

TEMPORARY FOREIGN WORKER PROGRAM RESEARCH NETWORK

REQUEST FOR PROPOSALS

WEB-EX INFORMATION SESSION (July 10, 2019)

The Objective:

This information session is an activity reflected in the Request for Proposals for research projects on labour market impacts of the Temporary Foreign Workers Program. The purpose of this information session is two-fold:

- To present the data platform for research on temporary foreign workers to potential bidders to facilitate collaboration with Employment and Social Development Canada and support submissions under the Request for Proposals.
- To leverage researchers' expertise and to explore the potential of the database in filling the gaps in terms of the policy-relevant research/evaluation questions.

Presenters:

Suzanne Tetreault, Evaluation Manager at Employment and Social Development Canada

Byron Spencer, Research Program Director at the Canadian Research Data Centre Network

Philippe Massé, Director General of Temporary Foreign Worker Program, Employment and Social Development Canada

Hai Hong Li, Data Analyst, Temporary Foreign Worker Program at Employment and Social Development Canada

Douré Grekou, Manager at the Canadian Centre for Data Development and Economic Research, Statistics Canada

Andy Handouyahia, Evaluation Manager at Employment and Social Development Canada

Workshop Transcript:

Welcome and introduction:

Suzanne Tetreault:

Welcome to the information session about the Request for Proposal for Research on Labour Market Impacts of the Temporary Foreign Worker Program

My Name is Suzanne Tetreault, manager in the Evaluation Directorate. I am here today with many representative from our department, ESDC, and Statistic Canada.

Today's presentation will be done all in English. It will be recorded and the transcription will be translated and both version of the presentation (English and French) will be posted on the Buy and sell Site.

All along the presentation you are welcome to send us your questions via the Chat devise or wait at the specific question periods to ask question. We will try to answer them all during the session, or if not possible, the questions and answers will be posted on the Buy and Sell site, in both official languages.

Additional questions could be forwarded to us, via Buy and Sell, after the Webex session if you need further clarifications.

Just want to remind all of you that we are here to help all potential bidders to develop their proposal and that in order to be fair, and not release privileged information to one group, we will only respond to questions outside of this session if they are forwarded to us via the Buy and Sell site and so all could see the answers. The best way to communicate with us after today's session is through the Buy and sell site.

Today's presentation will cover the rationale for the project, a brief introduction by Byron Spenser from the Canadian Research Data Centres Network about the potential of research networking around this project and it will be followed by high level description of the program by the Director General of the TFW Program: Philippe Masse.

We will then have three technical presentations

- TFW data will be presented by the program data specialist Hai Hong Li
- Douré Grekou from Statistics Canada will present the Canadian Employer-Employee Dynamics Database and the Canadian Center for Data Development and Economic Research (CDER)
- Finally Andy Handouyahia, chief of the methodology unit of the Evaluation Directorate at ESDC, will come and present some consideration and lessons learned form a Previous Data Platform.

So lets start.

Through this project, by connecting key data files and networking with other researchers, we are hoping to support the research capacity of the community of economic researchers. We are hoping to enhance the understanding of the Program's impact and learn about further data improvements to support better analysis on the Program's impacts.

Byron Spencer, the Research Program Director from the CRDCN will talk to you a little bit about the collaboration around this project.

Byron Spencer:

Thank you very much for inviting me to make a few remarks in connection with this Request for Proposals.

To introduce myself, I am the Research Program Director for the Canadian Research Data Centres Network. In that capacity, I can tell you that this project will help to facilitate and encourage policy relevant research that can inform government policy. To facilitate that means working with government to make important administrative records, such as those linked to temporary foreign workers, available for analysis. I think we have had considerable success in that regard and ESDC has already made a number of major administrative files available for analysis and we are very grateful for that. And this is a case where they are making files available with linkages to other files and that is a great step towards helping to inform government policy. Other government departments have also been making similar investments with the result that the sheer volume of files with policy interest that are now available has grown immensely.

So that is the first aspect of my work is to help get those files into the hands of people who might be able to use them to make policy relevant analysis. The second aspect of my task as Research Program Director is to insure that those various files are not only made available but are in fact analyzed. And I am pleased to report that we have had some success in this regard in our ongoing discussions with ESDC. One matter that we have emphasized is that many of the newly available data files are complex. That is just the nature of them as they are typically collected for administrative purposes and not for analysis. That means that the people who are working with them need to have time to become familiar with the files themselves and so we are pleased that the RFP (Request for Proposals) that we are discussing today is of substantial duration in that researchers who are going to take on this task will have a reasonable amount of time to complete the work.

Another point that we have emphasized is the benefit of having someone from the Department on the team. The benefit is first, to insure that due attention is given to

policy relevant implications of what is learned. And second, is that to continue the engagement, the Department is able to identify timely course correction in the event that there is some misinterpretation of the data and what they mean. I think that that is an extremely valuable thing to have.

So this webinar represents the beginning of a type of research. We focus today on providing information that is going to be available through this Request for Proposals and that will depend on your understanding of the data discussed here as well as the other data that will be made available.

We're thankful for ESDC for both, providing support for researchers to undertake this research and for willing to work with the winning teams as they undertake their analysis. We look forward to even more of this work happening and we are very pleased that this is happening.

Thank you very much, Suzanne.

Suzanne Tetreault:

Thanks, Byron

I just want to re-emphasize that we are pursuing this to work with the research community and also to invite the private sector to collaborate with us on this project. This means different groups will all be treated the same during the assessment of the project proposals.

I will now turn the microphone over to Philippe Massé, the Director General of the Temporary Foreign Worker Program. He will be providing with an overview of the Program for which we are aiming to obtain an assessment.

Philippe Massé:

Thank you.

Good afternoon everyone and thanks for your participation. I am happy to be here and am really excited about the prospect of new data coming online for analysis so we can get a better handling on the impact of this Program which is a complex and often mis-loved Program.

I will not provide a detailed overview of the Program as it can be fairly extensive and complex but I do want to provide some context from the program policy perspective of the data in terms of the things that we hear and the concerns that our political leaders express to us regularly. So we are hoping to get some help in getting some answers.

The primary role of the Program is to provide employers with access to workers, when they are unable to find Canadians and to help fill labour shortages. So we have a number of streams in the Program depending on the needs and each has their own rules and requirements. We can provide all of that information on the website for everyone to have access to (this information is available in the body of the Request for Proposals). As part of this transaction we try to balance the needs of the Canadian labour market while ensuring that Canadians have opportunities and that the Program isn't acting to reduce working conditions or wages. These are the two elements that we try to balance. We are of course worried about workers' protections as well but in this context it is really about the balance between access to workers for employers and also protecting the Canadian labour market.

The policies that we have in place try to take those things into account and mitigate any potential negative impacts. If you follow the Program, you might be aware that in 2014 there were a number of reforms to the Program that were made to further strengthen this aspect due to the concerns that some employers were misusing the Program and that business models were being built around the Program in that it was becoming a means to access cheap labour and that it acts as a barrier to increasing wages and improving working conditions.

So, as I mentioned, we will provide more detailed information as to what those reforms are as they are relevant in understanding the direction of trends in the Program and its various elements and should be factored into the analysis for this project.

Those are concerns that led to policy changes but more recently, the Auditor General took a look at the Program from a number of aspects and one of the concerns raised was the lack of empirical evidence regarding the impacts of the Program and the magnitude of those impacts. And also concerns about jobs for Canadians and wage suppression are all things we hear from our politicians and leaders as well.

I know that in the past year and a half or so there has been engagement with the research community in trying to get a handle on the empirical evidence and that some initial work had been done based on existing data. There was a workshop organized and a number of challenges were identified including the lack of appropriate data in particular. A lot of the data was at the macroeconomic level and not very detailed from a user perspective. The other big challenge was related to disentangling the various types of foreign workers that are here in Canada. You may know that we approve a certain number of those that require government approval but there are a lot of other workers that come from other countries and work in Canada and are exempt from our particular program and that are exempt from a labour market test and we were not able to disentangle those.

I think this data provides an opportunity to try to overcome some of those challenges, in particular, moving from that macro view where the Program is seen as a small part of the labour market and perhaps not influencing the movement of wages at the macro level to more the micro level and this is really important for us in getting the individual data, the firm data, the sector and regional data. This is where the Program might have more visible impacts. Some of the questions we get regularly are related to whether the Program is suppressing wages and if so, where are these effects seen? At the sectoral level? At the regional level? What characterizes users versus non-users of the Program? These are questions we don't have good answers for.

Impacts of the reforms in 2014 are also something we don't know much about. What happened to those firms that were using the Program and no longer do or face reduced access? Are they still around? Perhaps they have increased wages?

I realize all of these questions are not necessarily able to be answered through this project, I am just giving you the context of the questions that we receive. I think the other aspect we don't want to forget are the positive impacts of the Program. How does this Program support employers in meeting their labour needs? How does it contribute to growth? How might it contribute to maintaining Canadian wages?

I would say that is the high-level overview of some of the issues we deal with regularly. I would be happy to answer any further questions.

Suzanne Tetreault:

Thanks, Philippe. Any questions to Philippe Massé about the Program?

(No questions were raised).

I will now talk to you about the Request for Proposals and the purpose before we turn over to the technical piece about the data and data issues and accessing the data.

The purpose of the Request for Proposals is to address some of the evaluation and research limitations that exist. Such as limited access to administrative data. Research is largely theoretical. There is a lack of connecting between the key data files. There is continued debate about the methodologies and how to address those issues that Mr. Massé just talked about such as distinguishing impacts on sectors and regions and the inability to separate foreign workers coming through different programs.

The expectation with this Request for Proposals is that teams of researchers will use the administrative program data from the Temporary Foreign Worker Program, and other data from the Canadian Employer-Employee Dynamics Database to produce new research. The key questions are identified in the Request for Proposals. We asking you to look at the impacts on the labour market, including the potential suppression of

wages and displacement of Canadian workers; the extent to which the Program is meeting the needs of employers and the labour market as a whole, and the impacts of the 2014 reforms on Canadian businesses and the labour market.

Through this Request for Proposals, ESDC is looking to enter into two contracts. The maximum value of each contract is \$85,000. The data access and preparation by Statistics Canada will be paid for by ESDC and is excluded from the contract amount. So in your budget preparation you should be focussed on your professional fees.

The level of effort needs to be clearly laid out in the proposals and should be identified for each research issue to be addressed. No more than \$55,000 should be allocated for the first issue which is the potential impact on the labour market, focussing on potential suppression of wages and displacement of workers by the low-wage stream. The second issue should be allocated no more than \$15,000 to address the extent to which the Program is meeting the needs of employer and the labour market. And the third issue looking at the Program reforms should also be allocated no more than \$15,000.

One other aspect expected in the proposal is the expected start date and duration for research in the Canadian Centre for Data Development and Economic Research. We know there will be administrative hurdles which can be adjusted if need be but the proposal needs to have something for us to see when and how you will allocate resources. Once the contract is signed we can provide more flexibility if administrative issues arise in terms of timing for accessing the data.

The assessment of the proposals will be done by ESDC in collaboration with Statistics Canada. Make sure you look at the Request for Proposals and the Technical Merit criteria because that is how we will assess the bids. Lots of criteria is there that needs to be taken into consideration for your proposal.

The understanding of project objectives and issues, including the level of effort to address will be assessed. Please refer to the Request for Proposals for specific details.

The experience and expertise of researchers will also be assessed. The criteria are clear in the Request for Proposals as to how we will assess those.

The research relevance and methodology will also be assessed. For research relevance we look at how the proposal is situated in the literature that exists and how the research will address gaps in knowledge.

The quality of the methodology will be an important criteria. The soundness of the approach, the expected outputs from the data analysis using the Canadian Employer-Employee Dynamics Database, etc. will all be part of the assessment.

Any questions at this point with regards to the Request for Proposals?

Audience member question:

How did you arrive at the amount of \$85,000 for the amount for the project? It is a tremendous amount of work potentially and would be interesting to know how you arrived at that figure.

Suzanne Tetreault:

We were allocated a budget for the overall project and had to look at other, similar projects. But given that this specific project has never been done in the past, we estimated based on experience but there is no magic formula for us to arrive at this budget. We hope this will be sufficient to deliver good research projects.

Audience member:

It's just that for this particular project the work has to be conducted by somebody in Ottawa and then it will require that to do the work at Statistics Canada we have to be confident with these different files and work with the rest of the team since you require researchers with different expertise. So I am wondering about the proportioning of the budget set out by you?

Suzanne Tetreault:

We hear you. In terms of accessing the data there are likely ways to alleviate some of the costs for you. Douré from Statistics Canada will speak more about this. In terms of the budget proportions, the message for researchers is that the first issue is the one that is the most important from our point of view. That is why we had to identify amounts. If the proposal is showing us some limitations because of the budget, it will be the same situation for all bidders so at this point the budget remains firm and we will expect that the proposal will come within budget.

Now I will turn it over to Hai Hong Li who is the data expert from the Temporary Foreign Worker Program. She will present some information on the data set being transferred to Statistics Canada.

Hai Hong Li:

Hello everyone.

In this section I will present the Temporary Foreign Worker's Program administrative data that has been prepared for this study. If you have any questions I will be happy to answer them at the end.

When we designed this data we realized that compared to many programs, the Temporary Foreign Worker Program is unique in the sense that the program delivery is jointly administered by two departments. Specifically, ESDC conducts Labour Market Impact Assessments and approves number of positions. During this process we collect detailed information on jobs and employers with limited information on workers. Then IRCC approves worker permits to the foreign workers that are coming through the Program.

So it is important to be aware that the number of workers is not necessarily the same as the number of positions. If we want to analyze the impact of the Program on the labour market, it is better to use IRCC's work permit data which can provide a more accurate estimate of the worker population that actually enters the Canadian labour market through the Program.

This is why we decided to link the two files together, to have the complete information. The two files share the same key variables which is the Labour Market Impact Assessment (LMIA) file number. This is a unique key for each application. Through this variable we were able to connect workers in IRCC's data to jobs and employers in the ESDC data. As a result, for each LMIA application we established a three way linkage between workers, jobs and employers. This linked data will be linked with Statistics Canada's data in which workers and employers can be tracked through their unique IDs.

In the next few slides we will go through the major data elements on workers, jobs and employers one by one.

First, let's look at the data elements for workers. This data mainly comes from the IRCC data. We have the unique worker ID. If you count this number of unique worker IDs you are able to count number of workers. We also have demographic variables on the workers such as gender, date of birth, country of citizenship, residence, marital status and native language.

We also have work permit effective and expiry dates. This can help you estimate the job period and job duration. We also have serial number to each work permit so you can count the number of work permits.

The last variable is the program classification. This is a variable that we created to help researchers separate workers coming through the Temporary Foreign Worker Program versus the International Mobility Program.

Next we'll look at the data elements for employers. This is Labour Market Impact Assessment information (LMIA). In this information we have a nine-digit business number for each employer. This is also an ID to track employers in Statistics Canada

data. We also have employer names, activity, location, website, number of employees employed under the business number. Regarding the LMIA, the Program does request a lot of information in the application form. For example, for the benefit of Canadians and permanent residents, whether hiring a temporary foreign worker will create jobs, transfer skills, fill a labour shortage, or provides other labour market benefits. Also, in the last 12 months, how many Canadians or temporary foreign workers were laid off and what were the reasons for layoffs.

Also, for the number of positions requested, what is the rationale to justify that request. In the cases where the employer requests the same positions for more than one location, we will ask the employer to provide the number of Canadian employees and temporary foreign worker employees that are employed for the current year and the previous year at this job location, and if there is any change that occurred, what is the reason for this change.

For the last slides, we list the key data elements for job offers. We have job offer details, wages and benefits and recruitment efforts. Specifically, we have four digit National Occupation Classification ID which will tell you the occupation. As well we have job title, location, wage stream, four digit North American Industry Classification System code and this variable will tell you the industry and sector that a position belongs to. We also have the expected job start date and job duration.

Other variables are on the job requirements such as language, minimum education, occupational certification or minimum experience or skills that are required for the position. Other variables include hours per week or whether a job is seasonal or not.

Regarding the wage and benefits, we have wage range that is payed to Canadian employees that work in the same position, same location, with similar work experience. So employers should pay the same rate to foreign workers. We also have the hourly wage to be paid, the overtime wage, contingent wage which is a salary paid on pieces of work. Regarding insurance, we have whether employers provide medical, dental, or disability insurances. Also we have data on employer paid pensions that are beyond the provincial/territorial requirements. Other variables we have include number of paid holidays, whether a position belongs to a union and if so, employers need to provide the pay rate listed in the Collective Bargaining Agreement and they need to pay this rate to foreign workers. In the cases where employers provide housing to foreign workers, we also ask how much rent they charge for each worker.

For the recruitment efforts, there are detailed recruitment requirements on the web page and we also list the recruitment variation and exemption for each stream. The employer needs to indicate whether they think they are eligible for certain recruitment variation or exemption and to provide a rationale for that judgment. If they are not eligible they need

to provide detailed efforts to show that they recruit Canadians and permanent residents first. The information should include the recruitment methodology, the website to advertise their positions and the duration of the advertisement.

We have now gone through all the key data elements for the administrative data. The complete list of all variables will be provided later.

I would like to remind you of some important information on this data. First, is the time period. The administrative data is prepared for the years between 2010 and 2016. Potentially 2017 data will be added later.

When we try to match the two files between ESDC and IRCC, the matching rate is close to 100% for data after 2013. For older data, a previous study shows that about 1/3 of the records could not be matched. But for these cases, we still keep all of the positive LMIA records. So the researchers can still use the number of approved positions to estimate the number of workers. In cases where the two files have overlapping variables, such as employer names and job locations, we rely on the IRCC data and then use ESDC data to complement it for missing values. Another important note is that this data only includes Temporary Foreign Worker Program data. No data from the International Mobility Program is included. But we did create a program flag to help researchers separate workers coming through different programs. The last note is about the wage requirement and this is also related to the key question of the study. The Program website lists detailed information regarding the wage requirement for each stream. You will see that for most streams, the wage requirement was based on the labour market which is the median wage for certain occupations in specific economic regions. But this is not for all of the streams. For the Seasonal Agricultural Worker Program and Agriculture stream the wage requirement was based on the commodity that employers produce. To help facilitate this knowledge we will provide a reference document to researchers.

Now I have presented all the information about the data. If you have any questions please feel free to ask.

(No questions from the audience).

Suzanne Tetreault:

Thanks, Hai Hong.

Our next presenter, Douré Grekou, will talk to us about the CEEDD (Canadian Employer-Employee Dynamics Database) and the Canadian Centre for Economic Research and Data Development.

Douré Grekou:

My first presentation will be about the Canadian Employer-Employee Dynamics Database (CEEDD).

The CEEDD is a set of linkable files from matched data between employees and employers in the Canadian labour market. The nice feature of the CEEDD is that it allows us to make two types of analysis. The first is at a cross-sectional basis so we can look at a year and based on the covariates from that year you can look at different components of the files. The second is longitudinal analysis where you can track firms or employees over time. I will talk about the years that are covered in a moment.

Something that is important to note is that the CEEDD is not a survey, it is administrative files and they contain 100% of the respective population that are covered.

This slide shows the different sources of data but I do not need to go into detail. So I will go to the next slide.

Essentially, in the CEEDD you have information about individuals, information about businesses/firms, and you also have information files that cover both individuals and businesses.

For the individual, the main source is the T1 file. There you will find demographic information such as the age and sex of the individual. Because the T1 is a summary of tax files, we have already cleaned the files so that multiple SINS are processed as one and we can follow that individual over time. Because we are talking about temporary foreign workers, the CEEDD already has some information about immigrants. For instance, we have information from the IMDB files, have information at landing so when the person becomes a permanent resident in Canada.

Besides individual level data, you also have family level data. This comes from the T1 Family file (the T1FF). In this file, it is constructed from tax files and from the individual files you can have information about the spouses, the children, and detailed information about them.

Another level is about the job and the enterprise/firm level data. This information for the jobs comes from the T4 and the Record of Employment (RoE) files. The information you will get there includes payroll, the reason for separation.

And for incorporated and unincorporated business owners, you can think of them as providing the same type of information but for different types of companies. So the incorporated business owners, you will get this information from the T2 Schedule 50. These are the business owners who own their own corporation. These businesses tend to be bigger than their counterparts, the unincorporated businesses. But for both types

of businesses you will get information about the age, gender and also the revenues that they get from their businesses. It is important to note that this is 100% coverage so it is all the businesses that the individual owns, not just their main business.

Information about the firms we record from the NALMF which is another Statistics Canada data set. From there you will have information about the revenue, the employment and the GST, imports and exports.

A nice and important feature for researchers is to have an idea of geography. For individuals we have their province available. We also have the province of employment that is obtained from the T4. For the businesses we also have the provincial location of the headquarters. Some provincial variables can be made available for the individuals, they can have the census data made available.

Now a bit about the structure of the file. Something that is important to understand is that the CEEDD is not a database, it is really a linking file. On the slide you'll see "File 1", "File 2", "File 3", so you can think of these as the final dataset that the researcher wants to obtain. To obtain it, you can think that, for instance, File 1 is the TFWP so you will have person A, and person B and then you will have variable 1, Variable 2. But in this file maybe you're missing information about the spouse, so file 2 can be another file from the CEEDD where you will have the spouse. So person A and person B are the same in File 1 and File 2 but in the second file it could include the variable on number of children or sex of the spouse. And File 3 could be a third file where we have information about the employer or business owner. So having those different sets of files make it workable. Otherwise there is no way we could put all of the data sets together because it is too big. So putting them into individual files allows the researchers to make their own selection and derive the files that they want for their own research. So selected variables are available from component files for CEEDD users.

The current vintage is a 2018 vintage. This slide gives you an idea of the coverage. The years covered right now are from 2001 to 2016 for most of them, the main exception is the IMDB (the file about the immigrants) for which we have information from 1980. Also we have information about unincorporated business owners for which we have information from 2005.

So now key notes about this specific project. It is the first time that we are linking a new file from ESDC to CEEDD. So this data integration, we are doing our best but researchers need to be prepared for some hiccups. We are still learning about some features of the data and we will help the researchers along the way. So even if there are issues with the linkage, researchers should not be worried about them.

Another important feature is that the coverage for most files are up to 2016 but the processing for some files have started for 2017. So researchers might have access to

2017 data. As Hai Hong mentioned earlier, we are working on identifying the variables that will be useful for analytical work in the future.

Are there any questions on the CEEDD before I move onto the CDER (Canadian Centre for Data Development and Economic Research)?

(No questions)

My second presentation is about the CDER which is the Canadian Centre for Data Development and Economic Research.

Starting with a bit of background, CDER is like an RDC (Research Data Centre) but for business microdata. It is hosted at Statistics Canada's headquarters in Ottawa and has been around since 2012.

We have four main activities. We provide secure access to business microdata. We serve as a repository for business microdata, so we are hosted in the division that has its own data but also some researchers would like to access data from other divisions so this is possible from CDER. We develop new microdata. And we also provide analytical consulting services about business microdata and linkages in general.

The CDER approval process is similar to that of the RDCs but we have some differences because of the nature of the data that we host. I should stress this again that the access is only at the headquarters in Ottawa and on a cost recovery basis.

In terms of applying to the project, I will talk about what happens once bidders have been selected by ESDC. As soon as you get selected it is important to initiate the screening process as a first step. There are two aspects to this. The first is a security screening and the second is the Conflict of Interest. In terms of security screening we ask for enhanced reliability level clearance and if you already have security clearance from the RDC you can let us know and this will speed up the process. Otherwise, if you're non-Canadian or you have lived outside of Canada for six consecutive months the process might be a bit longer. Unfortunately we do not have any say on this process. So as soon as you can, please initiate the screening process.

The second aspect is the Conflict of Interest. This form will be sent by a CDER analyst and in it you will have to list RESP, RRSP, stocks or political activities you are involved in. If the stocks or RRSPs and RESPs are administered by someone else then that is ok but if they are administered by you then you will have to list them. In case of the conflicts, the labour relation team will try to resolve the conflicts. Again, I have to stress that this can take a long time so as soon as you can, please start the process.

Step 2 is something that is easy to get once the bidder is selected. The ADM at ESDC provides a letter of support. And Step 3 will be to become a deemed employee at Statistics Canada, you will be sworn in as a deemed employee.

Now a bit about the challenges. Maybe some of you are wondering why you have to come to Ottawa to do this research. As I mentioned, the RDCs and CDER are very similar but in CDER we have business microdata. So we follow the same process as in the RDCs in terms of identifying information. But for businesses we hide the real identifier but put a unique identifier in so you know that Person A is different from Person B. The access is only in Ottawa because there is more risk pertaining to a breach of business data. There are more motivations to generate a breach of business data. For those reasons, the access is only in Ottawa.

Finally, we also put measures in place that area a bit different than the RDCs. For our data, you won't have access to real data but will have access to synthetic data. These synthetic data will help you have a sense of the data so that results are really close to what you would get with the real data but is not the real data. Once you have a good sense of your code and are sure your code is doing what you want, you will submit this code through a batch system so that it is run against the real data. So the results you get will be from real data but you will not see the real data.

As Suzanne mentioned earlier, there might be the possibility to create a dummy file. There would be costs associated with it and this dummy file would be to help you develop your program outside of CDER and once you're done with your program you can then submit them to CDER.

So the website is here on this slide and if you have any questions about access please do not hesitate to contact us.

Thank you. Any questions about CDER or CEEDD?

(No questions).

Suzanne Tetreault:

Thank you very much Douré.

We will now turn to Andy Handouyahia who will talk to us about considerations and lessons learned from previous projects with data platforms. He will discuss some of the recent challenges faced with the ESDC labour market program data platform.

Andy Handouyahia:

Thank you, Suzanne.

Good afternoon everyone. My name is Andy and less than one year ago we completed a Request for Proposals for labour market data programs so we have done a similar information session to make sure that we provide all the required information to the potential bidders about our objectives.

It was a good success. We received very good proposals and have selected two. I would like to share some of the lessons learned from that RFP and how we deal with it now. I think this is useful for you to know in advance.

The challenges that you should know related to data development, the data platform for TFWP could be more challenging than that for the labour market program data platform because that process was more internal to ESDC and was hosted internally. We have some control on the data dictionary and what the data means, and how to link between files. I think Statistics Canada already spoke to this potential challenge but I think researchers are up for confronting these challenges.

When we received the proposals, the main observation that we had was that in some of the proposals, the research questions were not aligned with the data that we have. So it is important to make sure that your proposals align with the data available at Statistics Canada.

Also, we found in the end after selecting the proposals, we have done a lot of work for the bidders to make sure they are able to do the analysis. We have been working with them to ensure that we support the analytical file so they are able to do their research. I believe Statistics Canada said they would do that too. It's part of the work.

The other thing to consider is that some researchers only have experience with survey data and when they get to use administrative data it is not the same. Especially in terms of space and volume and size. Some programs do not handle the size well. You need to understand that when the administrative data is this large, you need to find a way to filter in advance, to select the variables you need.

I think one of the priorities of the federal government is to do more gender-based analysis. We have been working to make sure we have all of the data for sub-groups analysis but this too could be a good aspect to add into your proposal if it is possible.

These are my lessons learned from the previous Request for Proposals on labour market programs. If you have any questions, we are open to answer all of your questions and Suzanne can connect with me later if needed.

Thank you.

(No questions).

Suzanne Tetreault:

Thanks Andy.

We are close to the end of this session. So as a closing remark, in terms of next steps, once you have provided us with your proposal, no later than September 30th, 2019, ESDC and Statistics Canada will collaborate in assessing the proposals. We are aiming to have two contracts.

Again, ESDC will cover the costs to access the CEEDD data and also the costs of the dummy file. So any costs associated with that we will cover.

There will be flexibility in the schedule of deliverables once the contracts are in place. There are administrative aspects that can affect timing but that we cannot control. So please include a schedule in your proposal and before we sign the contract we will revisit the schedule to align it with the reality of the moment.

The detailed lists of variables will be available on the Buy and Sell site soon.

Any questions after this session has ended should still go through the Buy and Sell site. We do not want to release any information in a way that privileges one group over another. So this way everyone has access to the same information.

So that covers what we had to say today. Please continue to send us your questions and we will try to respond quickly.

Any questions we could try to address at this moment?

Participant Question:

In terms of the proposals requiring a minimum of three individual researchers with a mix of expertise, would all three individuals be required to complete the security screening process for accessing the data at Statistics Canada?

Suzanne Tetreault:

I'll turn to Douré from Statistics Canada.

Douré Grekou:

It is all the people who are signing the research contract will have to go through the security clearance and the conflict of interest.

Participant:

But it says only one individual signs the contract.

Suzanne Tetreault:

Statistics Canada is telling me that the contract will be signed by one individual but the security and conflict of interest screening will have to be done for all analysts that will work with or speak about the data.

Participant:

So even if they are only working with the derived data that has been extracted and is not physically working on the data they still need to go through screening?

Suzanne Tetreault:

Statistics Canada is telling us that yes, this is the case.

Douré Grekou:

Once the results are vetted out by Statistics Canada then you can use it.

Suzanne Tetreault:

Ok, so anyone going to Statistics Canada would need to be security cleared and complete the Conflict of Interest. If the information is to be analyzed at the bidder's site, whomever is doing that does not need to be cleared because the results will have been vetted by Statistics Canada.

Participant:

But the Request for Proposals makes it sound like all researchers must pass security screening with ESDC as part of the mandatory requirements.

Suzanne Tetreault:

I see. This is a great question and there is some debate here in the room so we will get some clarification and post that with the meeting notes from this session.

Participant:

Thanks, that's great. And a related question, in the proposal we have to put a timeline and we have to allow security clearance as part of that timeline. So who we pick as the three individuals could affect that timeline. I wonder how much judgment you are placing on the security clearance timelines as some individuals could take longer to clear than others. Would ESDC judge this negatively?

Suzanne Tetreault:

No we would not. That's a really good question. What we are looking for in the proposal are the timelines in a perfect world. But we know that there are potential issues down the road that will affect the timelines. So the closer we get to getting ready to accessing the data we will amend the timelines as needed. For now, just align your proposal timelines with the Request for Proposals and include a caveat that "this is if all administrative aspects are completed within expected timelines". We will be flexible, this happens often since we cannot control all of the administrative aspects.

Any other questions?

(No questions).

That's about it for now. We will post additional information for those of you who are interested in submitting a proposal. So please consult the Buy and Sell site as we are getting questions from potential bidders on a regular basis and we will be posting some of the additional information that we promised to you today.

Thanks everyone.

Follow Up Clarification on Security Screening Requirements from Statistics Canada

To get access to data in CDER researchers must sign a Microdata Research Contract (MRC). The MRC describes explicitly the work to be accomplished, the terms of condition of access to the microdata, the researchers' responsibilities and the limitation on use of information.

The limitations include the prohibition from disclosing confidential information related to any individual or firm (e.g., results from tabulation or regressions). It means that researchers cannot discuss unvetted results with anyone that has not signed the contract.

MRCs can be amended. Researchers can be added or removed (as long as they pass the security and conflict of interest screenings). Similarly, the data content on the MRC can be amended.