

The Evaluation Marketplace in Canada: What Qualifications Do Employers Demand?

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Abstract: *This study examined the key qualifications—education, knowledge areas, professional qualities, skills, and tasks—demanded of evaluators by employers in the public, private, and not-for-profit sectors. Through a content analysis of 50 employment advertisements, it found that the qualifications demanded by employers generally align with the skills identified as important in the evaluation literature and with competencies identified by the Canadian Evaluation Society. The study also found that there is an opportunity to promote the Credentialed Evaluator (CE) designation to those interested in enhancing the evaluation capacity of their organizations.*

Keywords: *evaluation practice, evaluation education, evaluation skills and knowledge, evaluation credentialing*

Résumé : *La présente étude examine les qualifications clés—éducation, domaine de connaissances, qualités professionnelles, compétences et tâches—que les employeurs recherchent chez les évaluateurs et évaluatrices dans les secteurs public, privé et à but non lucratif. Par l'intermédiaire d'une analyse du contenu de 50 affiches de poste, on a conclu que les qualifications requises par les employeurs s'alignent généralement avec les compétences identifiées comme importantes dans la littérature sur l'évaluation et avec celles déterminées par la Société canadienne d'évaluation. L'étude a aussi trouvé qu'il y a une occasion de faire la promotion de la désignation d'évaluateur qualifié ou d'évaluatrice qualifiée (EQ) auprès des organisations qui désirent améliorer leur capacité d'évaluation.*

Mots clés : *pratique en évaluation, éducation en évaluation, connaissances et compétences en évaluation, désignation professionnelle en évaluation*

The evaluation profession has grown considerably over the past two decades, evidenced by a proliferation of evaluation commissioners (those who seek to initiate

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an evaluation) and evaluation practitioners (those capable of completing an evaluation) (Gullickson, King, LaVelle, & Clinton, 2019; LaVelle, 2020; Leeuw, 2009; Nielsen, Lemire, & Christie, 2018; Picciotto, 2011). This growth can be attributed to an increased use of evaluation in the public domain, the global spread of New Public Management, and expanding use of evaluation in philanthropic foundations, not-for-profit organizations, and the private sector (Leeuw, 2009; Nielsen et al., 2018). Evaluation has evolved into a complex and multifaceted endeavor demanding a wide range of skills and competencies (Dewey, Montrose, Schroter, Sullins, & Mattox, 2008; Dillman, 2012; Galport & Azzam, 2017; Guyadeen & Seasons, 2018; Stevahn, King, Ghere, & Minnema, 2005).

Researchers have sought to identify the requisite competencies—that is, the specific knowledge, skills, abilities, and attributes—needed to succeed in the evaluation profession (Dewey et al., 2008; Gullickson et al., 2019; King, Stevahn, Ghere, & Minnema, 2001; Kirkhart, 1981; LaVelle, 2011, 2020; LaVelle & Donaldson, 2015; McGure & Zorzi, 2005; Mertens, 1994; Scriven, 1996; Stevahn et al., 2005). Many researchers have focused specifically on the acquisition of skills and knowledge through education and training (the *supply* side of the evaluation marketplace) (Beywl & Harich, 2007; C. A. Christie, Quinones, & Fierro, 2014; N. V. Christie, 2012; Davies & Mackay, 2014; Dillman, 2012; Galport & Azzam, 2017; LaVelle, 2011; LaVelle & Donaldson, 2015). Meanwhile, only a handful of researchers have studied competencies sought by employers, or the *demand* side of the evaluation marketplace (Brandon, Smith, & Hwalek, 2011; Dewey et al., 2008; Galport & Azzam, 2017; Ghere, King, Stevahn, & Minnema, 2006; LaVelle, 2014; Nielsen et al., 2018). These studies have illuminated many skills and areas of knowledge being supplied and demanded within the evaluation marketplace.

The objective of this study was to contribute to further understanding of the demand side of the evaluation marketplace by assessing the expectations for new evaluation recruits in the public, private, and not-for-profit sectors. Specifically, we analyzed employment advertisements to identify employer demands regarding education, knowledge, professional qualities, and skills, as well as the specific tasks that employers expect evaluators to perform. We then compared these demands to the competency standards outlined by the Canadian Evaluation Society to assess their congruence.

The article begins with a review of the contemporary literature on evaluation competencies. It then discusses the employer demand side of the evaluation marketplace. The third and fourth sections discuss the research methodology and findings, while the fifth section elaborates on the key themes emerging from the study findings. The paper concludes with key recommendations and directions for future research.

EVALUATION COMPETENCIES

Dating back to at least the 1980s, there has been an interest in establishing a core set of evaluation competencies that should be expected of all trained evaluators (King et al., 2001; Kirkhart, 1981; Mertens, 1994; Scriven, 1996; Stevahn et al., 2005). A set of shared and recognized competencies, it is argued, improves the

evaluation profession by signalling to both employers and evaluators that there are explicit skills, areas of specialized knowledge, and dispositions that define competent evaluation practice (Stevahn et al., 2005).

Evaluation competencies typically include technical skills, such as research design, quantitative and qualitative data analysis, and using logic models, as well as knowledge drawn from the evaluation discipline, such as ethics, evaluation approaches (e.g., participatory evaluation and empowerment evaluation), and capacity building (C. A. Christie et al., 2014; Davies & Mackay, 2014; LaVelle, 2020). Much of the work of identifying and refining evaluation competencies has been spearheaded by voluntary organizations for professional evaluation (VOPEs), such as the Canadian Evaluation Society (CES), the Aotearoa New Zealand Evaluation Association (ANZEA), and the American Evaluation Association (AEA). These professional bodies have each adopted a framework that outlines the competencies professional program evaluators should aspire to master and uphold.

The CES has adopted a set of 36 competencies that form the basis for its Credentialed Evaluator (CE) designation, a professional classification it issues to applicants who convincingly demonstrate to a credentialing board that they have met the specified competencies (Canadian Evaluation Society, 2018). The CES first introduced competency standards in 2010 through research, member consultation, and expert validation processes conducted in 2008 and 2009 (Canadian Evaluation Society, 2010). The CES competencies were later updated in 2018 and are grouped into five domains, including:

- *reflective practice*—competencies related to evaluation theory and practice, such as ensuring that ethical oversight is maintained and demonstrating commitment to transparency in all aspects of the evaluation;
- *technical practice*—competencies related to strategic, methodological, and interpretive decisions during an evaluation, such as clarifying the program theory and collecting, analyzing, and interpreting data using appropriate methods;
- *situational practice*—competencies related to understanding and adapting to the unique context of the evaluation, such as respecting all stakeholders, striving to build and maintain trusting relationships, and monitoring and responding to changes in the program environment during the course of the evaluation;
- *management practice*—competencies related to sound management of the evaluation project, such as defining work parameters, plans, and agreements for the evaluation and communicating project progress to all concerned; and
- *interpersonal practice*—social and personal skills to communicate and interact effectively with all stakeholders, such as using communication strategies appropriate to the cultural, linguistic, social, and political context.

According to the Canadian Evaluation Society (2014), the competency standards were developed as a foundation for the design of training programs and

professional development events, writing job descriptions, and developing requests for proposals, statements of work, or terms of reference when contracting out evaluation services.

In a similar vein, a working group released the ANZEA evaluator competencies in 2011, which included 15 competencies for professional program evaluators organized across four interrelated domains ([Aotearoa New Zealand Evaluation Association \[ANZEA\], 2011](#)). These include:

- *contextual analysis and engagement*—demonstrated ability to understand the connections among people, places, and relationships throughout the evaluation process, such as identifying, understanding, articulating, and taking account of the wider context and situation relevant to the evaluation;
- *systematic evaluative inquiry*—knowledge, skills, and abilities required to undertake a systematic evaluative inquiry, such as gathering, analyzing, and synthesizing information and interpreting findings to reach valid, defensible, and transparent answers to evaluation questions;
- *project management and professional practice*—competencies to manage the evaluation in a professional manner, such as developing collaborative, co-operative, and respectful relationships with those involved in and affected by the evaluation, and subscribing to and applying the appropriate standards and ethics that inform professional evaluation practice; and
- *reflective practice and professional development*—competencies that support the evaluation practitioner and profession, such as reflecting on one's own identity, evaluation practice, and expertise; assessing needs for growth; and engaging in professional development.

Finally, a task force of the AEA released a set of 49 program evaluator competencies in 2018, which were divided into five domains ([King & Stevahn, 2021](#)). These include:

- *professional practice*—qualities and skills that distinguish professional evaluators, such as demonstrating integrity and respecting people from different cultural backgrounds and Indigenous groups and using systematic evidence to make evaluative judgments;
- *methodology*—demonstrated proficiency with the technical aspects of evidence-based, systematic inquiry, such as designing credible and feasible evaluations that address identified purposes and questions and identifying relevant sources of evidence and sampling procedures;
- *context*—competencies relevant to the settings in which evaluation occurs, such as engaging a range of stakeholders throughout the evaluation process and clarifying diverse perspectives, stakeholder interests, and cultural assumptions;
- *planning and management*—skills in planning and executing an evaluation, such as negotiating and managing a feasible evaluation plan,

- budget, resources, and timeline and monitoring evaluation progress and quality, making adjustments when appropriate; and
- *interpersonal*—skills to interact effectively with people when conducting evaluations, such as listening to understand and engage different perspectives and recognizing the ways power and privilege affect evaluation practice.

Despite their obvious differences, the competency frameworks outlined by the CES, ANZEA, and AEA have several commonalities. First, there is a strong emphasis on contributing to the evaluation profession, understanding and respecting the connections between people and places throughout the evaluation process, and possessing the technical skills and capabilities necessary to conduct systematic enquires. Second, the VOPEs emphasize aspirational competencies (e.g., being reflective and considering the well-being of human and natural systems in evaluation practice) rather than treating the competencies as a technical screening tool to demand evaluators to possess all competencies. The CES is somewhat unique in this regard in that it has attached its competency standards to the credentialing process. Finally, it is clear that credentials outlined by the VOPEs offer a rigorous framework to identify competent evaluation professionals.

ASSESSING EMPLOYER DEMAND IN THE EVALUATION MARKETPLACE

The work by VOPEs and academic researchers to identify and define specific competencies that characterize professional evaluation practice can be conceptualized as part of the “supply” side of the evaluation employment marketplace (Nielsen et al., 2018). However, there is also a small body of research focused on the demand side of the evaluation marketplace, with a specific emphasis on competencies demanded by employers (Brandon et al., 2011; Dewey et al., 2008; LaVelle, 2014).

Analyzing employer demands is important in order to gauge what is expected of evaluation recruits, which might offer insights into potential priorities for professional education and training. It is also useful to assess the degree of congruence between the competencies deemed important by the profession and those considered essential and desirable by employers. Close congruence would suggest that the marketplace is in approximate equilibrium, whereas divergence might indicate that the professional competencies adopted by VOPEs, and the training programs designed to teach them, are out of step with the needs of employers. It might also indicate that employers are unaware of the competency standards.

Some analysts have focused on the demands of evaluation employers and clients. One comprehensive analysis of the relationship between evaluation competencies taught in graduate education programs and those demanded by employers used survey research and an assessment of employment postings retrieved from the AEA job bank (Dewey et al., 2008). The most frequently sought competencies included quantitative methods and analysis, report writing, interpersonal skills,

data management, content-area skills (e.g., education, marketing), supervisory and team management skills, and qualitative research methods. The competencies taught in schools and sought by employers were generally congruent, but some skills demanded by employers, such as interpersonal interaction, project management, and the ability to make presentations, were not emphasized in education programs. These inconsistencies highlighted additional experiences that could be added to evaluation education programs.

The competencies demanded by employers have also been investigated through interviews with established evaluation firms (Brandon et al., 2011). Interviewees highlighted good evaluation practice, such as respect for clients, sensitivity to how the evaluation will be used, and openness to input from others, aligned closely with those identified by researchers as core competencies of the evaluation professional.

Practicing evaluators have also been a source of information on the competencies that employers demand of evaluation recruits (Galport and Azzam, 2017). In this approach, competencies related to professional practice, such as acting ethically, applying professional standards, and considering the public welfare, were found to be most important. Equally important were skills in conducting systematic inquiry, including collecting, analyzing, and interpreting data. Evaluation practitioners also asserted that interpersonal competencies (e.g., cross-cultural competence, conflict-resolution skills, negotiation skills, and communication skills) and reflective competencies (e.g., being self-aware and building relationships) required further training.

The demand-side studies highlight core evaluation skills and knowledge that evaluation practitioners value. These competencies relate to the technocratic side of evaluation (e.g., collecting and interpreting data) but also an appreciation of the moral purposes of evaluations (e.g., acting ethically and being sensitive to clients and evaluation context). It is interesting to observe that many of the skills identified by researchers over the years have remained relatively consistent, such as systematic inquiry, strong interpersonal skills, and effective communication. The skills and areas of knowledge discussed by researchers also align with the competencies identified by VOPEs, suggesting a strong level of congruence.

This study buttresses and extends the existing research by assessing the knowledge, skills, professional qualities, and tasks demanded by employers seeking to recruit evaluation practitioners in the public, not-for-profit, and private sectors. The study builds on the work of Dewey et al. (2008), which was completed 13 years ago and focused on the U.S. context, by analyzing employment advertisements in Canada. The Canadian context in particular remains underresearched when compared to other international jurisdictions such as the United States (Galport & Azzam, 2017). The objective of this study was to contribute to further understanding of the demand side of the evaluation marketplace and to compare the qualifications demanded by employers against the competency standards of the CES.

METHODS

We collected and analyzed the content of 50 evaluation employment advertisements dated between 2019 and 2020 that were posted by public, private, and not-for-profit organizations across Canada. These advertisements were retrieved primarily from the CES job board but also from publicly accessible sources, including municipal websites, private firm websites, and professional networking sites. We targeted advertisements in English that specified “evaluation” in the job title and contained evaluation-related duties in the job description (e.g., participation in evaluation activities). Although those seeking to hire evaluators might use other recruitment avenues, we specifically targeted the CES employment postings because of the society’s explicit focus on promoting the evaluation profession in Canada. We compared advertisements posted on the CES website against those posted elsewhere to determine whether organizations aware of the CES crafted their advertisements differently. We did not observe any notable differences in the content of advertisements and concluded that it was feasible to group all employment advertisements for our analysis. We excluded international employment advertisements in this study.

We focused specifically on employment advertisements because they are the primary means by which employers communicate their intention to recruit prospective candidates and their expectations concerning the position. Employment advertisements generally contain an overview of the position, key qualifications (e.g., education, years of experience), professional qualities, skills, and expected responsibilities associated with the position. They are publicly accessible documents that are often used as the basis for preliminary hiring decisions, including deciding who should be interviewed and who should be eliminated from the selection process.

A challenge to relying on employment advertisements, however, is that they may focus more on the technocratic elements of evaluation (i.e., day-to-day evaluation responsibilities) over the moral purpose of evaluations, such as evaluators’ values, theories, and interactions with stakeholders (Schwandt, 2017). Despite this potential limitation, employment advertisements provide a reasonably accurate snapshot of employer demands when it comes to evaluation.

The advertisements were content analyzed using the NVivo qualitative data analysis software, which involved coding and categorizing information into the following qualifications. We also highlight the CES competency areas that closely align with our categorization.

- *Education* includes academic discipline and level of education specified in employment advertisement (e.g., social sciences, health, business administration, planning). The level of education includes college-level degrees, undergraduate degrees, master’s degrees, and doctoral degrees.
- *Experience* relates to years of professional experience in the evaluation practice (1 to 2 years for junior level evaluators, 3 years for intermediate-level evaluators, 4+ years for more senior-level evaluators).

- *Professional designation* refers to designation or professional memberships/association specified (e.g., Credentialed Evaluator, member of Canadian Evaluation Society, project management professional).
- *Knowledge* involves comprehension of knowledge areas critical to evaluation (e.g., knowledge of evaluation best practices, theories, models, methods, and tools, as well as understanding of program theories and program evaluability). This category closely aligns with the reflective practice and technical practice competencies identified by the CES.
- *Professional qualities* relates to attributes that are considered important traits for evaluators (e.g., reflective thinker, committed to transparency, self-awareness, respect for all stakeholders, ethical). This category aligns closely with the reflective practice and situational practice competencies outlined by the CES.
- *Skills* includes both soft and hard skills possessed by individuals (e.g., communication, leadership, relationship building, project management). This category aligns closely with the interpersonal practice, management practice, and situational practice competencies identified by the CES.
- *Tasks* involves specific responsibilities associated with the advertised position (e.g., develop evaluation designs, identify data requirements, use sampling and data collection tools, develop recommendations, develop work plans, effectively use resources). This category aligns closely with the technical practice, situational practice, and management practice competencies outlined by the CES.

Our approach was largely inductive in that we were interested in understanding employer demands for evaluation recruits. For this reason, we did not base our coding directly on the CES competencies. We hypothesized that since the CES competencies and CE designation are voluntary, there are no expectations that employers will craft their advertisements to meet these competencies. Employers are more likely to tailor their employment advertisements to attract and recruit evaluators with skills, knowledge, and professional qualities specific to the position. Our analysis began with predefined categories to establish a starting point for the coding process. The development of these predefined categories is common to employment advertisements and was further refined by our literature review. However, categories were added, and we removed and modified the predefined categories as needed based on our review of the collected employment advertisements. This approach allowed us to capture the full breadth of employer demands regarding education, knowledge areas, professional qualities, and skills, as well as the specific tasks they expect evaluators to perform.

We further mapped our coding categories to the CES competencies to assess their level of congruence. Alignment with the CES competency standards is an important consideration because these competencies were developed as a foundation for the design of training programs, writing job descriptions when seeking evaluation expertise, and developing requests for proposals, statements of work, or terms of reference when contracting out evaluation services ([Canadian Evaluation Society, 2014](#)).

Content analysis is a useful method to interpret the contents of documents using a systematic classification process of coding to identify themes or patterns (Krippendorff, 2013). To assess the clarity and applicability of the coding framework, a pilot set of 15 employment advertisements was analysed at the outset. One member of the research team then coded all the employment advertisements, which ensured consistency in the application of the coding framework (Baker, Peterson, Brown, & McAlpine, 2012). Content analysis allowed us to quantify the contents of employment advertisements and report on the frequency of key education, knowledge areas, professional qualities, skills, and tasks referenced in advertisements. We exported our coded information to a Microsoft Excel database for analysis using descriptive statistics. The results of the analysis are presented in the following section. After the analysis, the findings are compared to the competencies identified by the CES as well as the competencies identified in the literature review. We also discuss key themes emerging from our qualitative review of employment advertisements.

There are several limitations to our approach. The study is based on a relatively small sample size of 50 employment advertisements, and this should be considered when reviewing the study results. The analysis may not reflect the full breadth of Canadian employer demands regarding education, knowledge areas, professional qualities, skills, and the specific tasks they expect recruits to perform. We also focus specifically on employment advertisements that specified “evaluation” in the job title and contained evaluation-related duties in the job description. We did not consider the incidence and prevalence of evaluation positions or evaluation-adjacent positions that do not specifically reference evaluation in the job title, which may limit our findings and application to the wider Canadian evaluation landscape. Furthermore, our sample includes only English advertisements and does not capture employer demands from regions that recruit in French only. Finally, it is important to note that employment advertisements are only one avenue for recruitment and should be interpreted cautiously since advertisements can include a “wish list” of skills, characteristics, and attributes.

RESULTS

The data were analyzed across five categories: education and experience, knowledge areas, professional qualities, skills, and tasks and responsibilities. The most frequently mentioned academic backgrounds included social sciences ($n = 22$, 44%), followed by health ($n = 20$, 40%), public administration ($n = 12$, 24%), and business administration ($n = 11$, 22%). Most employment advertisements specified a master’s degree ($n = 32$, 64%), while a handful of postings specified an undergraduate degree or doctoral degree ($n = 3$, 6%).

The positions were located throughout Canada, with most advertisements coming from the public sector (i.e., local and senior levels of government) ($n = 22$, 44%) and the non-profit sector ($n = 20$, 40%). There were a handful of postings from higher education institutions and hospitals ($n = 3$, 6%) and the private sector ($n = 2$, 4%). Most employment postings sought senior evaluators with three or

more years of experience ($n = 19$, 38%), while 10 advertisements (20%) specified three years of experience. There were six postings that specified between one and three years of experience. Nine advertisements (18%) specified that prospective candidates must possess the CE designation, and an additional seven postings (14%) specified applicants should be members of the Canadian Evaluation Society. Six advertisements (12%) specified the Project Management Professional (PMP) certification as an essential education credential.

The most frequently mentioned knowledge areas included research processes (e.g., developing research and evaluation questions, data collection techniques, and data analysis) ($n = 35$, 70%), evaluation processes (e.g., setting the parameters of an evaluation and developing monitoring approaches, including identifying indicators and data sources) ($n = 30$, 60%), and program evaluation (i.e., the importance of program evaluation and its role in an organization) ($n = 23$, 46%).

Approximately one quarter of the employment advertisements specified attention to detail as an essential quality ($n = 12$, 24%) and being a strategic thinker as a preferred character trait ($n = 11$, 22%). Employers also sought candidates who are flexible and adaptable ($n = 8$, 16%), take initiative ($n = 7$, 14%), are results oriented ($n = 6$, 12%), and are self-motivated ($n = 5$, 10%).

The most referenced skill set was related to data collection, data analysis (including statistical analysis), and data management ($n = 47$, 94%), followed by communication skills (written and verbal) ($n = 34$, 68%). Most employers sought evaluators who possess time-management and multi-tasking skills ($n = 23$, 46%), interpersonal skills ($n = 19$, 38%), and organizational and self-management skills ($n = 18$, 36%). Other notable skills included research ($n = 17$, 34%), project management ($n = 16$, 32%), and presentation ($n = 15$, 30%).

Evaluators are expected to complete a variety of tasks, from conducting research and analyzing data to presenting findings and informing policy. The most frequently mentioned tasks included data analysis (including statistical analysis) ($n = 32$, 64%) and conducting evaluations ($n = 30$, 60%). To complement data analysis, data collection was also mentioned as a task in 19 advertisements (38%), including the administration of surveys as reflected in 13 advertisements (26%) and conducting research in 11 advertisements (22%). Evaluation practitioners were also expected to write reports ($n = 22$, 44%), conduct presentations ($n = 21$, 42%), and advise or make recommendations ($n = 20$, 40%). The role of an evaluator, as defined through the postings, also involves collaboration ($n = 14$, 28%), stakeholder engagement ($n = 12$, 24%), and liaising and consulting ($n = 10$, 20%).

DISCUSSION

This section discusses three key themes that emerged from the analysis and qualitative review of employment advertisements. First, the skills and knowledge demanded by employers generally align with the competencies identified by the Canadian Evaluation Society and the existing evaluation literature. Second, our findings are comparable to Dewey et al.'s (2008) analysis of AEA job-bank postings, which was completed 13 years ago. Third, it seems clear that the CES must better promote the

value of the CE designation in the absence of specialized evaluation degrees. The remainder of this section discusses these themes in greater depth.

Alignment between the demand and supply of evaluation practitioners

Competencies demanded by Canadian employers align relatively closely with those promoted by the CES and the skills identified in previous evaluation scholarship. This suggests that many of the competencies identified in the evaluation literature have remained consistent over time. Employers expect evaluation recruits to understand the fundamentals of program evaluation, including its role and importance. They also expect evaluators to possess knowledge of research processes, such as data collection and data analysis, as well as expertise with evaluation processes, such as scoping and developing monitoring initiatives. The CES highlights these knowledge areas as critical, with an emphasis on developing evaluation designs; identifying appropriate evaluation methods and data collection tools; and collecting, analyzing, and interpreting data using appropriate methods (Canadian Evaluation Society, 2018). Past researchers add that evaluators should be trained on conducting systematic inquiries using established methodologies that focus on evaluation design, data collection, and data analysis and interpretation (Dewey et al., 2008; King et al., 2001; Kirkhart, 1981; Mertens, 1994; Scriven, 1996; Stevahn et al., 2005).

We also compared our coding analysis to the CES competencies to further assess congruence between competencies demanded by Canadian employers and the CES standards. Our analysis revealed that while employment advertisements did not reference the full set of competencies specified by the CES, many advertisements mentioned several common competencies.

Communication is a commonly referenced skill set in employment advertisements. This includes the written, verbal, and visual transmission of information, especially through making effective presentations and writing reports. The CES considers communication an important competency related to interpersonal practice. This includes using appropriate communication strategies and effective written and visual communication skills (Canadian Evaluation Society, 2018). Communication has remained a commonly referenced skill in the evaluation literature since the 1980s.

Project management is ranked highly by employers and promoted by both the CES and evaluation scholars. Project management includes applying sound judgement and organization to evaluation projects in order to achieve their goals despite constraints. It involves providing leadership to the evaluation project, defining work parameters, using human, financial, and technical resources effectively, and coordinating with other team members (Canadian Evaluation Society, 2018; Stevahn et al., 2005). It is notable that some employers ($n = 6$, 12%) specifically sought candidates possessing the PMP certification.

Alignment with previous study findings

The findings from this study generally align with Dewey et al.'s (2008) analysis of AEA employment postings. The majority of employers in both studies sought evaluation candidates with a master's degree. According to Dewey et al. (2008), the

most frequently sought competencies on the AEA job bank included quantitative methods and analysis, reporting, interpersonal skills, data management, content area skills, supervisory and team management, qualitative methods and analysis, and evaluation theory and methods (p. 280). Our analysis also revealed a preference for candidates with strong interpersonal skills and possessing knowledge of the research and evaluation processes with specific skills in data collection and analysis and data management.

Dewey et al. (2008) also identified analysis, reporting, planning and design, implementation, data collection, instrument development, conceptualization, and management as key responsibilities (p. 280). These findings aligned with ours, in that we found data analysis, report writing, data collection, and project management to be commonly sought skills. This suggests that competencies expected of evaluators are generally congruent on both sides of the Canada–U.S. border. The findings also indicate that core evaluation competencies have remained consistent over time.

Promoting the value of the CE designation

The analysis suggests that the CES could benefit from further promoting the CE designation as a recognized credential that defines professional evaluators. Only seven advertisements (14%) referenced membership with the CES and another nine (18%) mentioned the CE designation. This suggests that employers may not be fully aware of the role of the CES and the importance of hiring credentialed evaluators.

In other professions, such as planning, membership with the Canadian Institute of Planners and its professional planning designation is promoted heavily. Guyadeen and Henstra (2021) found that roughly 80 percent of planning employment advertisements sought recruits with membership in the Canadian Institute of Planners or respective provincial planning chapters. Moreover, most postings demanded that candidates possess or be in pursuit of official Registered Professional Planner designation.

One of the key roles of the CES is to contribute to the professionalization of evaluation practice in Canada, including through the CE designation (Canadian Evaluation Society, 2014). There is a benefit to promoting the CE designation to employers, specifically those that make recruitment decisions, because it helps attract and retain skilled evaluators who possess the requisite skills, areas of specialized knowledge, and dispositions that define competent evaluation practice (Stevahn et al., 2005).

Employers should pay particular attention to the CE designation, given that advertisements do not reference evaluation-specific degrees but rather general academic disciplines such as the social sciences, health, public administration, and business administration. Many of these programs are rooted in specific academic disciplines and may only teach evaluation as a peripheral course. The CE designation and membership with the CES could be useful indicators of qualified and competent evaluators who possess the technical skills and knowledge of the

evaluation discipline (C. A. Christie et al., 2014; Davies & Mackay, 2014; LaVelle, 2020; McGure & Zorzi, 2005; Stevahn et al., 2005). Credentialed evaluators must also participate in continuous learning through education and training, which ensures they are knowledgeable about emerging evaluation theories and practices (Canadian Evaluation Society, 2014).

Our findings also revealed a strong emphasis on the technocratic aspects of evaluation (e.g., data collection and analysis, report writing, time management) over the moral purpose of evaluations (e.g., evaluators' values, theory, and interactions with stakeholders). This is not entirely surprising, given the rise of technical professionalism in the evaluation field, which continues to be driven by an increasingly technocratic and "tool kit" approach to evaluation (Schwandt, 2008, 2017). In this regard, the CES could play a role in educating employers about its vision of evaluation, including fostering an evaluation ethos grounded in democratic professionalism and civic agency (Schwandt, 2017). This effort would involve promoting evaluations as collaborative, sharing authority and responsibility for decision making, and promoting an ethical justification for evaluations (Schwandt, 2017, p. 551).

One potential barrier to further recognition of CE designation is its status as a voluntary credential, rather than a formalized certificate, license, or accreditation (Canadian Evaluation Society, 2014). The CES notes that "the CE designation demonstrates that an individual has met the specified competencies as described in their own words." There are, however, no legal implications of the credential. Rather, the CE reflects competence, promotes continuous learning, and demonstrates commitment to the evaluation profession (Canadian Evaluation Society, 2014). Another potential barrier relates to the cost to acquire and maintain the CE designation, which may act as a deterrent, especially for junior evaluation practitioners. Nevertheless, promoting the benefits of the CE designation for both employers and practitioners, as well as providing member-only resources specific to the evaluation profession, may help bolster its recognition and use in practice.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This research examined the demand side of the evaluation marketplace by analyzing employment advertisements from the public, private, and not-for-profit sectors to identify expectations regarding education, knowledge areas, professional qualities, skills, and tasks of evaluation practitioners. Three key findings were revealed in the analysis. First, the skills and knowledge demanded by employers generally align with competencies identified by the Canadian Evaluation Society, as well as the skills identified in the existing evaluation literature. Second, our findings support Dewey et al.'s (2008) analysis of American Evaluation Association job-bank postings, which was completed over a decade ago. We also observed that many of the competencies identified in the evaluation literature have remained consistent over time. This suggests that there is a general consensus among practitioners and researchers regarding the core competencies needed to

support competent evaluation practice. Third, the Canadian Evaluation Society should consider further promoting the value of the CE designation.

These findings have implications for evaluation education and practice. Educators offering courses in evaluation can use the findings from this analysis to better prepare students for evaluation practice. Evaluation courses should emphasize key knowledge areas, skills, and tasks, such as evaluation processes, the importance of systematic methodologies, written and verbal communication skills, and project management experience.

Educators and practitioners should also identify in-demand and emerging skills and knowledge needed to succeed in the evaluation field, as well as gaps in education. This could include evaluation approaches that acknowledge multiple realities and promote collaboration, negotiation, participation, and empowerment among stakeholders (e.g., decision makers, program beneficiaries, and evaluators) (Alkin, 2013; Cousins, 2004; Fetterman, 2004; Guyadeen & Seasons, 2018; Patton, 2011; Rodriguez-Campos, 2012). Students pursuing careers in the evaluation industry can also use the study findings as a general guide to help develop and improve keys evaluation skill sets.

This study and its findings are important to organizations such as the CES that are interested in understanding the kinds of knowledge and skills demanded by employers. It can also be used as a case for promoting the work of the CES to organizations unfamiliar with the CE designation. This includes actively communicating the value and importance of the CE designation to practitioners, employers, and decision makers. This designation signifies ethical practice and competent evaluation in Canada (Canadian Evaluation Society, 2014).

This study presents an opportunity for further discussion and research. One promising avenue is to expand data collection to include a larger sample of evaluation advertisements, including extending the analysis to evaluation-adjacent positions that do not specifically reference evaluation in the job title. This would involve increasing the data collection period given the highly specialized nature of the data set (i.e., trying to locate evaluation-specific job postings). Another promising approach might be to engage evaluation employers directly through surveys and interviews to identify specific knowledge, skills, and abilities and the attributes they consider critical for competent evaluators. This information could then be compared against employment advertisements and the competencies identified by the CES, as well as the skills and knowledge identified in the evaluation literature. Finally, further studies may examine the availability of evaluators with the skills sought by employers in Canada and compare and contrast employers' satisfaction with evaluators with and without a CE designation. This may help build a stronger case for promoting the CE designation to employers and evaluation practitioners.

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APPENDIX

Competencies for Canadian Evaluation Practice

1. **Reflective Practice** competencies focus on the evaluator's knowledge of evaluation theory and practice; application of evaluation standards, guidelines, and ethics; and awareness of self, including reflection on one's practice and the need for continuous learning and professional growth.
 - 1.1 Knows evaluation theories, models, methods, and tools and stays informed about new thinking and best practices.
 - 1.2 Integrates the Canadian/US Joint Committee Program Evaluation Standards in professional practice.
 - 1.3 Integrates the Canadian Evaluation Society's stated ethics in professional practice and ensures that ethical oversight is maintained throughout the evaluation.
 - 1.4 Considers the well-being of human and natural systems in evaluation practice.
 - 1.5 Provides an independent and balanced perspective in all aspects of the evaluation.
 - 1.6 Is committed to transparency in all aspects of the evaluation.
 - 1.7 Uses self-awareness and reflective thinking to continually improve practice.
 - 1.8 Engages in professional networks and activities and contributes to the evaluation profession and its community of practice.
2. **Technical Practice** competencies focus on the strategic, methodological, and interpretive decisions required to conduct an evaluation.
 - 2.1 Clarifies the purpose and scope of the evaluation.
 - 2.2 Assesses program evaluability.
 - 2.3 Clarifies the program theory.
 - 2.4 Frames evaluation topics and questions.
 - 2.5 Develops evaluation designs.
 - 2.6 Uses appropriate evaluation methods.
 - 2.7 Identifies data requirements, sources, sampling, and data collection tools.
 - 2.8 Collects, analyzes and interprets data using appropriate methods.
 - 2.9 Uses findings to answer evaluation questions and, where appropriate, to develop recommendations.
 - 2.10 Produces complete and balanced evaluation reporting to support decision-making and learning.
3. **Situational Practice** competencies focus on understanding, analyzing, and attending to the many circumstances that make every evaluation unique, including culture, stakeholders, and context.

- 3.1 Examines and responds to the multiple human and natural contexts within which the program is embedded.
 - 3.2 Identifies stakeholders' needs and their capacity to participate, while recognizing, respecting, and responding to aspects of diversity.
 - 3.3 Respects all stakeholders and strives to build and maintain trusting relationships.
 - 3.4 Promotes and facilitates usefulness of the evaluation process and results.
 - 3.5 Monitors and responds to organizational changes and changes in the program environment during the course of the evaluation.
 - 3.6 Engages in reciprocal processes in which evaluation knowledge and expertise are shared between the evaluator and stakeholders to enhance evaluation capacity for all.
 - 3.7 Uses evaluation processes and practices that support reconciliation and build stronger relationships among Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples.
4. **Management Practice** competencies focus on applying sound project management skills throughout the evaluation project.
 - 4.1 Provides leadership to the evaluation project.
 - 4.2 Defines work parameters, plans and agreements for the evaluation.
 - 4.3 Identifies and effectively uses required human, financial, and technical resources.
 - 4.4 Coordinates the work of other team members.
 - 4.5 Uses group management and facilitation skills.
 - 4.6 Communicates project progress to all concerned.
 5. **Interpersonal Practice** competencies focus on the social and personal skills required to communicate and interact effectively with all stakeholders.
 - 5.1 Uses communication strategies appropriate to the cultural, linguistic, social, and political context.
 - 5.2 Demonstrates effective and appropriate written and visual communication skills.
 - 5.3 Demonstrates effective, appropriate, and respectful verbal and non-verbal communication skills.
 - 5.4 Uses a variety of processes that result in mutually negotiated agreements, shared understandings and consensus building.
 - 5.5 Builds partnerships within the evaluation context.