

# Overview of the Program

## GOALS

*Canada Beyond 150: Policy for a diverse and inclusive future* convened a Canada-wide group of federal public servants working in various capacities to participate in a ten-month program designed to support leadership and skills development, as well as drive culture shift across the public service. The main objectives of the program included:

- Leadership development for a diverse cohort of public servants;
- Experimentation with new methods in open policy, to build the required skills and encourage a culture shift to a more open, innovative, collaborative public service; and
- Engaging external partners in the development of longer-term analyses and innovative ideas to inform future policy making.

## FIVE PROGRAM THEMES

Under the lens of diversity and inclusion, participants were invited to address complex policy challenges under the following themes:

- Feminist Government
- Open and Transparent Government
- Reconciliation
- Socio-Economic Inclusion
- Sustainable Development Goals

Participants explored how these issues may evolve over the next 10-15 years, and how the Government of Canada could prepare for these changes. Policy Horizons trained participants to use innovative policy tools

and methods that allowed them to develop insights on each of these themes, and propose policy interventions.

## PEOPLE AND ROLES

The Privy Council Office (PCO) and Policy Horizons Canada (Horizons) delivered the program. Many federal organizations supported the program by sponsoring participants, sharing expertise, and offering guidance from senior executives.

### Participants

Canada Beyond 150 participants were selected from 671 applicants from across the country, from a variety of occupational roles and federal departments and agencies. Selection criteria included leadership and initiative, teamwork abilities, policy aptitude and potential contribution to the program. The program was open to early-career public servants who were permanent employees of the federal public service for fewer than five years.

The participant selection process featured three innovative approaches. First, it used name-blind applicant screening to minimize the effect of implicit bias. Second, dozens of public servant volunteers were brought on through micro-assignments to screen and assess the applications. This helped the screening process move quickly, and allowed for a more diverse pool of application screeners. Finally, the project team developed tools in-house to assess and minimize reviewer bias.

Ultimately, 86 early-career public servants accepted an invitation to participate. They came from a range of backgrounds and represented

30 federal departments and agencies. A quarter of the participants came from outside the National Capital Region. By design, the cohort exceeded the public service's figures for representation of women (50 participants), visible minorities (23 participants), Indigenous Peoples (7 participants) and people with disabilities (5 participants).

## PROGRAM COORDINATION

The Canada Beyond 150 coordinating team included staff from Horizons and PCO's Priorities and Planning, and Communications and Consultations secretariats. The team was responsible for the design and management of the program, as well as day-to-day operations.



Experienced analysts and facilitators from Horizons helped guide the teams working under each theme. The primary role of these "enablers" was to provide guidance and advice to participants about the process, tools and methods, as well as to help manage timelines and products. The enablers served as a resource to help groups meet their goals, rather than as a project authority.

Participants also received support from internal and external experts. These included subject matter experts from a number of fields within the Government of Canada; external partners who

worked in relevant areas; and alumni from *canada@150*, which was a precursor program to Canada Beyond 150 conducted in 2007–2008.

## GOVERNANCE

Two Assistant Deputy Minister (ADM) co-chairs provided oversight, guidance and support on Canada Beyond 150: Isabelle Mondou, Assistant Secretary of Priorities and Planning at the Privy Council Office, and James Gilbert, Assistant Deputy Minister of the Public Affairs and Stakeholder Relations Branch at Employment and Social Development Canada (former Assistant Deputy Minister responsible for Policy Horizons Canada). They also led an ADM Steering Committee, which included representatives from departments responsible for the program's five major themes, as well as one of the Deputy Minister Champions from the original *canada@150* program.

The ADMs also acted as a sounding board during the development of participant teams' policy interventions. Given the thematic linkages, the program established relationships with the co-chairs of the Deputy Minister Task Force on Diversity and Inclusiveness, who also participated in the opening and final events.

## What We Did

### THE TOOLKIT

Canada Beyond 150 experimented with a range of tools and methods to help inform policy analysis and development. These included foresight analysis, design thinking, and engagement.

**Strategic foresight** helps us understand which forces shape a system, how the system could evolve, and what challenges, opportunities and surprises could emerge. This systematic process surfaces and tests assumptions and mental models about an issue, and uses our capacity to simulate and visualize how it could evolve. Participants developed system maps to better understand their theme, then scanned for weak signals of change taking shape in their respective domains. They used the insights gained from scanning to develop a range of plausible future scenarios and identify potential challenges and opportunities.

**Design thinking** is a human-centered approach to problem solving that uses qualitative and quantitative research techniques to gain insights into people's lives and contextual understanding of an issue. It involves a five-stage approach: empathizing with users, clearly defining or reframing the issue, coming up with ideas, creating prototypes, and then testing them. Participants carried out the first three stages within the timeframe provided. They used a range of techniques such as cultural probes, intercept interviews of people on the street, experiential activities to empathize with stakeholders, and developed interactive outreach tools. They also participated in engagement and co-creation sessions to help define the problem and come up with ideas to address the issues.

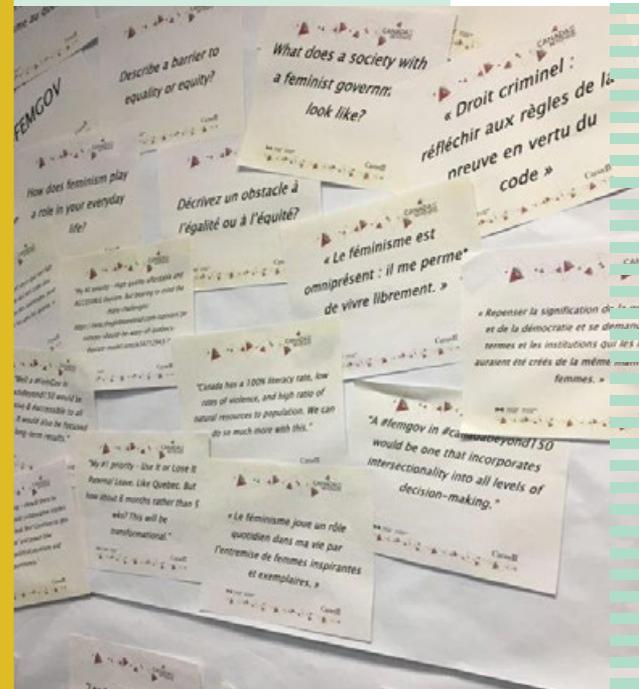
## WHAT ARE...

**System maps** are visual representations of the components of a system and their interrelationships. They allow a group to share their mental models, uncover their assumptions, and test shared analysis of how a system may evolve.

**Weak signals** are signs that a disruptive change could be underway, and include a preliminary assessment of implications for the system under study.

**Cultural probes** are an alternative way of collecting information to better understand people. They use a variety of tools (e.g., journals and cameras that help a person record their thoughts and experiences), artifacts (such as mementos from their childhood), or tasks (like writing, drawing or creating something that expresses how they feel at the moment about an issue) to help uncover implicit assumptions or perspectives on an issue area.

**Intercept interviews** are short dialogues designed around a series usually done in public settings as a spontaneous encounter with people likely to have a stake in a given issue.



**Engagement** with a diverse spectrum of partners and stakeholders was a cornerstone of the program. The aim was to better understand the context of the five themes, as well as identify policy challenges relevant to the people interested in or affected by them—particularly those who are not typically engaged by government. Participants developed stakeholder maps to explore who would affect the system and who would be affected by the changes they had identified. They contacted identified groups, which included experts working in the field as well as people who provided insight based on their lived experience of the issue, to hear their diverse perspectives. During their discussions, they explored plausible futures, identified potential policy challenges, and developed policy proposals.

## CURRICULUM: TEACHING THE TOOLKIT

The curriculum involved both online and in-person workshops. Participants attended three multi-day working meetings—at the program launch in June 2017 (Ottawa), at the midpoint in November 2017 (Winnipeg), and at the conclusion of the program in March 2018 (Ottawa). At the launch meeting, participants received an introduction to the program, themes and methods, and formed working teams by selecting among the five major program themes. At the mid-point, teams reported on their foresight analysis to a diverse group of local stakeholders in Winnipeg. This was a pivotal point in the program, as participants moved from scanning and foresight to policy analysis and development. The final meeting allowed participants to share what they had learned over the course of the last 10 months. The teams presented their experience and policy proposals to colleagues, managers, stakeholders, partners, and senior public servants.

While the overall arc of the program was established before its launch, the Canada Beyond 150 curriculum was designed to adapt and respond to participants. Evaluations were conducted after each workshop to account for the teams' experiences and adjust the program as needed.

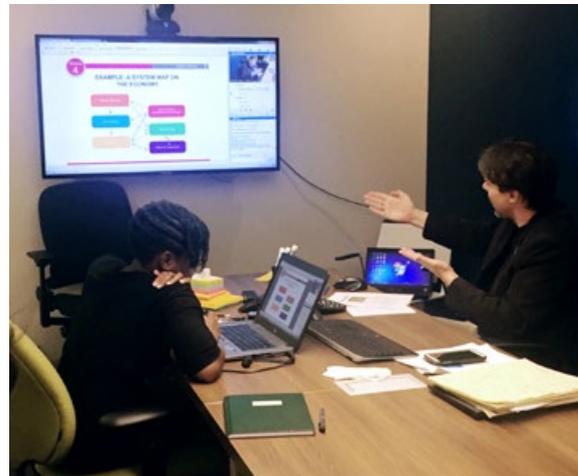
Between the major working meetings, the program team held nine half-day workshops over the 10-month program period to teach the program material and allow participants to work with new methods.

The first two workshops were on The Human Element, which focused on applying design principles to engagement with stakeholders and partners. Four workshops about strategic foresight came next. Participants learned to identify assumptions, develop system maps, locate weak signals, insights and change drivers, and produce scenarios.

These were followed by a workshop on behavioural insights, delivered by the Impact and Innovation Unit of PCO, that explored ways to understand our cognitive biases. The session stressed the importance of randomized controlled trials to support policy development. The next workshop explored how to work with stakeholders to identify policy challenges, and prepared teams for selecting the area that they would focus on in the last stage of the program. The final workshop was on Theory of Change, which is a tool for selecting among policy interventions, and expressing the logic and assumptions behind the chain of effects they are intended to produce.

## TECHNOLOGY TO SUPPORT COLLABORATION

The Canada Beyond 150 program team expected participants to use a mix of tools to collaborate online, including government tools such as GCcollab, which is accessible to partners and stakeholders outside government. However, participants mainly chose to use cloud-based third-party platforms like Google Docs, Hangouts, and Drive to collaborate, as they found these to be easier to use. The program team built a custom website within Google for participants to organize their work. Some participants also used online tools such as Slack, Framemo.org and Mind42 to organize their work, collaborate and brainstorm ideas. Most of the online collaboration with external partners also used third party applications and platforms because they are tools that the partners are already using.



## DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION WITHIN THE PROGRAM

### Support for increasing knowledge on Indigenous issues and enhancing cultural competency

The program team wanted to advance the Government's commitment to implement the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Call to Action #57 about public service training (see page 46). Both the participants and the officials supporting the program participated in this professional development, including a joint presentation on the legacy of residential schools by an Elder and an official who supported the work of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission. The professional development also included a blanket exercise—an interactive teaching tool designed to share the historic and contemporary relationship between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in Canada.

Reconciliation was one of the five Canada Beyond 150 themes. As such, Indigenous perspectives were an important element of all three of the in-person meetings, including a keynote by Senator Murray Sinclair at the final meeting. An Elder and an Elder-in-training provided support to the participants during the second half of the program. While the Elder worked most closely with the Reconciliation team, she also offered guidance and perspective to the program coordination team and supporting staff members.

### Official languages

Recognizing the importance of offering the program equitably in both official languages, the program team engaged in targeted outreach to offices that had high proportions of francophone federal employees. But both the application rate and subsequent representation of francophones in the program were low compared to the proportion of francophones in the federal public service.

In an effort to provide equivalent experiences to anglophones and francophones in simultaneous sessions, workshop presentations were delivered in each official language. But this meant that francophone participants who attended the French-only presentations missed out on the interactions that took place in the larger English-speaking group. For the last workshop, the program team presented an integrated English and French session for in-person participants.

### Accommodation of visually impaired participant

One of the participants self-identified as visually impaired. The team met with him and Employment and Social Development Canada's Office of Disability Issues to learn how to make the program inclusive and benefit from his participation. As a result, the program team made adjustments, like converting workshop materials into an accessible format, and scheduling longer breaks to meet his needs. The team regularly touched base with the participant to get his feedback, make adjustments as necessary, and develop further solutions.

### Managing meaningful regional participation

Approximately 25 percent of Canada Beyond 150 participants live and work outside of the National Capital Region. Throughout the program, these participants would meet and collaborate online using various platforms, by video or teleconference, or through telepresence robots. Enablers used facilitation skills to ensure regional participants were heard. In an effort to provide an equal workshop experience for everyone, the program team organized an online-only workshop. Although participants in the National Capital Region (NCR) found this experience difficult, regional participants found it to be one of the most effective. It also gave NCR

participants a sense of the challenges that regional public servants face on a daily basis. Still, technology can only do so much to bridge regional divides. Technical limitations sometimes made equal regional participation difficult, and participants reported in discussions and their regular evaluations that in-person working sessions were the most productive.



### Opening the program beyond the participants

To open the program to the policy community, Canada Beyond 150 learning resources were shared on a website as they were finalized, and promoted on social media. The website also featured blog posts written by participants, partners, and the program team on various elements of their experience with the program. Through a partnership with the Institute for Research on Public Policy, the program also published a series of articles on Canada Beyond 150 with the Policy Options online magazine.

### Social media use in the program

The program team envisioned that social media would help amplify participants' experiences, learnings, and analysis. They anticipated that participants would make heavy use of social channels to these ends. Except for an initial burst of social media activity, participant engagement online decreased significantly throughout the program. Policy Horizons' Communications team offered workshops to provide guidance on the personal and professional use of social media. Here are some of the participants' comments:

- Some participants were hesitant to use social media to discuss "work in progress," as they preferred sharing information about final results and outcomes.
- Others pointed to the lack of support or understanding of social media channels, benefits, and restrictions for public servants from their supervisors.
- Inconsistent policies on and access to social media continues to be a challenge for participants.

## Lessons For the Broader Public Service and Policy Community

### Make space for experimentation

Canada Beyond 150 was about experimenting with different approaches and tools. That meant accepting and even embracing the likelihood that some activities—whether organized by the program team or the participants themselves—would not go entirely smoothly. This test kitchen approach supported participants' professional

development by creating a low-risk environment to learn from experience.

In their final presentations, the teams were candid about what worked, what did not, and how they adjusted. Some of the groups' initial thinking fell flat when they took it to external stakeholders and partners. Other groups spent time chasing down insights that ultimately did not inform their policy thinking. This combination of experimentation, reflection, and adjustment led to deeper learning. Once participants understood that they did not need to get everything right the first time, they became more confident. They reached out to external partners more easily; they were less afraid of criticism, and could use it productively when they heard it; and they were more comfortable experimenting with new or unfamiliar ideas. Perhaps most importantly, participants took personal risks—exploring skills such as public speaking, taking leadership roles, sharing artistic skills, and personal experiences that influenced their work. Future learning programs could draw on this experience, as could policy and program teams tasked with developing capacity and products that go beyond business as usual.

### Put humans first

The Canada Beyond 150 experience suggests that design thinking can be useful to policy development in at least two ways. First, it raises good questions: What do people want? How do they feel? How do they perceive the problem? What does a good solution look like? Second, design thinking can often help in the search for answers to these questions.

Canada Beyond 150 participants experimented with design thinking in their engagement strategies and presentations. The Feminist Government team started co-creating earlier in the process

than most teams, connected with stakeholders from across Canada, and sought to create an inclusive environment for hearing the views of underrepresented groups such as women of colour. The Reconciliation team augmented their conventional approaches to learning with experiential learning, including hearing from a residential school survivor at the National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation, and participating in a sweat. They also continually adapted both their work and their approach in response to what they heard. When a concern was raised midway through the program that the team's work had been insufficiently grounded in Indigenous perspectives, they increased their outreach and adapted their methods. They invited members of the Indigenous Federal Employees Network to participate in all of the team's subsequent workshops and meetings, and established an ongoing relationship with an Elder. The Elder helped them adapt their way of working together, incorporating Indigenous teachings and ceremony into meetings. She also helped the group understand how the tools that government uses for policy and programs may themselves embody colonial approaches.



The participants' final presentations showed that they had internalized design thinking. The teams created gallery-style experiences with interactive elements highlighting key parts of their process and findings to present to managers, partners and stakeholders.

The Reconciliation team collaborated with Elders on a presentation that included ceremony and storytelling, and displayed a wall of quotes with a sample of what they had heard through engagement.

The Feminist Government team's gallery included a holographic video demonstrating how emerging technologies could support their policy proposal. They also developed an activity in which visitors selected one quote from the team's many engagement sessions for inclusion in a jar, and shared the difficulty in selecting a single focus among the many areas of a Feminist Government.



Other interactive elements included a thematic game developed by the Sustainable Development Goals team, and persona cards, which the Future of Work team created to show how different demographics could experience the training and job search platform that they had proposed.

"The surprising thing that I learned is how many ideas and how much skill exists within the participant pool today. One of the things I saw today was a new way of serving clients via hologram, and it was amazing. It gave me that level of excitement that I needed to really imagine what the future can be today."

– AYANNA ROBERTS (PARTICIPANT'S MANAGER), SERVICE CANADA

### Engagement and co-development

The idea of engaging Canadians in policy making is not new. But there is a growing body of practice with innovative methods to make engagement more effective and meaningful. Engagement styles can be tailored to encourage diverse input and express respect for communities. Public servants can challenge themselves to reach out beyond the stakeholders with whom they are most comfortable. Government engagement can come early in the policy process, and can extend to co-creation of solutions.



Partners and stakeholders were remarkably willing to support the work and development of Canada Beyond 150 participants. Hundreds of people from various regions of Canada and walks of life shared their time and thoughts with participants. Some of them engaged on the basis of their lived experience, rather than their work roles, and some had never previously engaged in this way with the federal government. Our partners and stakeholders were open to many activities, from leading a small group discussion at an Ideas Café or reflecting on draft foresight insights, to participating in a series of policy co-design workshops.

"I was pleasantly surprised by the generosity and candour of the stakeholders I contacted. We had honest and profound discussions, sometimes on touchy subjects such as private companies' responsibility to the environment—subjects that do not have widely accepted solutions. These discussion sessions were one of the most important things I learned from the program, and I quickly realized that collaboration is the key to the development of relevant, integrative policies. – ÉTIENNE LEPAGE, AGRICULTURE AND AGRI-FOOD CANADA

Meaningful engagement means being open to new ideas. In practice, it also requires a willingness to forgo being the expert and be prepared to have uncomfortable conversations. In the early part of the program, some participants and teams were reluctant to engage people outside the program, for fear of saying the wrong thing or being seen as not knowing enough about the topic. By the final meeting, discomfort was no longer a barrier to engagement. Instead, many teams identified these uncomfortable moments as key turning points. They often learned the most when

they felt most uncomfortable listening to their stakeholders and partners. These encounters often put a human face on a public policy issue, and were crucial to further participants' ideas and learning.

"It has opened my eyes to the fact that we share this policymaking ecosystem and while the relationship is symbiotic, it's easy to lose sight of that and get caught up in the Ottawa echo chamber. Most importantly, stakeholder engagement has made me realize that we must all hold the pen if we are to truly create more inclusive policies." – ANDREIA SANTOS, GLOBAL AFFAIRS CANADA

### Building skills and competencies

While the program did not intend to turn participants into experts at foresight, design thinking and engagement, it was designed to teach them to apply the tools in their everyday jobs. They were also introduced to centres of expertise across government, such as Policy Horizons Canada, the Impact and Innovation Unit, the Policy Community Partnership Office, the Community of Federal Regulators, and the Public Engagement Community of Practice.



Through a learn-as-you-go, immersive environment, Canada Beyond 150 built competencies and skills in a way that might not be accessible in traditional courses or learning modules. Participants will continue to share their learning with their colleagues.

### Foresight and engagement in policy making

The Canada Beyond 150 experience suggests that there is still more to be done to the methods it explored with more conventional policy tools and processes.

One participant group's work explored how to reconcile the immediate priorities that stakeholders and partners identified in engagement sessions with the results of foresight activities. While many stakeholders were already thinking and planning for the future, some insights and scenarios saw strong resistance. Some stakeholders did not approve of plausible future states. This is understandable, as some scenarios involved the displacement of their careers by automation. In other cases, scenarios suggested possible changes that were out of line with stakeholders' objectives or vision of the future.

Other stakeholders resisted focusing on insights about the future for other reasons. They noted the backlog of tasks to address present human suffering—a list of existing barriers that need to be lifted so that all Canadians can benefit and participate equally. In the face of pressing problems, thinking 15 years or further ahead can seem insensitive, or even a way of avoiding hard truths in the present.

The Feminist Government and Reconciliation teams experienced this response more than the other groups. Some partners and stakeholders felt that their initial work was insufficiently grounded in historical and present-day realities,



not taking account of the slow pace of positive change. To be accepted, effective and relevant, both the foresight content and the tools themselves may need to be further developed with government's partners and stakeholders in various contexts.

During Canada Beyond 150, the addition of a workshop on Theory of Change facilitated the transition to policy development. Having all the participants familiar with the same tool helped many teams have more structured and productive discussions on policy challenges and interventions. Teaching a standard policy tool also increased support for some Canada Beyond 150 participants whose jobs relate to government

operations rather than policy. These participants were in a good position to assess how various policies might look in practice and how client or user sensitivities might surface. The Canada Beyond 150 experience raises the question of how government could make room for operational perspectives in the policy process more generally. Offering these officials practical training in the language and tools used to make policy, and opening up the policy process within departments and portfolios could help in this.

The experience was a reminder that working with innovative techniques does not remove the need for a solid foundation in standard policy tools. It was also a reminder of the ongoing relevance of training in policy fundamentals. ▲

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Visit [www.CanadaBeyond150.ca](http://www.CanadaBeyond150.ca) to learn more about the program.