**Setting the Case for an Evaluation Framework
for Innovative Human Resources Initiatives in the Federal Public Service**

**Une démarche d’élaboration d’un cadre d’évaluation des initiatives innovantes en ressources humaines dans la fonction publique fédérale**

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**Summary**: This policy paper provides a guide on the genesis of an evaluation framework for innovative human resources (HR) initiatives found within the Government of Canada (GC) and shares recommendations on the path forward. Background research was undertaken to set the context and affirm the rationale for developing and implementing such a framework. During Winter 2020, consultations were undertaken with various stakeholders, including program managers and human resources experts, and key findings and observations from those sessions informed the concluding recommendations.

**Résumé :** Ce document de politique vise à fournirun guideà la genèse d’un cadre d’évaluation des initiatives innovantes en ressources humaines (HR) au sein du gouvernement du Canada et à partager des recommandations sur la voie à suivre. Des recherches ont été effectuées afin d’établir le contexte et les raisons pour élaborer et mettre en œuvre un cadre. Pendant l’hiver 2020, des consultations ont été menées auprès de divers intervenants, y compris des gestionnaires de programme et des experts en ressources humaines, et les observations clés ont informé les recommandations du présent document.

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6. **Context**

This policy paper provides a guide to the development of a horizontal evaluation framework for innovative human resources (HR) initiatives in the federal public sector. The impetus behind this framework is the fact that becoming an employer of choice requires not only requires exploring new ways of recruiting and mobilizing talent, but also benefitting from lessons learned through current initiatives to inform strategic decisions.

In a world where competition for talent is growing, skills are increasingly specialized, and workers are looking for more choice and flexibility in their work, the public sector must explore innovative ways to remain an employer of choice. Compared to the private sector, the federal government ranks highly when it comes to working conditions, job stability and job diversity. However, the high standards of transparency and fairness render recruitment processes cumbersome[[6]](#footnote-6) and lengthy.

These challenges have spawned a number of innovative HR initiatives within the Canadian federal government, designed by different departments and agencies, to recruit targeted candidates to fulfill specific needs using a more agile staffing process. In 2018, the first cohort of GC Entrepreneurs (GCE) undertook a preliminary analysis of 16 of these initiatives[[7]](#footnote-7) that range from well-known initiatives (e.g. Free Agents), more recent ones (e.g. Impact Canada Fellowship), emerging platforms (e.g. Talent Cloud), recruitment initiatives (e.g. Recruitment of Policy Leaders) to external recruitment initiatives (e.g. Federal Student Work Experience Program).



Source: Avelar P. L. (2019) [Innovative Staffing](https://medium.com/gc-entrepreneur/innovative-staffing-eb541920e18a)

 **Figure 1**. Mapping the diversity of innovative HR initiatives in the federal public service.

Preliminary [analysis by the first cohort of GCEs](https://medium.com/gc-entrepreneur/innovative-staffing-eb541920e18a) revealed that the initiatives are not systematically evaluated to determine whether or not they have achieved their respective objectives. Moreover, the risks of competition between them as well as their potential for synergies have not been assessed.

In this context, the [Deputy Ministers Task Force on Public Sector Innovation](https://www.canada.ca/en/innovation-hub/services/task-force.html), in collaboration with the Office of the Chief Human Resources Officer (OCHRO), mandated the second cohort of GCEs to develop a framework for evaluating innovative HR initiatives in the federal public sector. This evaluation framework would guide federal departments and agencies in assessing the effectiveness, efficiency and relevance of their initiatives, thereby informing strategic decision-making, such as providing additional resources, scaling up, or combining existing initiatives.

The remainder of the paper will take a more in-depth look into the different aspects and considerations for the evaluation framework and is structured as follows:

* Section 2 outlines key considerations regarding the scope of an evaluation, the challenges posed by the diversity of initiatives to be assessed, and the strategic implications of implementing a horizontal assessment framework.
* Section 3 describes the proposed evaluation framework, which focuses on four questions related to the relevance, efficiency and effectiveness of each HR initiative. As the HR initiatives in question have significant differences in purpose and function, this diversity necessitates a framework with sufficient commonality in its indicators metrics, and measurement methods to provide consistency and comparability, but, at the same time, enable enough flexibility to customize the evaluation process to each initiative’s context.
* Section 4 summarizes lessons learned from the experimental application of the proposed evaluation framework to five different innovative HR initiatives, keeping in mind variations in administrative data compilation, monitoring the needs behind the initiative, and defining targeted results.
* Section 5 concludes with recommendations for a horizontal evaluation approach to be implemented for initiatives across the GC. These recommendations aim to add value to strategic decision-making for deputy heads, initiative managers, human resources experts, and program participants.
1. **Key Considerations**

The development of an evaluation framework for innovative HR initiatives in the public sector must take into account the following three key considerations:

1) The scope of a horizontal evaluation approach

2) The challenges related to the diverse nature of the targeted initiatives

3) The strategic implications for HR departments, deputy heads and initiative managers

* 1. **An evaluation approach has a scope and purpose defined by stakeholders**

The evaluation of a program is intended to answer key questions related to its efficiency, effectiveness and relevance. In an innovation context, engaging in an evaluation process to address these questions is demanding for managers, given that the design and implementation of any innovative initiative already poses a considerable workload.

However, when the scope and purpose of the evaluation are well-defined by stakeholders within a framework tailored to their context, the evaluation provides strategic information that supports the administration of the initiative, and effectively, the work of the program managers, in addition to revealing future development opportunities for other HR initiatives. As shown in Figure 2, an engaging evaluation can provide stakeholders with: (a) a better understanding of the strengths to build on and the weaknesses on which each initiative can work (e.g. potential for improvement); (b) evidence to support the need for additional resources or to scale it up, if applicable (e.g. relevance, conformity and potential for scaling); (c) comparable data to leverage synergy opportunities (e.g. mobility and movement); and (d) examples of best practices to replicate and awareness of hardships that can be avoided for future initiatives.

**Figure 2.** Stakeholder interests in evaluating innovative HR initiatives

* 1. **The diversity of innovative HR initiatives** **poses an evaluation challenge that** **is surmountable**

Innovative HR initiatives vary from one department to another and do not all have the same objectives. This diversity of initiatives requires the development of a flexible evaluation framework with common guidelines coupled with indicators tailored to their respective context. These initiatives are guided by a common intention illustrated in Figure 3.

**Figure 3.** Common theory of change for innovative HR initiatives

* 1. **Conducting an evaluation of innovative initiatives comes with benefits and risks for relevant stakeholders**

A well-performing public sector needs an agile staffing system to take advantage of external and internal talent. A greater ability to customize staffing based on unique needs and circumstances allows departments and agencies to establish different HR initiatives to meet current and emerging needs. At the same time, the multiplicity of initiatives risks the duplication of effort and failing to optimize employee skills. Thus, it is important to understand where the impact is greatest in order to invest accordingly.

Moreover, since innovation implies the absence of precedents, evaluation of innovative initiatives takes place in a context that lacks historical comparison. As such, considerable resources are needed to increase data collection and establish preliminary baselines on which future initiatives can be based. Figure 4 outlines advantages and disadvantages of adopting an evaluation framework for innovative HR initiatives.

**With an evaluation**

**Without evaluation**

**Figure 4.** Benefits and risks with and without assessment

1. **Horizontal Evaluation Framework for Innovative HR Initiatives**
	1. **An approach based on some *Design Thinking* Principles**

To develop a horizontal evaluation framework that adequately considered the diversity of innovative HR initiatives currently in place, we adopted an approach based on some *Design* *Thinking* principles. Our first step involved reviewing the preliminary work of the previous GCE[[8]](#footnote-8) cohort to **better understand the challenges** associated with measuring the performance of innovative initiatives and their contribution to government objectives.

We then consulted various stakeholders, including program managers, HR specialists and managers, to better **define** the guiding principles of an evaluation framework that could be applied to all the initiatives while respecting their unique features.

Next, we created a **first draft** of our evaluation framework by formulating questions designed to uncover the initiatives’ relevance, efficiency and effectiveness. We then identified 5 HR initiatives[[9]](#footnote-9) deemed representative of the spectrum of diversity amongst all initiatives and researched these initiatives further to assess whether or not the evaluation questions were sufficiently applicable.

Finally, we **tested** the framework further by setting up consultations with the respective initiative managers of the five initiatives to get their feedback on the value and clarity of the evaluation questions.

These steps, illustrated in Figure 5, led to the evaluation framework proposed in this policy paper.

Test the framework on selected initiatives to refine and improve the framework.

Draft an evaluation framework to test evaluation questions and indicators.

Brainstorm potential framework select questions and develop indicators.

Clearly articulate the problem to be solved.

Develop an understanding of the innovative HR initiatives evaluation challenge.



**Figure 5.** Steps in the development of the evaluation framework for innovative HR initiatives

* 1. **An evaluation framework focused on analyzing** **the relevance,** **effectiveness and efficiency of initiatives**

Based on what we have read, heard and tested, the evaluation framework we propose covers three dimensions (as illustrated in Figure 3):

1. The relevance of the initiative that examines the extent to which the initiative's strategic and operational objectives are logically related to an up-to-date analysis of public sector needs and alignment with government objectives.
2. The effectiveness (and impact) of the initiative, which examines the extent to which the expected results were achieved.
3. The efficiency of the initiative, which examines the extent to which the results of the initiative were achieved compared to resources required to operate the initiative.

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**Figure 3.** Dimensions assessed as part of the evaluation

* 1. **Relevance**

*Question 1. What organizational need does the initiative address?*

As illustrated in Table 1, answering this question involves analyzing the extent to which the official description of the initiative and the challenges it addresses continue to be aligned with the needs of the employer, government priorities (Table 1, Section 1.1), as well as job seekers (Table 1, Section 1.2). This analysis uses cross-referenced information from four sources: (i) official information about the initiative (e.g., presentations or approval document, publicly available information, cabinet brief, etc.); (ii) diagnostic data (e.g., recruitment data, retention rate, results of the [Public Service Employee Survey](https://www.canada.ca/en/treasury-board-secretariat/services/innovation/public-service-employee-survey/2018/2018-public-service-employee-survey-questionnaire.html) (PSES) with regards to Mobility); (iii) framework documents (e.g., policies, strategic plans) and (iv) interviews with program managers & participants.

*Question 2. What difference the initiative is making compared to the typical process or method used or other similar initiatives?*

To answer this question, the concepts of similarity vs. difference (Table 1, Section 2.1) and complementarity vs. overlap (Table 1, Section 2.2.) will serve as a framework for the analysis. On one hand, outreach, administration, onboarding and placement activities will be examined from the perspective of similarity/difference to the regular HR process*.* The results of this assessment will allow for mutual learning among the initiatives managers through best practices sharing. On the other hand, the groups targeted by the initiative (e.g., internal vs. external candidates) and the recruitment methods used (e.g. social media) will be examined from the perspective of complementarity/overlap with other existing initiatives. The results of this aspect of the evaluation will guide potential collaborations between program managers and decisions to be made to promote complementarity or create better synergy. The necessary analyses use cross-referencing information from three sources: (i) administrative data from initiatives and the regular HR process*;* (ii) interviews with program managers and (iii) interviews with HR experts.

**Table 1.** Questions, Issues, and Indicators for Relevance Assessment

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Evaluation questions and sub-questions** | **Indicators** | **Documentation-based and/or data-based evidence** | **Interview-based and/or survey-based evidence** |
| **RELEVANCE TO PUBLIC SERVICE NEEDS** | **1. What organizational need does the initiative address?** |
| **1.1. Alignment of the HR initiative’s purpose with the needs of the organization and the government** |
| 1.1.1. How are the changing recruitment needs addressed by this initiative?  | [I1]. Correspondence between the challenges targeted by the initiative (or its value proposition) and the changing recruitment needs of the organization.  | **X** |  |
| 1.1.2. Is there a clear link between government priorities and this initiative as evidenced in government documents? | [I2]. Correspondence between the description of the initiative as defined in official documents and current government priorities.  | **X** |  |
| 1.1.3. Has the initiative evolved with the changing needs of the Public Service? If so, how? | [I3]. Correspondence between the evolution of the initiative and the evolution of the recruitment needs of the organization according to the initiative's manager.  |  | **X** |
| **1.2. Alignment of the HR vehicle’s purpose with the needs of participants / target groups** |
| 1.2.1. Why do participants choose this initiative?  | [I4]. Correspondence between the value proposition of the initiative and the results of job seeker satisfaction surveys (internal and external). | **X** |  |
| 1.2.2. To what extent are their expectations fulfilled? | [I5]. Correspondence between the value proposition of the initiative and the PSES results regarding employee mobility and retention. | **X** | **X** |
| 1.2.3. What specific needs of participants are met by participating? | [I6]. Correspondence between the value proposition of the initiative and the opinion of the participants / former participants regarding fulfilment of their needs.  |  | **X** |
| **2. What difference the initiative is making compared to the typical process or method used or other similar initiatives?** |
| **2.1. Comparison with typical process or approach on elements such as outreach, administration, onboarding and placement** |
| 2.1.1. Why was this initiative implemented in this way? What advantages does this initiative have over the typical process or approach? | [I7]. Similarities and differences between the initiative and the regular staffing process with respect to dissemination and administration of the initiative and the integration and placement of participants. | **X** |  |
| 2.1.2. What types of participants are commonly attracted to this initiative and why? | [I8]. Similarities and differences between initiatives and the types of participants that are attracted. | **X** |  |
| 2.1.3. What other aspects of the initiative are pertinent to demonstrate its value-added? | [I9]. Additional information on other features of the initiative according to the initiative’s manager. |  | **X** |
| **2.2. Comparison with similar HR initiatives on elements such as outreach, administration, onboarding and placement** |
| 2.2.1. Are there existing HR initiatives within the Public Service that have similar goals? If so, how does this initiative meet a unique need? | [I10]. Similarities and differences between the goals of this initiative and other comparable initiatives. | **X** |  |
| 2.2.2. Does this initiative overlap with other existing initiatives? If so, does this overlap have negative effects? Are there sound reasons for the overlap?  | [I11]. Opinion of the initiative’s manager on the pros and cons of duplication or overlap with other initiatives, if any. |  | **X** |
| 2.2.3. Do you see potential for collaboration with other initiatives? Could there be an opportunity to expand this initiative or to replicate it elsewhere? | [I12]. Opinion of the initiative’s manager on the complementarity (or competition) between initiatives with comparable objectives. |  | **X** |

* 1. **Effectiveness & Impact**

Table 2 presents the framework for analyzing the effectiveness (and impact) of the initiative evaluated. This assessment is focused on the following question: To what extent did the HR initiative meet its goals?

**Table 2.** Questions, Issues, and Indicators for Efficiency Assessment

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Evaluation questions and sub-questions** | **Indicators** | **Documentation-based and/or data-based evidence** | **Interview-based and/or survey-based evidence** |
| **EFFECTIVENESS IN MEETING GOALS** | **3. To what extent did the HR initiative meet its goals?** |
| **3.1. Performance of the HR initiative relative to its intended outputs (e.g. aims/targets of the HR vehicle where available)** |
| 3.1.1. How effectively did the initiative meet its goals as measured by qualitative and quantitative evidence? | [I13] Performance gap between results and targets, including:* + Attractiveness of job opportunities
	+ Number or percentage of targeted and qualified candidates
	+ Deadlines for processing applications
	+ Number of steps for the recruiter
	+ Number of steps for the employee
 | **X** |  |
| 3.1.2. Do the Public Service Employee Survey results show positive results due to this initiative? | [I14]. Evolution of PSES results regarding retention of employees for internal initiatives. | **X** | **X** |
| 3.1.3. Is there any other pertinent information that speaks to how effectively the initiative met its stated purpose? | [I15]. Additional information on other features of the initiative according to the initiative’s manager. |  | **X** |
| 3.1.4. To what extent did the initiative provide the right fit for participants?  | [I16]. Opinion of participants on their position and the fit, in relation to the technical work and the work environment. |  | **X** |
| **3.2. Performance of the HR initiative relative to mobility and movement outcomes** |
| 3.2.1. How were candidates empowered to build skills and develop their career? Are there any aspects of the initiative that inhibited participants from developing professionally?  | [I17]. Evolution of the number of participants of the initiative.[I18]. Evolution of the number of employee movements within the host department or employee turnover rate.[I19]. Timeframe or number of steps between submission of application and receipt of an offer.[I20]. Time or number of steps to be functional after receiving an offer.[I21]. Survey results of participants (and former participants) on the satisfaction of their professional development needs.[I22]. Evolution of PSES results regarding motives for employee movement. | **X** |  |
| 3.2.2. Did participants believe they were able to develop professionally through lateral moves designed to develop specific skills or through obtaining positions of greater responsibility? | [I23]. Opinion of participants on their mobility (to fill a position that meets their aspirations) and on challenges. |  | **X** |
| 3.2.3. What is the opinion of program managers on participant professional development?  | [I24]. Opinion of program managers on (intended and non-intended) movements and related challenges. |  | **X** |

As shown in Table 2, the extent to which the initiative's targets (when initially specified) have been met (Table 2, Section 3.1), the degree of employee mobility, and the strategic nature of the movement of staff within the public service (Table 2, Section 3.2) are examined. The corresponding analyses cross-reference the following four sources of information: (i) administrative data from initiatives on outcome targets and achieved outcomes; (ii) conventional process administrative data as a reference; (iii) interviews with initiative officials and (iv) interviews with participants/former participants of the initiative.

Performance results of the initiatives against their initial targets will provide strategic information for the initiatives managers, while results in mobility and movement will inform decision-making on the potential for scale-up of the initiatives evaluated.

* 1. **Efficiency**

Table 3 presents the framework for analyzing the efficiency of the initiative evaluated. This assessment revolves around the following question: How efficient is the initiative in achieving its results?

**Table 3.** Question and indicators related to the efficiency of the initiative

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Evaluation questions and sub-questions** | **Indicators** | **Documentation-based and/or data-based evidence** | **Interview-based and/or survey-based evidence** |
|  | **4. How efficient is the initiative in achieving its results?** |
| **EFFICIENT USE OF RESOURCES** | **4.1. Comparison of the effort involved in operating the initiative (number of FTEs, operational costs such as software, governance, etc.) to the results.** |
| 4.1.1. To what extent time and money are used efficiently by using this initiative as opposed to the typical approach? | [I25]. Gap between work organization with and without the initiative organization.[I26]. Ratio between initiative costs (funds and FTE) and program participants (or outreach).[I27]. Of the FTE resourcing implicated in the program, how many FTEs fall in the HR staffing/recruiting realm? If HR is involved, what is their role?[I28]. Gap between the resources deployed in communication (and dissemination) and the status quo.[I29]. Delivery times compared to the status quo.[I30]. Level of risk versus status quo. | **X** |  |
| 4.1.2. How does the set up and operation of the initiative contribute (or fail to contribute to) its internal efficiency? | [I31]. Description and explanation of changes in the organization of work.[I32]. Explanation of observed performance results (or lack of results). |  | **X** |
| **4.2. Best practices and lessons learned at different stages of the HR vehicle’s implementation** |
| 4.2.1. What are some of the best practices developed through the implementation and operation of the initiative? Are these best practices currently being shared? If so, how? Are they practices organization-specific or are they broadly-applicable across the Public Service? | [I33]. Description of best practices and lessons learned by the initiative’s manager for each of the ideation, design, implementation and administration phases of the initiative. |  | **X** |

Answering this question involves looking at two aspects. First, information on work organization, operating costs, communication strategy as well as time management (Table 3, Section 4.1) will be examined to determine the extent to which resources to deliver the initiative are used optimally. The results of this aspect of the evaluation will be a strategic source of information for the initiatives managers as well as other managers interesting in reproducing the initiative in their department.

Second, best practices and other lessons learned resulting from the implementation of these initiatives will be examined regarding their impact on services such as IT, administration, legal services, communications, etc. (Table 3, Section 4.2). These analyses are based on the cross-checking of three sources: (i) administrative data from initiatives on outcome targets and outcomes; (ii) administrative data from conventional recruiting as a reference; (iii) interviews with initiative leads.

**4. Lessons Learned**

Initial testing was done with five innovative HR initiatives chosen for their diversity. A summary of findings from the consultations undertaken with each of the chosen initiatives is presented in Appendix 2. The testing of the framework was based on two sources of information: 1) documents and reports on the initiatives and 2) interviews with program managers and HR experts. Lessons learned through this process are presented in Table 4 and include ways to improve the evaluation and make it useful for decision-making.

**Table 4.** Learnings from applying the indicators on the five pilot initiatives

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Evaluation questions and sub-questions** | **Indicators** | **Documentation-based and/or data-based evidence** | **Interview-based and/or survey-based evidence** |  | **Findings** |
| **RELEVANCE TO PUBLIC SERVICE NEEDS** | **1. What organizational need does the initiative address?** | **Documentation and Data Collection** | **Consultation** |
| **1.1. Alignment of the HR initiative’s purpose with the needs of the organization and the government** |
| 1.1.1. How are the changing recruitment needs addressed by this initiative?  | [I1]. Correspondence between the challenges targeted by the initiative (or its value proposition) and the changing recruitment needs of the organization.  | **X** |  | * In general, the description of the initiatives and the needs they target are not consistently backed with proper data or documented reports.
* Data on which the initiatives are based are not always documented. When it is documented, it is not updated on a regular basis.
* The creation of a monitoring template would ensure that a preliminary diagnosis is made to measure and document the evolution of the needs addressed. It helps making sure that a clear link is made between the needs and objectives of the initiative.
* While such a monitoring template is useful, it should be simple enough (example is provided in Appendix 1), while resources should be allocated to the monitoring activities.
 | * The Initiatives are expected to evolve as needs change. This indicator allows for follow-up on these changes for strategic purposes.
 |
| 1.1.2. Is there a clear link between government priorities and this initiative as evidenced in government documents? | [I2]. Correspondence between the description of the initiative as defined in official documents and current government priorities.  | **X** |  |
| 1.1.3. Has the initiative evolved with the changing needs of the Public Service? If so, how? | [I3]. Correspondence between the evolution of the initiative and the evolution of the recruitment needs of the organization according to the initiative's manager.  |  | **X** |
| **1.2. Alignment of the HR vehicle’s purpose with the needs of participants / target groups** |  |  |
| 1.2.1. Why do participants choose this initiative?  | [I4]. Correspondence between the value proposition of the initiative and the results of job seeker satisfaction surveys (internal and external). | **X** |  | * A satisfaction survey of participants (or not) provides strategic information for those responsible for the initiative. Such a survey should be standard practice for innovative recruitment initiatives for learning purposes.
* The results of the SAFF (PSES) on employee mobility and retention are a source of information prior to setting the objectives of initiatives to address internal needs.
 | * Interviews allow us to learn about external obstacles to the initiative, highlighting some administrative barriers to innovation. For example, an innovative initiative that targets internal employee mobility has little control over the host ministry's IT capacity to quickly accommodate needs that are outside normal procedures.
 |
| 1.2.2. To what extent are their expectations fulfilled? | [I5]. Correspondence between the value proposition of the initiative and the PSES results regarding employee mobility and retention. | **X** | **X** |
| 1.2.3. What specific needs of participants are met by participating? | [I6]. Correspondence between the value proposition of the initiative and the opinion of the participants / former participants regarding fulfilment of their needs.  |  | **X** |
| **2. What difference the initiative is making compared to the typical process or method used or other similar initiatives?** |  |  |
| **2.1. Comparison with typical process or approach on elements such as outreach, administration, onboarding and placement** |  |  |
| 2.1.1. Why was this initiative implemented in this way? What advantages does this initiative have over the typical process or approach? | [I7]. Similarities and differences between the initiative and the regular staffing process with respect to dissemination and administration of the initiative and the integration and placement of participants. | **X** |  | * The characters that distinguish innovative initiatives from the regular staffing process are generally indicated in their descriptive documents. On the other hand, the reason for this change and the expected benefits of this change are not the subject of a specific monitoring or evaluation mechanism.
* The creation of a monitoring template would document the added value of changes in the dissemination or administration of the initiative or in the integration or placement of participants.
 | * This indicator collects additional information and contextual elements that are not always provided into official descriptive documents, such as the limitations of the initiative.
 |
| 2.1.2. What types of participants are commonly attracted to this initiative and why? | [I8]. Similarities and differences between initiatives and the types of participants that are attracted. | **X** |  |
| 2.1.3. What other aspects of the initiative are pertinent to demonstrate its value-added? | [I9]. Additional information on other features of the initiative according to the initiative’s manager. |  | **X** |
| **2.2. Comparison with similar HR initiatives on elements such as outreach, administration, onboarding and placement** |  |  |
| 2.2.1. Are there existing HR initiatives within the Public Service that have similar goals? If so, how does this initiative meet a unique need? | [I10]. Similarities and differences between the goals of this initiative and other comparable initiatives. | **X** |  | * Typology work was carried out by the cohort #1 of the GCE to distinguish existing initiatives.
* Another recent typology has been developed by Étienne Laliberté
* Complementarity is sought between initiatives that target the same targeted groups.
* The framework might benefit from a comparative assessment against the traditional recruitment methods or hiring mechanisms for short-term based flexibilities, (such as assignments, casuals) for mobility outcomes, time and risk management, effectiveness. Assessment should be of not only the vehicle but also of the employee whether in personal career development and ⁄ or contribution to the department.
 | * Duplication can have pros and cons and interviews to shed light on these or potential disadvantages.
* The complementarity of the initiatives is possible under certain conditions that the interviews will identify.
* The views of program officials on the impacts of the absence of the initiative can also be assessed.
 |
| 2.2.2. Does this initiative overlap with other existing initiatives? If so, does this overlap have negative effects? Are there sound reasons for the overlap?  | [I11]. Opinion of the initiative’s manager on the pros and cons of duplication or overlap with other initiatives, if any. |  | **X** |
| 2.2.3. Do you see potential for collaboration with other initiatives? Could there be an opportunity to expand this initiative or to replicate it elsewhere? | [I12]. Opinion of the initiative’s manager on the complementarity (or competition) between initiatives with comparable objectives. |  | **X** |
| **EFFECTIVENESS IN MEETING GOALS** | **3. To what extent did the HR initiative meet its goals?** |  |  |
| **3.1. Performance of the HR initiative relative to its intended outputs (e.g. aims/targets of the HR vehicle where available)** |  |  |
| 3.1.1. How effectively did the initiative meet its goals as measured by qualitative and quantitative evidence? | [I13] Performance gap between results and targets, including:* + Attractiveness of job opportunities
	+ Number or percentage of targeted and qualified candidates
	+ Deadlines for processing applications
	+ Number of steps for the recruiter
	+ Number of steps for the employee
 | **X** |  | * This information is not systematically documented for innovative initiatives. Targets are not quantified in the majority of cases and are limited to indicating general objectives such as reducing processing times, and increasing the number of participants.
* The PSES results are an interesting source of information for setting targets, knowing that the context may vary from department to department.
 | * Interviews identify factors that explain performance and performance differences.
 |
| 3.1.2. Do the PSES results show positive results due to this initiative? | [I14]. Evolution of PSES results regarding retention of employees for internal initiatives. | **X** | **X** |
| 3.1.3. Is there any other pertinent information that speaks to how effectively the initiative met its stated purpose? | [I15]. Additional information on other features of the initiative according to the initiative’s manager. |  | **X** |
| 3.1.4. To what extent did the initiative provide the right fit for participants?  | [I16]. Opinion of participants on their position and the fit, in relation to the technical work and the work environment. |  | **X** |
| **3.2. Performance of the HR initiative relative to mobility and movement outcomes** |  |  |
| 3.2.1. How were candidates empowered to build skills and develop their career? Are there any aspects of the initiative that inhibited participants from developing professionally?  | [I17]. Evolution of the number of participants of the initiative.[I18]. Evolution of the number of employee movements within the host department or employee turnover rate.[I19]. Timeframe or number of steps between submission of application and receipt of an offer.[I20]. Time or number of steps to be functional after receiving an offer.[I21]. Survey results of participants (and former participants) on the satisfaction of professional development needs.[I22]. Evolution of PSES results regarding motives for employee movement. | **X** |  | * Some indicators may not apply to initiatives such as platforms that do not account for the number of applications or the investment rate.
* An evaluation system should be encouraged to be applied to any innovative HR initiative for strategic decision-making analysis
 | * Interviews with participants and program managers help to understand the ambivalence of these two concepts. Greater mobility assigned to a program can be undermined by the capacity of host departments to accommodate this work model. On the other hand, the movements of personnel are beneficial when desired and harmful when they become a constraint.
 |
| 3.2.2. Did participants believe they were able to develop professionally through lateral moves designed to develop specific skills or through obtaining positions of greater responsibility? | [I23]. Opinion of participants on their mobility (to fill a position that meets their aspirations) and on challenges. |  | **X** |
| 3.2.3. What is the opinion of program managers on participant professional development?  | [I24]. Opinion of program managers on (intended and non-intended) movements and related challenges. |  | **X** |
| **EFFICIENT USE OF RESOURCES** | **4. How efficient is the initiative in achieving its results?** |  |  |
| **4.1. Comparison of the effort involved in operating the initiative (number of FTEs, operational costs such as software, governance, etc.) to the results.** |  |  |
| 4.1.1. To what extent time and money are used efficiently by using this initiative as opposed to the typical approach? | [I25]. Gap between work organization with and without the initiative organization.[I26]. Ratio between initiative costs (funds and FTE) and program participants (or outreach).[I27]. Of the FTE resourcing implicated in the program, how many FTEs fall in the HR staffing/recruiting realm? If HR is involved, what is their role?[I28]. Gap between the resources deployed in communication (and dissemination) and the status quo.[I29]. Delivery times compared to the status quo.[I30]. Level of risk versus status quo. | **X** |  | * Data on operating costs ($, FTE, time) and results will need to be systematically accounted for learning needs and strategic intelligence to program managers.
* The experimental nature of these initiatives requires the deployment of resources to support the initiative and underlying activities.
 | * In the absence of data and administrative information, interviews provide information on the changes observed between the status quo and the implementation of these initiatives in terms of work organization, time management and risk management.
 |
| 4.1.2. How does the set up and operation of the initiative contribute (or fail to contribute to) its internal efficiency? | [I31]. Description and explanation of changes in the organization of work.[I32]. Explanation of observed performance results (or lack of results). |  | **X** |
| **4.2. Best practices and lessons learned at different stages of the HR vehicle’s implementation** |  |  |
| 4.2.1. What are some of the best practices developed through the implementation and operation of the initiative? Are these best practices currently being shared? If so, how? Are they practices organization-specific or are they broadly-applicable across the Public Service? | [I33]. Description of best practices and lessons learned by the initiative’s manager for each of the ideation, design, implementation and administration phases of the initiative.  |  | **X** |  | * The interviews also shed light on the changes the initiative wants to make improvements at the various stages of implementation. For future iteration, the evaluation of HR initiatives in government should be framed as a whole. For example, doing a survey of the gaps where the government can improve on attracting candidates where they’re needed and making recommendations to advance that.
 |

1. **Recommendations**
	1. **Integrating evaluation from the design stage of initiatives and allocation of resources**

The innovative nature of the HR initiatives being evaluated calls for integrating evaluation measures from the very beginning of any future initiative. The adoption of an evaluation framework before implementing an initiative is recommended as it allows for the development of a data collection system for evaluation purposes right from the onset. In covering the issues of relevance (responsiveness to needs), effectiveness (and impact) and efficiency of the initiative, evaluation provides an understanding of how the different components of the initiative lead to the observed results and to understand the challenges faced at the ideation stage, design and implementation, and opportunities for improvement.

More specifically, Appendix 1 provides an example of a generic set of indicators that could accompany the design and implementation of any future innovative HR initiative. It identifies data required for evaluation including the need for the initiative, evaluation objectives and targets (qualitative and/or quantitative), the means used to solicit participation (e.g. communication strategy, type of review, type of platform), administrative strategies, and resources mobilized.

* 1. **Identify evaluation team dedicated to innovative initiatives**

Another essential element of an effective evaluation is the need for a dedicated evaluation team whose role is to document and monitor the progress of the initiative. The fact that the same team operates and evaluates the initiative poses two problems. First, from our findings in tests with the pilot initiatives, there was a lack of or limited documentation regarding the design of initiatives and how they were implemented. This was partially due to the time that program managers had to devote to the effective delivery of the initiative using non-standard staffing procedures (e.g. new IT procedures, new contractual procedures, access and security procedures, etc.). Had these administrative functions been less burdensome, more attention could have been given to documentation purposes, which would have greatly assisted the evaluation. With a resource dedicated for the evaluation, there would be dedicated time to create and gather the necessary documentation. Second, the scope of any assessment lies in its objectivity, which is done independently. Given that program managers are generally invested and would have consequent bias on their HR initiative, it is difficult for them to review the initiative objectively. An evaluator who is not affiliated with the initiative could work at arm's length and thus objectively assess the relevance, effectiveness and efficiency of an initiative.

In light of consultations with different stakeholders, a two-tiered evaluation is proposed: 1) a lower level of individual evaluation of each initiative and 2) a higher level of coordination that aims to provide an overall assessment of all the initiatives covered by the evaluation:

**Tier #1: Individual evaluation of each initiative using a generic evaluation framework.** The completion of this evaluation is based on the use of the evaluation framework proposed in this policy paper and presented in Table 4. This evaluation could, in particular, involve the adoption of a directive that would require agencies and departments to systematically conduct an exercise in monitoring and evaluating any innovative initiatives that could benefit the entire public service. Three evaluation piloting scenarios are proposed at the tier #1 level:

* + **Conducting a** **regular** **periodic (e.g., annual) evaluation by a team of** **internal evaluators from the instigating agency or department.** If the objectives of innovation and experimentation are among the priorities of the agency or the instigating department, and if the evaluation framework is already well established, this approach has the merit of being practical and contributory to the development of a culture of innovation within the government. However, this approach can become a burden on the team of internal evaluators if additional resources are not invested.

* + **Conducting a regular, periodic (e.g., annual) evaluation by a team of external evaluators supervised by the instigating department evaluation branch.** If the objectives of innovation and experimentation are among the priorities of the agency or the instigating department and if the evaluation framework is already well established, this approach has the merit of reducing the burden on the team of internal evaluators. However, this approach presents the risk of being done within a longer time frame and only reaching approximate conclusions if the evaluation requires in-depth knowledge of the different mandates of departments and the agencies.
	+ **Conducting a periodic (e.g., annual) evaluation by an *ad hoc* task force of evaluators from different departments.** This approach has the merit of optimizing the use of evaluation services of large departments during low-traffic periods of a fiscal year. However, this approach requires a great deal of coordination and thus presents the risk of being done within a longer time frame.

**Tier #2: Coordinating individual evaluations for overall review purposes.** This second level of evaluation is to gather the results of individual evaluations from tier #1 to provide an overall assessment and to highlight trends and avenues for improvement. Two potential scenarios are proposed at the tier #2 level:

* + **Compilation and analysis of the results from tier 1 level evaluation by one of the following two bodies: OCHRO or PSC**. This scenario has the advantage of providing the designated body with strategic monitoring of innovative HR initiatives. It will help inform the direction of the federal government's HR function. However, this approach can become a burden on this body if additional resources are not invested.
	+ **Compilation and analysis of the results from tier 1 level evaluation by taskforce with members** **with well-defined roles.** This taskforce could be made up of HR experts and evaluators from across the Government of Canada who will compile, analyze and review individual evaluations. This task force would have a Champion at the Assistant Deputy Minister or Deputy Minister level attached to a senior committee, such as the Deputy Ministers Task Force on Public Sector Innovation.

As tier #1 provides information on the HR initiative itself, tier #2 is providing a horizontal analysis of the contribution of targeted initiatives to the public service (e.g. improving capacity, transfer of skills, reducing time to staff, managing recruitment, attracting diverse candidates) by looking at their synergy and best practices. Such a horizontal evaluation is useful as it will look at the issue at a more comprehensive way including cumulative impact and the relative advantage point of each innovative initiative.

* 1. **Use of** **data to inform critical decisions**

The ultimate goal of the evaluation framework is to chart the way forward for various HR initiatives. Some of them may be using a disproportionate amount of human and financial resources to recruit a small number of people. Others may be unknowingly competing for the same candidates, creating an inefficient use of public resources. Or others may be able to expand their success by deploying on a larger scale to meet additional human resource needs in the GC. A solid evaluation provides reliable data to inform scaling, scale-down, modifying or eliminating HR initiatives.

With evaluation implemented, the collection of data on indicators would be consistent across the whole of government and there would be common, standard baselines against which all HR initiatives would be measured. This would very telling to determine the narrative on the flow of talent in and out of the public sector; it would also support evidence-based decision-making regarding future strategy and planning for all implicated initiatives. Resultantly, this could mitigate a saturation of HR initiatives being implemented across government and foster the government’s ability to be a more effective recruiter of top talent to meet current and emerging needs.

Finally, there are other benefits for program managers, provided that a horizontal evaluation of innovative HR initiatives takes place: better understanding of the beneficiaries of the respective initiatives and the profiles of these individuals, impact on participant’s skills, and broader impact on the participating departments (e.g. based on the collection of longitudinal data over time).

**Appendix 1.** Example of a monitoring template for program managers to be filled out for each innovative HR initiative

| Content |  |
| --- | --- |
| Descriptive information on the initiative |  |
| Type of HR initiative | Program? Platform? Gigs? Etc. |
| HR initiative description | Descriptions of the whys and hows of the initiative |
| Value proposition | Delay reduction, accessibility improvement, user-friendly, etc. |
| Organization priority statement / mandate letter | Mandate Letter, Action Plan, Official Briefing, etc. |
| HR challenge addressed | Delay and number of steps, lack of flexibility, lack of subject matter experts, etc. |
| Targeted groups (the group specifically targeted in the initiative) |  |
| * Subject matter expert
 | Yes/No (quantitative and or qualitative targets) |
| * Internal/external or both
 | Yes/No (quantitative and or qualitative targets) |
| * Graduate specific
 | Yes/No (quantitative and or qualitative targets) |
| * Students specific
 | Yes/No (quantitative and or qualitative targets) |
| * EX specific
 | Yes/No (quantitative and or qualitative targets) |
| Outreach objectives (objectives as specifically designed in the initiative) |  |
| * Regional diversity (Yes/No)
 | Yes/No (quantitative and or qualitative targets) |
| * Employment equity (e.g. women) (Yes/No)
 | Yes/No (+ precisions if needed) |
| * Project-based filling process (Yes/No)
 | Yes/No (+ precisions if needed) |
| * Short-term position filling process (< 24 months)
 | Yes/No (+ precisions if needed) |
| * Permanent position filling process
 | Yes/No (+ precisions if needed) |
| Marketing towards candidates |  |
| * Job ad design
 | Yes/No (How?) |
| * Job ad platform
 | Yes/No (How?) |
| * Job ad content
 | Yes/No (How?) |
| Marketing towards departments and agencies |  |
| * Call for proposal (Yes/No)
 | Yes/No (How?) |
| * Distribution channel
 | Yes/No (How?) |
| Administrative info |  |
| * Managing department
 | Organization’s name |
| * Host department
 | Organization’s name |
| * Partnership model (Who pays the salary? And how?)
 | Who pays the salary and how? |
| * Launch date (fixed, year-round)
 | Fixed date or continuous |
| * Number of hired/participants per year (2017-2018)
 | Target |
| * Number of hired/participants per year (2018-2019)
 | Target |
| * Hiring time
 | Target |
| * Program staff
 | Number |
| * Dedicated financial resource (Yes/No)
 | Yes/No (How?) |
| * Placement approach (Who picks the candidate?)
 | Selection Committee |
| Learning and development opportunities  |  |
| * Onboarding session (Yes/No)
 | Yes/No (How?) |
| * Time and budget for training (Yes/No)
 | Yes/No (How?) |
| * Mobility opportunities (to a position that is a better fit or has more responsibilities within the government)
 | Yes/No (How?) |

**Appendix 2.** Pilot findings summary

1. **General findings summary**

Five different HR vehicles – Talent Cloud, Career Marketplace, Impact Canada Fellowship, Free Agents and Recruitment of Policy Leaders – were chosen as initial pilots against which the framework could be tested to ensure and workability of the evaluation framework itself. At the time of our engagements, the intent was not to use our findings and observations to inform changes or recommendations that would impact the operations or future planning of the initiatives.

Conducting interviews with program leads and managers was an effective way to affirm quantitative data, gather qualitative insights, and gain more in-depth perspectives on the respective initiatives’ inceptions, structures, and forward visions. All of the initiatives sought to provide an improved alternative to traditional staffing processes; however, the initiatives focus on bettering different aspects of the staffing processes. Resultantly, while their overall objectives may be comparable, their strategies to attain those objectives vary. Initiatives did face similar barriers and challenges (lack of data, adequate resourcing, measurement and definition of success, etc.), and there was general agreement from interviews that broader information sharing and collaboration would be beneficial.

Majority of the interviewees agreed that data was an important and the lack of it (in terms of collection, consistency, maintenance, analysis, presentation) contributed to difficulty in being able to evidence-based decision-making and strategic planning. Evaluation would be a means to gathering data consistently and reporting regularly on results. Initiatives are also expected to evolve as needs change and interviewees noted that in order to continue being relevant and valuable, they have had to refine aspects or direction as the talent and HR landscape shifts. Evaluation helps to inform these changes and provide the evidence base to effect changes strategically.

From overall observations, there was consensus that while the Government of Canada has effective mechanisms to bring talent in to the public service, there is a saturation of innovative HR initiatives implemented to accomplish this. This is caused by insufficient dialogue and collaboration on actions across the GC, leading to the development of similar or duplicative processes in departments. Evaluation was perceived as an effective mechanism to determine how to allocate resources and focus efforts for specific initiatives to maximize the impact for the GC and facilitate a fluid talent pipeline in the GC. Most initiatives were receptive to considering evaluation as a way of informing improvements to their initiatives.

Fit, mobility, and movement of candidates were also brought up in interviews and while evaluation would be an important informant to those three concepts, it would not be able to supply definitive parameters on how employees navigate the public service once they are in. There were also varied responses on how success in the public service is defined.

1. **Findings summary for each initiative**

1. Services publics et Approvisionnement Canada – Public Services and Procurement Canada [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Emploi et Développement social Canada - Employment and Social Development Canada [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. Services Partagés Canada – Shared Services Canada [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. Environnement et Changement climatique Canada – Environment and Climate Change Canada [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. Développement économique Canada pour les régions du Québec - Canada Economic Development for Quebec Regions [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. According to one [2016 Treasury Board Secretariat Report](http://www.gcpedia.gc.ca/wiki/Reducing_Internal_Red_Tape_Initiative), the average time to staff a position is 40 weeks and includes 50 to 75 steps [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
7. Avelar P.L. (2019). *Innovative Staffing*. Medium: GC Entrepreneurs. URL : <https://medium.com/gc-entrepreneur/innovative-staffing-eb541920e18a> [↑](#footnote-ref-7)
8. Avelar P.L. (2019). *Op. Cit.* [↑](#footnote-ref-8)
9. [Talent Cloud, Free Agents](https://oecd-opsi.org/innovations/free-agents-and-gc-talent-cloud/), [Recruitment Leadership Program](https://www.canada.ca/en/public-service-commission/jobs/services/recruitment/graduates/recruitment-policy-leaders.html), [Impact Canada Fellowship,](https://impact.canada.ca/en/careers) [Career Marketplace](https://gcconnex.gctools-outilsgc.ca/en/support/solutions/folders/2100029506). [↑](#footnote-ref-9)