and will be accompanied by the Special Advisor to the President on Indigenous Initiatives, as well as two Indigenous faculty from Guelph University and a Sami Professor from the University of Uppsala."
– University of Guelph, Inclusive International Summer Field Schools

"Although we were unable to send students abroad for the Global WorkAbilities program, we still brought the overall project forward. Marketing efforts had to be shifted online, with campuses closed. We invested time and resources to network with many different internal colleagues, including senior leadership, to promote the GSO program funding. We also built great relationships with our colleagues in ADR (Access and Disability Resources), who will support students with disabilities in their programs abroad. We received great buy-in and support and are confident that the students will have the best possible help."
- MacEwan University, Global WorkAbilities: Gaining intercultural work competencies across disability barriers

"Perhaps the greatest outcome of the project thus far has been the newfound working relationships and connections made between student advisors, mobility coordinators and student support offices. The founding of the steering committee and various working groups has seen the bringing together of people and experts from all of Memorial's campuses in a way like never before. This collaboration and bridge-building has built a solid ground upon which the intended activities of our project will grow in future quarters."
– Memorial University of Newfoundland, Minding the GAP: Increasing International Travel Equity and Access for Canadian Students

7.0 SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPMENT GOALS

Broadly speaking, universities are instrumental in the successful achievement of all 17 Sustainable Development Goals and play a key role in implementing the SDG framework. All 65 GSO university projects explicitly and implicitly contribute to the global goals. The skills, knowledge and expertise gained from international learning experiences empower and mobilize the next generation to implement solutions to global challenges.

GSO university leaders and student participants are key champions in advancing the SDGs at the local, national and global levels. International mobility experiences equip students with global competencies, leadership, problem solving and adaptability: skills necessary to be agents for meaningful change. Study/work abroad programs offer experiential learning opportunities that transform students' worldviews and deepen their understanding of the complex, interconnected nature of local and global issues.

A key component of the SDG framework is to 'leave no one behind.' GSO contributes to this objective by offering international learning opportunities to students who are traditionally unable to participate in such programs, specifically low-income students, students with disabilities and Indigenous students. Reducing barriers and enriching post-secondary experiences for underrepresented students is key to advancing the reconciliation process with Indigenous communities, closing the gap between socioeconomic divides, and helping create a more inclusive and prosperous Canada.

GSO projects and the SDGs
The following is a sample of GSO projects that advance the SDGS:

York University: Go Global Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Action Student Challenge
This project empowers York students and their peers around the world to take action to achieve the SDGs with a global lens. Through facilitated discussions, workshops and immersive abroad opportunities, York University students develop global competencies, leadership, digital fluency and project management skills necessary to take action on SDGs. GSO students will learn and experience the opportunities and challenges in leading community action for social change.

University of Waterloo: Powering Change: Innovating Accessible International Work-Integrated Learning (iWIL) with Focus on Intercultural Competencies and the UN's Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) in Post-Pandemic Environments
Well-prepared students are powerful change agents, both locally and globally. From 2021-2025, through lenses of intercultural effectiveness competency development and advancing the SDGs, students who are Indigenous, have disability needs or traditionally face financial barriers will undertake more than 65 transformational international work-integrated learning (iWIL) experiences via established and new international partner social enterprises, private companies and not-for-

profits located in more than 20 non-traditional destinations. In keeping with Waterloo University's strategic plan, Powering Change enables future-ready talent realize their fullest potential through rich iWIL experiences and outcomes of innovative programming will be shared with the larger community.

University of Alberta: Abroad Together: Advancing UN SDGs through international experience
International learning provides a valuable opportunity for students to learn about the SDGs, contextualize them as shared global challenges and appreciate the creative approaches communities in different countries are taking to address these challenges. Students return with new ideas that can be implemented locally or with increased commitment to engage in these important topics. This project offers education abroad opportunities for low-income students with experiences ranging from one week to a full academic year.

8.0 CONCLUSION / NEXT STEPS

GSO grew tremendously over the 2021-2022 year, despite the pandemic and global instability. Funding for multi-year mobility projects was launched; projects were assessed, selected and implemented. Governance structures were strengthened, and tools and resources to monitor and evaluate program results were implemented. The program name, website, social media, newsletter and communications strategy were launched. The partnership development strategy was implemented and learnings continue to be shared across the post-secondary sector to build capacity of mobility programming in Canada.

Emerging results demonstrate the program is off to a promising start to achieve its objectives. Most student participants (84%) identify as a low-income student, student with a disability or an Indigenous student, with 76% participating in a GSO experience with a non-traditional country. Institutions report an increase in capacity to produce accessible international learning opportunities with 62% of universities attributing this achievement to GSO funding.

Universities Canada is excited for the upcoming year. Participation numbers are expected to grow exponentially. Program management activities will advance beyond the foundational phase to deepen analysis of progress results, enhance knowledge-sharing opportunities, build a community of GSO alumni, onboard partners to enhance program implementation, feature student success stories and more. Universities Canada launched another RFP in September 2022 for mobility and innovation projects to offer additional international learning opportunities to Canadian university students.

In 2022-2023, as the program nears the mid-point, we will start considering activities that drive program renewal. As a pilot program, it is important to demonstrate results early on to create a permanent study/work abroad program in Canada. We look forward to continuing to collaborate with the federal government, universities, colleges, students, advisory group members, CICan and other stakeholders as we move efforts towards a more sustainable program. Support across all levels will be instrumental in securing a permanent study/work abroad program in Canada, equipping the next generation with the skills needed in today's workplace and helping strengthen Canada's economic prosperity.