



THE BANTING POSTDOCTORAL FELLOWSHIPS PROGRAM EVALUATION SUMMARY

About the Banting PDF Program

The Banting PDF program was announced in the 2010 federal budget as part of a broader strategy to increase Canadian capacity for research excellence. The objectives of the Banting PDF program are to: attract and retain top-tier postdoctoral talent, both nationally and internationally; develop their leadership potential; and position them for success as research leaders of tomorrow.

- Valued at \$70,000 per year for two years.
- 70 new awards annually, with a total of 140 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 \(SSHRC\)](#).

Banting PDF program website: <https://banting.fellowships-bourses.gc.ca/>

Results: What We Found

- There is a continued need for a postdoctoral support that aims to attract, retain, and support the training of top-tier Canadian and international early-career researchers. There is a role for the federal government and granting agencies in providing this type of postdoctoral support, and the Banting PDF is intended to meet this need (per its program authorities), although there are concerns of overlap between the Banting PDF program and other Tri-agency PDFs.
- The Banting PDF is recognized as a prestigious, competitive award in Canada. However, available data indicates that awareness outside of Canada is limited and that the Banting PDF program is not effective in attracting international candidates from outside Canada.
- Although the Banting PDF program is producing its expected outputs and achieving its immediate and intermediate outcomes, it is not clear that this can be solely attributed to the Banting PDF. Banting PDF recipients and unfunded applicants are largely achieving the same immediate outcomes during their PDF training (e.g., establishing collaborations, leadership development activities), and recipients demonstrate better outcomes on some, but not all, measures of research excellence compared to their unfunded applicant peers.
- Banting PDF recipients are recognized as leaders in their fields and are more likely to be working in research intensive careers, in tenure track academic positions, and in Canada. Here, it is important to note that Banting PDF recipients are recognized by supervisors as having inherent leadership potential and would likely have achieved those outcomes without the Banting PDF.

Performance, Evaluation and Results Branch, Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR), 2024



- Findings indicate that key design features of the Banting PDF program may be limiting the effective achievement of intended outcomes. These include the application process and program requirements such as synergy with the host institution and demonstration of leadership and research excellence. The latter review criteria may limit the attraction of top-tier international talent in favour of those who are more advanced in their research careers and already connected to the institution.
- The Banting PDF is unique among similar PDF programs reviewed in its commitment to equity, diversity, and inclusion (EDI) in the program's assessment, although improvements can still be made for equity-deserving groups.

Recommendations and Management Response

- 1 The Banting PDF program should consider adjusting key features of the award (e.g., award value, allowances, and duration) to remain prestigious and competitive in comparison to other international programs.

Response: Management agrees. Based on the direction established by Budget 2024, and in conjunction with the Tri-Agency Training Strategy initiative, the enhanced suite of scholarships and fellowship programs will be streamlined into one talent program. Consequently, the agencies will assess and determine the key features of the Banting award to help design a new harmonized Tri-Agency postdoctoral level program to make the latter prestigious and competitive in comparison to other international programs.

- 2 The Banting PDF program needs to clarify its objective of attracting international candidates to meet the program's target of 50% international nominations.

Response: Management agrees, and the agencies will use the learnings from the Banting program evaluation to establish and clarify the objectives of a new harmonized Tri-agency postdoctoral program with respect to attracting international candidates.

- 3 The Banting PDF program should take steps to increase awareness of the award among the international research community, including enhancing current activities and the monitoring of these activities.

Response: Management agrees. While learnings from the Banting program evaluation will inform the design of the new harmonized Tri-agency postdoctoral program that will be established as a result of the Budget 2024 announcement, the agencies will review the current outreach and communication strategy for training programs and will identify the steps required to increase awareness of this new postdoctoral award among the international research community.

- 4 The Banting PDF program should develop specific leadership development and mentorship program elements during the tenure of the fellowship to better develop Banting PDF recipients' leadership potential and position them as future research leaders.

Response: Management agrees, and learnings from the Banting program evaluation will inform the identification and implementation of the new harmonized Tri-agency postdoctoral program elements to better develop award recipients' leadership potential.

Performance, Evaluation and Results Branch, Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR), 2024



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The Banting PDF program should improve application and selection processes to better ensure transparency, including:

- Define and improve measurement of leadership and research excellence using an EDI lens in order to ensure alignment with the Tri-agencies’ strategic priorities related to research excellence and EDI.
- Reduce weight of the synergy with the host institution review criterion.
- Review program features, including the window of eligibility and mobility requirement, to ensure that barriers are reduced for equity-deserving groups.

Response: Management agrees, and the agencies will undertake an examination of potential EDI barriers in the current suite of postdoctoral programs and address them within the design and delivery of the new harmonized Tri-agency postdoctoral program that will be established as a result of the Budget 2024 announcement.

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The Banting PDF program needs to improve end of award reporting to improve assessment of program performance and barriers to access.

Response: Management agrees. Based on learnings from the Banting program evaluation, and contingent on the direction of the Tri-Agency Training Strategy, and the agencies will identify steps needed to improve end of award reporting to allow for enhanced assessment of program performance and barriers to access.

About the Evaluation

CIHR's Evaluation Unit conducted the evaluation in 2022, 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 2014-15 to 2020-21



Second evaluation since the program's inception in 2010

Methodology



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



Surveys of unfunded applicants and recipients,



Key informant interviews and case studies

Full Evaluation Report: <https://cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/54133.html>

MAP: <https://cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/54134.html>

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