



THE VANIER CANADA GRADUATE SCHOLARSHIP PROGRAM

EVALUATION SUMMARY

About the Vanier CGS Program

The Government of Canada (GOC) launched the Vanier CGS program in 2008 to strengthen Canada's ability to attract and retain the world's top doctoral students and establish Canada as a global centre of excellence in research and higher learning.

- Valued at \$50,000 per year for three years.
- 167 new awards annually, with a total of 500 active awards at a time.
- Available to Canadian citizens, permanent residents and foreign citizens pursuing doctoral studies at eligible Canadian institutions.
- Administered by the [Canadian Institutes of Health Research \(CIHR\)](#), [Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council \(NSERC\)](#) and [Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council \(SSHRC\)](#).

Vanier CGS program website: <https://vanier.gc.ca>

Results: What We Found

- There is a continued need to support both national and international top-tier doctoral students in Canadian institutions.
- The program's objectives are aligned with the Acts and priorities of the federal granting agencies.
- The current design and delivery of the program (e.g., the quota and nomination model) limits its ability to: attract top students from other countries to Canada and retain Canada's top doctoral students at the time of application.
 - Almost all international students were already living in Canada at the time of application.
 - The majority of recipients were already enrolled in a doctoral program in Canada or would have enrolled in the same doctoral program had they not received the award.
- The assessment of leadership is a challenge due to subjectivity in the interpretation of and inconsistency in the leadership criteria (more so for international applications).
- The program is achieving its expected intermediate outcomes; however, applicants (those who did not receive the award) and recipients report very similar outcomes, which calls into question the added value of the program.
 - The majority of both award recipients and applicants are living and working in Canada after graduation, working in the academic sector, in research intensive careers and report similar outcomes in terms of leadership opportunities.
 - However, recipients have higher research productivity than applicants following completion of their doctoral degrees, and are more likely to be in more advanced academic positions.

Office of Audit and Evaluation, Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR), 2020-2021



Recommendations and Management Response

1

The Vanier CGS program needs to change its current objectives and/or design and delivery model in order to more effectively attract top doctoral students to Canada and retain top domestic students in Canada at the time of application. Given the similar levels of achievement by recipients and applicants related to leadership opportunities, post-graduation retention and career outcomes, the changes to the Vanier CGS program need to be made with due consideration of other federal doctoral scholarship programs.

Response: Management agrees and CIHR will lead the assessment of the purpose and design of the Vanier CGS program in coordination with the [Canada Research Coordinating Committee \(CRCC\)](#) Tri-agency Training Strategy initiative, NSERC and SSHRC, and in alignment with the suite of federal research training award programs.

2

In light of the evaluation findings and the [Tri-agency Statement on Equity, Diversity and Inclusion](#), the Vanier CGS program should examine the nature and extent of EDI barriers, including GBA+ analysis, related to the potential biases associated with the leadership selection criteria, the nomination process, and the selection of international doctoral students in order to more equitably assess and select Vanier recipients.

Response: Management agrees and will review options for assessing leadership as well as undertake an examination of the potential EDI barriers in the design and delivery of the Vanier CGS program.

About the Evaluation

CIHR's Evaluation Unit conducted the evaluation in 2019, in collaboration with the NSERC-SSHRC Evaluation Division, to meet requirements of the [Policy on Results](#) and provide Tri-agency senior management with valid, insightful and actionable findings regarding:

- Needs addressed by the program;
- Effectiveness of program design in supporting outcomes; and,
- Achievement of expected results

Scope



Covered the period from 2013-14 to 2017-18



Second evaluation since the program's inception in 2008

Methodology



Analyses of documents, end of award reports and other administrative data



Tracer survey of Vanier award applicants and recipients



Key informant interviews

Full Evaluation Report and MAP: <https://cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/46969.html>

Office of Audit and Evaluation, Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR), 2020-2021

Cat. Number: MR4-96/2-2021E-PDF, ISBN: 978-0-660-39510-4