



RETURN BIDS TO:

Department of Foreign Affairs and
International Trade
125 Sussex Dr., Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0G2

Attention: Tayisa Petryshyn

REQUEST FOR INFORMATION (RFI)

**Proposal to: Foreign Affairs and International
Trade Canada**

We hereby offer to sell to Her Majesty the Queen
in right of Canada, in accordance with the terms
and conditions set out herein, referred to herein
or attached hereto, the goods, services, and
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sheets at the price(s) set out therefore.

TITLE	
Integrated Strategic Communications Plan for the promotion of Canada as a study and research destination	
SOLICITATION NO. 14-74158	DATE July 8, 2013
SOLICITATION CLOSURES	
On Monday, July 8, 2013 at 14:00 hours Eastern Standard Time.	
ADDRESS ENQUIRIES TO: TAYISA PETRYSHYN	
TELEPHONE: 613-944-7004	EMAIL: TAYISA.PETRYSHYN@INTERNATIONAL.GC.CA
DESTINATION OF SERVICES	
Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade 125 Sussex Dr., Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0G2	
VENDOR/FIRM NAME AND ADDRESS	
Telephone No.: Facsimile No.:	
NAME AND TITLE OF PERSON AUTHORIZED TO SIGN ON BEHALF OF THE VENDOR	
_____	_____
Signature	Date
Corporate Seal	



1.0 TITLE

Integrated Strategic Communications Plan for the promotion of Canada as a study and research destination

2.0 BACKGROUND

Canada needs an enhanced and clear communication strategy to ensure it maintains and increases its market share of international students, who make a significant contribution to Canada's future prosperity; both the development of human capital and the business of international education are key means for engagement. Recruitment and retention of international talent is an essential and increasingly important component of building a modern society and an innovative economy.

The development of human capital includes attracting the best and brightest international students and researchers to Canada. Some international students may choose to remain in Canada, constituting a desirable source of qualified immigrants who are capable of integrating into Canadian society. International students and researchers who return to their home country will become allies to Canada by fostering successful commercial and political relations, given their understanding of Canadian values. It is hoped that the time spent by international students in Canada will lead to greater visibility for Canada, fostering and encouraging future generations of international students and researchers to study in Canada.

There is a global competition between industrialized countries to attract young international Highly Qualified and Skilled Persons (HQSP), including holders of technical degrees in key trades sectors. The OECD estimates that the global demand for international higher education is set to grow from 2.6 million students in 2008 to 7.2 million by 2025, with most of the students interested in studying in English or French (to a lesser degree). Canada is uniquely positioned to meet the growing competition, to increase its market share and to attract talent. With its technical colleges and vocational institutes providing programs closely related to industry and its highly professional university curricula, Canada is offering top training directly linked to job opportunities. Education in Canada is characterized by great variety and comparable quality across all institutions.

International education is now broadly recognized at federal and provincial levels for its positive contribution to Canada in education, labor market planning, industry innovation and with an economic contribution of \$C 8.2 billion and compound growth of 7% per year. Worth mentioning is that Education has become a major export; for example, it is Canada's single largest service export to China. The spending of international students in Canada is greater than Canada's export of unwrought aluminum, even greater than the export value of helicopters, airplanes and spacecraft.

DFAIT International Education Strategy

In 2007, the Government of Canada announced the establishment of a new international education promotion program, funded with \$1 million per year managed by the unit Edu-Canada (a Unit of the International Education and Youth Division). It was aimed at leveraging DFAIT's network of embassies and consulates to undertake promotion efforts and attract more international students to Canada. As the delivery of education in Canada is of exclusive provincial and territorial jurisdiction, DFAIT entered into a partnership with the provincial and territorial governments via the Council of Ministers of Education, Canada (CMEC) to jointly manage Canada's education brand.¹

DFAIT strived to help Canadian universities and colleges enter into collaborative arrangements with their foreign counterparts (i.e. to export their curriculum or to open campuses abroad, and to create more

¹ As education is of provincial/territorial jurisdiction, education ministries are also very active internationally. DFAIT works closely with provincial and territorial governments in promoting Canada's education abroad, including through bi-annual meetings of the Federal-Provincial Consultative Committee on Education-Related International Activities (FPCERIA).



opportunities for Canadian students to study abroad.). DFAIT improved service offerings to education sector clients, by naming Education as a full economic sector of the Trade Commissioner Service.

Despite competitors' far more substantial annual investment to attract top talent, Canada's modest \$C 1.0 million allocated each year from 2007-2012 has been effectively managed to achieve stated goals:

- Increase enrollment of international students to Canada by 51% between 2007-2012 (the period of the Edu-Canada pilot);
- Coordination of an education brand and activities across government and with the education sector; (Achieved with the launch of "Imagine, Education au-in Canada" and promotional events)
- Increase the international use of Canadian curricula by 10% (Achieved with 21% increase from 2006-2010);
- Increase number of agreements facilitating two-way student mobility; (Achieved via bilateral roundtables, bilateral arrangements and scholarships based on partnerships and Signature Event Profile)
- Enhanced client service through the creation of an online portal for market intelligence;
- In 2012- 2013, DFAIT missions organized over 170 education promotion events in over 90 countries.

Budget 2011 provided an envelope of \$10 million over two years to develop and implement a revised strategy drawing on the recommendations by an independent Advisory Panel reporting to both Minister of Finance and Minister of International Trade.

Concluding an extensive consultation and assessment process, the independent Advisory Panel on Canada's International Education Strategy presented the Government with fourteen recommendations to position Canada as the 21st century leader in international education. The recommendations provide both tangible and aspirational goals to fuel Canada's ability to attract top talent to study, conduct research, and potentially immigrate, thereby contributing substantially to Canada's future prosperity.

Among the recommendations, the Report proposes:

1. Focusing on growth markets (China, India, Brazil, the Middle East and North Africa, as well as Turkey, Vietnam and Mexico);
2. Regrouping grants and scholarships available to international graduate students and post-doctoral fellows under one label/brand, with a focus on priority areas aligned with Canada's innovation and prosperity agenda (though will not be carried out before Canada's fiscal outlook improves and an assessment is made of existing awards and recommendations are made for the most appropriate funding mechanisms); and
3. *Increasing marketing of Canada's brand.*

The Imagine Education au/in Canada Brand

The creation of an international brand for Canada's education sector, something sought by stakeholders for many years, is the foundation of Edu-Canada. Research demonstrates that Canada's education systems (incorporating different models in each of the provinces and territories) are highly regarded for their quality but is confusing to international students due to the disjointed nature. Research also indicates that international students' first choice is usually the country they wish to study in and it is for this reason that most of our main competitors (Australia, UK, France, and Germany) have all created strong national education brands.

In 2007, following a competitive process, a marketing firm was contracted and proposed the essence of the brand "Empowered Idealism", with the actual logotype and a communication platforms. A consensus



among all the provinces and DFAIT was reached to retain the Imagine Education au/in Canada Brand name which would best capture the whole of Canada offer.² Various focus groups of stakeholders and international students currently in Canada were surveyed about the Communication platform and the logo for reactions.

In June 2008, Edu-Canada started to develop promotional material and communication tools using the Brand. Technical and graphic norms were also developed and published on a Brand extranet (www.imagine.cmec.ca) including a tool to download promotional tools (such as images and logos). The Brand Extranet has two levels of access. Canadian missions abroad and provinces have access to all the branded promotional tools and eligible Canadian institutions and NGOs have access only to the logo.

The Imagine Education au/in Canada brand (including the protected trade-mark (- logotype- and the Brand Use Guidelines) is the official visual identity to be used by Canadian missions abroad to promote Canada as a study destination including websites, promotional items and brochures. Close to 250 Canadian institutions use the Brand logotype on their promotional material.

The Imagine Education au/in Canada brand is intended to suggest that the high value of the Canadian educational experience is unrivalled. Essentially, the brand conveys a message of openness and supportiveness through the concept of "**Empowered Idealism.**" Like those of our competitors, our education systems are founded on quality, and our brand aims to convince international students that the quality of a Canadian education will provide them with the tools they need to develop their full potential. Our brand is therefore intended to be a springboard that will help them fulfill their dreams and ambitions.

The Brand manager (also the Project Authority of this RFI) ensures that in carrying out the international promotional campaign, missions abide by the Brand use guidelines and participate in regular training (through Webinars), while providing counsel and oversight of material created or adapted by missions.

In 2011, DFAIT commissioned Ipsos Reid to conduct a qualitative research on the attractiveness of Canada as a study destination and on the resonance of "Imagine Education au/in Canada." The objective of this research was to gather insights among target audiences in three key markets, Brazil, China and India. The results show that Canada tends to follow the United States, the United Kingdom and Australia among preferred foreign destinations of study, but is not a top of mind destination. The prestige associated with world-class institutions, tradition or expertise in a particular area of education are serious draws for foreign students and are not always seen as attributes of education in Canada. It was acknowledged that Canadian credentials open doors worldwide.

There was positive reaction to the brochure and a clear interest for more specific and relevant information to change people's perception. The name "Education au/in Canada" and the prominence of "Imagine" in the logo created some confusion among the participants. It was suggested that there should be more emphasis on the word - "Education" and "Canada" in the graphic design.

Greater advertising and outreach efforts, stronger presence in social media networks, providing our education advisors at our overseas missions with material and unique selling points for Canada are required in order to raise awareness about education in Canada and its benefits relative to the other top-of-mind study destinations, such as the US, UK, and Australia.

Promotional Strategy

As of 2013, 135 missions have an Education Marketing officer and 10 of those have at least one full time Education Marketing Officer. The number of activities has grown from 150 organized in 63 missions in

² Education Canada would have been the best option marketing wise but some were of the views that it would sound too much like a Federal department of education.



2010 to 170 activities in 90 missions in 2013. A growing number of Heads of Missions and Senior Trade Commissioners are choosing Education promotion as a Priority Sector.

Canadian missions abroad engage in various promotional activities such as:

- Canadian presence at education fairs or Canada education fairs;
- Journalist missions or Agent/Counsellors Familiarization tours;
- Networking events; and,
- Outreach at local institutions.

Missions also provide support for core Trade Commissioner Services to Canadian educational institutions.

Promotional materials include:

- Printed and digital material promoting Canada as a study destination to students, parents, agents and education counsellors mainly through the www.educationau-incanada.ca site;
- Presentations for prospective students (multilingual);
- Presentations for education agents (multilingual);
- Brochures (10 languages: English, French, Spanish, Portuguese, Chinese, Japanese, Korean, Arabic, Italian and Russian);
- Sector-specific brochure (4 brochures focusing on education in the sectors of: Information Sciences and Communications Technologies; Energy Sciences and Communications Technologies; Environmental Sciences and Technologies; Life Sciences and Biomedical Technologies); and,
- Map of Canadian universities and colleges.

All missions promote their events through free or low cost publicity and networking leveraging. Because of the Publicity limitations, only a few will engage in paid publicity.

Education Marketing officers also leverage Sectorial recruitment opportunities, in collaboration with the Trade Commissioner of these sector (such as the Farnborough Air Show in the UK , an Oil & Gas show in Nigeria, etc.).

Comparator countries: maintaining Canada's market share

Competing Governments (UK/British Council; Australia/Australia Education International; US/Education USA; France/Campus France, etc.) invested heavily in promotion efforts to attract and retain international students. With its decentralized education system, and no federal ministry of education to lead the way, Canada was falling behind and losing market share.

Our competitors are increasing their efforts to attract Highly Qualified Skilled People (HQSP), particularly in the United States. The economic downturn is affecting education markets, but international students also have short-term impact with regional distribution effects. There has been modest growth for Canada, but other countries are growing much faster.

Comparing Canada's annual budget for education marketing with that of competitor countries, Canada clearly risks falling behind as Australia spends \$C 34.0 million; New Zealand \$C 15.6 million; and the United States \$C 13 million. Education USA (a program of the State Department) has funding for promotion only; it does not include operational costs (salaries or premises) of offices abroad. The British Council has an annual total budget of \$C1.25 billion to which the Prime Minister's Initiative has added \$3.6 million per year.

There is a need to develop a comprehensive, sound strategic Communication Plan that will uphold and illuminate Canada's brand of quality and excellence in education. It should reflect Canada's empowered idealism and align with other important national strategies (such as Canada's S & T strategy, a revamped



immigration strategy and a labour market strategy). The strategy should leverage a variety of communication channels (including e-communication) to reach the primary and secondary audiences (as described in the scope section).

The process to develop this strategy should involve international education partners and stakeholders such as Other Federal Departments, Provincial and Territorial departments of Education and national and regional Association involved in International education.

3.0 Objective

1. *Development of a comprehensive 3 year, integrated communications strategy that will see the profile of the Imagine Education au/in Canada brand reflected in all areas of marketing, media relations, event promotion and e-communication;*
2. *To ensure the coordinated messages of the brand value proposition and representation of education opportunities in Canada are delivered with greater impact in priority countries.*

The project is expected to commence mid-November with final delivery 4 months later.

4.0 The RFI Process

1. Nature of the RFI

This RFI is intended to:

• Invite industry experts and potential suppliers of relevant products and services to provide input as to potential solutions and approaches to meet Edu-Canada's requirements or to re-align expectations with industry capability, experience, and direction.

• Invite industry experts and potential suppliers to share their insights on any potential improvements to Edu-Canada's planned approach toward a digital communication strategy.

• Invite potential suppliers to express the degree of interest that they may have in participating in the project.

1.2 Nature and Format of Responses Requested

Respondents are requested to provide their comments, concerns, and, where applicable, alternative recommendations regarding how the requirements or objectives described in this RFI could be satisfied. Respondents should explain any assumptions they make in their responses.

There is no formal structure or format that a response to this RFI should meet. The Respondent should feel free to submit whatever information it feels would make a useful and relevant contribution to DFAIT's analysis of this project and the development of solicitation documents to deliver a product or solution to fulfill its requirements.

DFAIT only requests that any submissions to this RFI cite the question appearing below (s. 4.0) to which the Respondent's information pertains. This will aid DFAIT personnel in the gathering and collating of submitted information addressing specific areas of the project.

Responses may be submitted either electronically to the email address of the Contracting Authority found on the cover page or through hard copies delivered to the mailing address found on the cover page.



2.1 Treatment of Responses

2.1.2 Use of Responses

Responses will not be formally evaluated. However, the responses received may be used by DFAIT to develop or modify procurement strategies. DFAIT will review all responses received by the RFI closing date. DFAIT may, at its discretion, review responses received after the RFI closing date.

2.1.3 Review Team

A review team composed of representatives of DFAIT will review the responses. DFAIT reserves the right to hire any independent consultant, or use any Government resources that it considers necessary, to review any response. Not all members of the review team will necessarily review all responses.

2.2.3 Confidentiality

Respondents should mark any portions of their response that they consider proprietary or confidential.

2.3.4 Follow-up Activity

DFAIT may, in its discretion, contact any Respondents to follow up with additional questions or for clarification of any aspect of a response. DFAIT may invite one, some, or all of the Respondents to present their submissions and/or perform a presentation for DFAIT. DFAIT is not obliged to invite any Respondents for this further exploration nor are any Respondents obliged to participate.

3.0 Communication Strategy

The following is a list of high-level requirements DFAIT has identified for the communication strategy project. This list was developed through a preliminary examination of the factors driving the need for a solution. These requirements are representative of the initial visioning of the communication strategy needed and will be subject to more intense consideration and, possibly, modification throughout the development of the project. **The response to the RFI should include feedback or suggestions to the following:**

- 1) Feedback of the Brand Essence (Empowered idealism) with recommendations for closing gaps and message fine-tuning.
- 2) Option for developing key messages per target audience (see below) and in eight priority countries and regions such as Brazil, China, India, Mexico, Vietnam, Turkey and North Africa and the Middle East region.
- 3) Identification of adequate channels (publicity, media relations, event promotion and e-communication including a social media strategy).
- 4) Suggestions for approach to consultations with our partners and stakeholders such as the Federal Provincial Consultative Committee on Education Related International Affairs (FPCCERIA) composed of representatives from Provincial and Territorial Departments of Education. Many associations involved in international education will be consulted such as the AUCC, ACCC, CBIE, Languages Canada, etc., and they will be invited to liaise with their members' Canadian educational institutions. Other federal government departments with an interest in attracting international students such as Citizenship and Immigration Canada (CIC), Industry Canada, Human Resources and Skills Development Canada (HRSDC) and the Canadian Tourism Commission will also be consulted.



- 5) Potential approach to promoting Canada's education offering to international students, researchers and potential institutional partners by highlighting distinctive features in study, research and student life while leveraging the Canadian Scholarships, the Science & Technologies innovations, tourism and the professional work opportunities for those who wish to stay after completing their studies.
- 6) How to address all education sectors- ranging from language schools, K-12 to post-secondary education (colleges, polytechnics, Cégeps and universities).
- 7) How best to target Primary audiences, first and second level Influencers such as:
 - a. Primary audience:
 - i. Students at the K-12 level;
 - ii. Students at the Post-secondary level either at the University Undergraduate or College;
 - iii. Students at the Graduate level or researchers
 - iv. Non-Canadian Educational institutions
 - b. First level Influencers:
 - i. Parents;
 - ii. Educational agents;
 - iii. School advisors/counselors;
 - iv. Specialized Media
 - c. Second level influencers (placed by order of importance):
 - i. Alumni; General Media;
 - ii. Ethnic diasporas in Canada;
 - iii. Current students in Canada.
- 8) Recommendations for cross promotion of Canada as a top study and research destination with federal and provincial/territorial partners and with a selected number of international education sector stakeholders.
- 9) Comments on the positioning of Canada's education sector abroad by using the research available and/or recommend additional studies.
- 10) The key message might be tested through in person and virtual public opinion research with target audience (pending public opinion research approval from the Communication Department at DFAIT) managed by another contractor identified by DFAIT. The public opinion research objectives are:
 - a) To ensure that the key messages proposed resonate with the intended targeted audience.
 - b) To allow the contractor to revise messages to ensure appropriateness.
- 12) Provide high level recommendations (not including any public opinion testing) on revising the actual Brand Graphics platform including types of photos, colours, tone of voice, and the communication structure used in our promotional ads, banners, backwall, and other communication material.



- 13) How we could ensure coherence by keeping emerging recommendations focused on actions that are practical, affordable, and within the Minister's mandate (while involving and sharing insights with provincial partners and education sector stakeholders, as appropriate, to generate buy-in of the strategy, and involve them in collaborating in delivering the same key messages through their channels of communications.
- 14) Recommendations or advice on moderating a (or some) consultation(s) with education institutions across Canada, with provincial and territorial departments and with associations involved in international education identified by the Project Authority. The consultation will be done by distance using the web. There could be consultation over the phone or in person, if necessary.
- 15) Provide comments on whether the proposed plan is feasible for implementation by DFAIT within the established timeframe and using existing departmental resources.
- 16) Recommendations on building plans for subsequent years.

4.0 Areas of Specific Interest

These are some of the key elements of the Communication Strategy project for which DFAIT is seeking feedback. Though respondents are invited to make any comments or suggestions freely, DFAIT does request that respondents comment specifically on the subjects addressed in the questions below. DFAIT also requests that respondents indicate the number of the question listed below to which the responses pertain.

1. Based on the requirements defined in Section 3.0 above, is it feasible to target the full list of target audiences in 6 countries and one region?
2. If the contract is awarded by the beginning of November, is it realistic to give a 4 months delay for completion?
3. Is the scope of the communication strategy proposed (3 years) an adequate timeline to ensure a communication strategy?
4. Would it be suggested to do focus groups (public opinion research) with proposed new key communication lines? If so, what kind of testing is suggested? Are focus groups recommended? If yes, is it recommended in all priority countries/regions? Are there other means than focus groups that would be valuable?
5. What approaches would you recommend for achieving the goals of this project?
6. What would you expect to be a realistic budget for a project of this scope?
A) \$50,000 – \$99,999? B) \$100,000-\$149,999? C) \$150,000 - \$199,999? D)\$200,000-\$250,000? What would be the most economical approach to acquire your suggested solution. Are there variations to the financial model you employ?
 - i. Note: All financial details from respondents will be treated as proprietary and confidential information if the respondent makes a declaration of confidentiality in its submission.
7. What vulnerabilities to the implementation of a communication strategy can you foresee?



8. DFAIT is required to provide all end-users with bilingual user interfaces (English and French) in both visual and audio formats. Is your suggested solution able to provide end users with a bilingual interface? To what depth is your suggested solution available in both official languages? Would it be possible to provide this in other languages as well?
9. How is your organization positioned in the industry with regard to the development and implementation of a communication strategy that meets DFAIT's objectives?
10. Are there any important considerations that you feel need to be added to our understanding of the possible with regard to the project should DFAIT wish to proceed?