

Higher Education  
Quality Council  
of Ontario



*An agency of the Government of Ontario*

Conseil ontarien  
de la qualité de  
l'enseignement supérieur

*Un organisme du gouvernement de l'Ontario*

# Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario

## 2023–2026 Business Plan

**Ontario** 

## Mandate

“To assist the Ministry of Colleges and Universities in improving all aspects of the postsecondary education sector, including improving the quality of education provided in the sector, access to postsecondary education and accountability of postsecondary educational institutions” (HEQCO Act, 2005).

## Mission

HEQCO informs the future of Ontario higher education through authoritative research, effective communication of meaningful data and evidence-based options for solutions to the challenges facing Ontario’s postsecondary system.

## Vision

HEQCO seeks to influence the key decisions, practices and policies that will guide Ontario’s public postsecondary system to national and international leadership and provide Ontarians with the greatest opportunities for social mobility and economic success.

## Values

**Continuously pursue independent, high-quality research:** HEQCO maintains a distinctive position in the research community as a credible, authoritative and influential agency through a foundation of independent, objective, high-quality analysis to provide the best evidence-based advice to government and postsecondary institutions. By remaining attentive to emerging trends, HEQCO has the agility to pursue promising new avenues of research as opportunities arise.

**Engage with leaders and practitioners worldwide:** HEQCO’s work is strengthened through relationships with postsecondary institutions, non-profit agencies and community organizations. Through these connections, we ensure that the very best thinking from around the world is made available to Ontario decision-makers as a catalyst for informed decisions, collaboration and innovation. HEQCO’s global perspective on higher education research, policy and practice brings the best ideas, findings and insights to Ontario. Many of Ontario’s postsecondary education (PSE) challenges are shared by jurisdictions across Canada and worldwide.

**Communicate with our audiences in accessible and meaningful ways:** HEQCO contributes to the effective movement of evidence-based solutions into policy development and best practice, through understandable and direct communication. To help bridge the gap between complex research knowledge and its active use in the PSE sector, HEQCO’s work is written in an accessible style and publicly available.

**Advocate for data collection and transparency:** HEQCO remains an advocate for a more transparent, open and holistic approach to higher education data, in partnership with educational institutions, organizations and governments. Data is the lifeblood of evidence-based policy decision-making and HEQCO will continue to seek out solutions to the significant and persistent data gaps that exist at both the provincial and national level.

**Recognize that accountability is a foundational tool for system improvement:** HEQCO explores system design models across the globe to improve postsecondary access and quality in Ontario.

**Respond to government priorities and mandates:** HEQCO ensures that evidence-based research and evaluation of the highest quality informs policy decision-making and practice, in alignment with the Ministry of Colleges and Universities (MCU).

**Be equipped to achieve our goals:** HEQCO is committed to ensuring that our organizational structure and staff capabilities maximize impact and drive toward the achievement of our vision for Ontario postsecondary education.

## Strategic Vision — Message from HEQCO's President and CEO

Ontario's postsecondary education system is an engine of growth, powering the economic and social development in the province during a time of challenge and change. By providing evidence-based research, analysis and solutions, HEQCO is working to help Ontario's colleges and universities deliver the best possible results for government, students, employers and the public.

HEQCO is committed to supporting the work of the Ministry of Colleges and Universities by exploring critical issues of access, quality and sustainability in the sector. The most recent Annual Letter of Direction from the Minister of Colleges and Universities re-affirmed that our work is aligned with the government's commitment to improve all aspects of the postsecondary education sector. It further provided direction on new projects examining government priorities related to student mental health and supports for students with disabilities. These projects are in addition to our ongoing role in reporting on campus free speech. We look forward to continuing our positive collaborations with the Ministry on other priority areas.

As we look ahead to the next phase of our research framework, HEQCO's focus is on three core areas:

**Research:** Research is our core business, and our focus is on ensuring our work aligns with the critical and urgent issues facing government, students and institutions, both now and in the future. Our research framework looks ahead to potential challenges and opportunities, while also speaking to the issues demanding attention now. For example, the issue of the experience of international students and their role in Ontario's postsecondary system is a regular topic in media and within institutions as they plan for the future. Complicated challenges require informed solutions and HEQCO is pleased to have produced a report examining the needs of international students in Ontario in 2023. We are initiating a research consortium to interrogate a range of topics in the international space over the next two fiscal years.

**Capacity:** We continue to develop our workforce to deliver high-quality research products that offer substantive contributions to policy and analysis. We have continuity in our research team over the past cycle and continue to upskill our team members to align with the needs of our research framework.

**Data:** Achievement of our research goals is contingent on timely access to data. The data partnerships we established with the Ministry and other groups are promising and, in some cases, have resulted in timely access to data. In other cases, we need to further gain efficiencies in obtaining timely access to the most current data. Through the multi-year

Business Plan HEQCO will indicate projects where data from MCU may be required. We will continue to advocate for greater availability of research-quality data in Ontario.

We are also excited to be bringing back our conference, which has been a longstanding opportunity for discussion, collaboration and knowledge mobilization within the postsecondary sector. Planning a large event in a post-pandemic world has its challenges, but the planning team is addressing these with flexible, cautious strategies that can accommodate any uncertainty ahead. This conference will be a signature event again for HEQCO moving forward.

I want to thank our Board of Directors for their continued guidance and ongoing support in delivering on our mandate to the government and citizens of Ontario.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Janice M. Deakin', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Janice M. Deakin, PhD, ICD.D — President and CEO

# Environmental Scan

## Government Priorities for Agencies

As part of the government of Ontario, agencies are expected to act in the best interests of Ontarians by being efficient, being effective and providing value for money to taxpayers. As outlined in HEQCO's 2022 Annual Letter of Direction, agencies are directed to focus on:

### 1. **Competitiveness, Sustainability and Expenditure Management**

HEQCO has established a series of indicators to ensure responsible, sustainable, efficient, transparent and accountable operation within our financial allocation. New business systems and innovations designed specifically for a remote environment have improved efficiencies and allowed HEQCO to effectively control expenditures. One of HEQCO's performance metrics is to deliver HEQCO's mandate within the annual operating budget while maximizing mobilization of funding for research purposes (see Appendix 1).

### 2. **Governance: Transparency and Accountability**

A Skills Matrix was developed to identify the current strengths of the existing Board Members and to assist the Minister in the recruitment of Board Members with the knowledge and experience needed to support the Board's oversight role. This Skills Matrix identifies the areas of expertise considered important by the Board to support their work in agency governance and accountability. The Board Member Skills Matrix is provided to the Minister when an upcoming Board vacancy is expected.

### 3. **Governance: Risk Management**

As part of the leadership renewal occurring in 2020, HEQCO introduced the use of a Risk Heat Map to monitor on a quarterly basis the key risk factors for agency operations in addition to the annual agency risk assessment. The Risk Heat Map is presented to the Audit Committee and the Board each quarter with updated mitigation strategies and actions taken to ensure timely and appropriate risk management (see Appendix 2).

### 4. **Workforce Management**

HEQCO has completed the mandated three-year moderation period for employee compensation and continues to train and support our employees in both accessibility and accessible public service delivery. HEQCO remained stable with its current full-time equivalent (FTE) count in the 2022/23 cycle and through the remote-work model has expanded the geographic footprint of our workforce well beyond the Toronto core.

## **5. Diversity and Inclusion**

Equity of access has been a pillar of HEQCO's research agenda since the agency was founded and the current Strategic Research Framework extends this work with a focus on equitable access and outcomes for Ontarians. The research framework includes several access and equity topics including issues of social mobility; the experience of international students; and accessibility, inclusion and reconciliation/decolonization in the Ontario postsecondary sector. HEQCO has incorporated equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) training into its professional development programs for all staff to encourage an equitable and diverse workplace.

## **6. Data Collection**

Some previously available data sources became inaccessible due to the shift to remote operation, however new data sharing agreements with the Ministry of Colleges and Universities, OCAS and some school boards have allowed for new research opportunities and continued access to data for ongoing projects. Progress is needed on the ability to operationalize data sharing agreements into accessible and timely research-quality data.

## **7. Digital Delivery and Customer Service**

Like many other workplaces, HEQCO pivoted to remote operation due to the pandemic and continues to operate as a virtual workplace. The shift to remote operation increased efforts to deliver services digitally, where possible, and explore new possibilities for stakeholder engagement, partnerships and research opportunities. HEQCO staff continue to embrace knowledge mobilization in the virtual space and all public HEQCO material is available digitally in accessible formats for both official languages.

## **Government Priorities for HEQCO**

Communities across Ontario have been deeply impacted by the global pandemic. As we look to the future, Ontario's PSE sector is poised to play a key role in the province's recovery. The pandemic has highlighted opportunities to modernize and strengthen Ontario's postsecondary system and support a high-quality and sustainable PSE sector. The government has made additional investments to support economic growth and future pandemic preparedness. In HEQCO's 2022 Annual Letter of Direction, three projects were identified to be included as part of the research plan:

1. **Postsecondary Students' Mental Health** – An overview of how postsecondary institutions are supporting students' mental health focusing on key themes and potential opportunities.
2. **Services for Students with Disabilities** – A program evaluation of Ministry programs supporting students with disabilities to ensure special purpose grants are achieving their purpose of helping colleges and universities meet their obligations under the Ontario Human Rights Code. This evaluation was initially requested in 2020 but was deferred due to data availability.
3. **Campus Free Speech Policy** – HEQCO will continue in its role of reporting on the ongoing implementation of the province's campus free speech policy.



## **Research Framework**

To sustain the province's strong postsecondary education system, HEQCO remains committed to investigating sector challenges. Our Strategic Research Framework explores critical issues in each of the core areas of HEQCO's mandate. The framework is a roadmap that builds on our long-standing research into the interconnected priorities of access, quality, and sustainability and system design. This roadmap reflects current environmental factors shaping postsecondary education in Ontario and internationally: COVID-19; anti-racism and other social justice movements spearheaded by BIPOC (Black, Indigenous and people of colour) communities; the shifting labour market; and an ongoing emphasis on public accountability. These priorities may appear as distinct areas of focus at first glance, but more often than not they overlap in significant and important ways.

### **Access**

#### **Goals**

- Expand HEQCO's access research to examine equity in participation and outcomes for postsecondary students in Ontario
- Build a data infrastructure to illustrate current access and equity challenges and identify promising solutions
- Extend HEQCO's research on digital learning environments

### **Quality**

#### **Goals**

- Expand the impact of HEQCO's work on skills development through engagement with sector stakeholders in a community of practice
- Further develop HEQCO's understanding and assessment of teaching and learning environments
- Build a data infrastructure on the value of postsecondary education in Ontario, with a focus on skills and competencies

### **Sustainability and system design**

#### **Goals**

- Explore and critically review the PSE policy context in Ontario to chart a path to the future
- Examine the effects of policy decisions on system differentiation and sustainability
- Review Ontario PSE institutions' financial sustainability and cost structure

## **Current Projects**

### **Freedom of Speech on Campus [Quality] *Fall 2023***

The objective of the Ontario Campus Free Speech Policy is to ensure that all colleges and universities have a strong and clear policy that is consistent across the sector. Regulations under the Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario Act, 2005 were amended, requiring HEQCO to monitor and evaluate ongoing implementation of free speech policies by postsecondary institutions and provide reports and recommendations to the minister. Institutions are required to submit to HEQCO annual reports detailing the implementation of their free speech policies. HEQCO reviews and assesses each institution's annual report and produces a report summarizing the findings.

### **PSE Transitions During COVID [Access] *Spring 2023***

This project will detail how students whose final years of high school were disrupted by the pandemic are faring in the transition from high school to postsecondary. In partnership with Academica, the project surveyed students after their first year of college or university and will shed light on preparedness for PSE, decision-making processes and experiences in first year. The information gathered will help institutions accommodate the needs of incoming students whose learning was disrupted by the COVID-19 pandemic. This project will also involve data-access partnerships with Ontario school boards to better understand learning gaps and preferences PSE institutions should be aware of. Through a partnership with OCAS, questions were added to their applicant survey about how COVID-19 impacted student applications, including decisions about which programs to apply to.

### **Work-integrated Learning [Access, Quality] *Spring/Summer 2023***

Work-integrated learning (WIL) — which encompasses co-operative education, internships, work placements and apprenticeships — is becoming more widespread in today's colleges and universities with the goals of preparing students for the post-graduate labour market and building new connections between education and the labour market. WIL is an important component of many college and university programs and is seen as a potential means of addressing the perceived skills gap. HEQCO's upcoming work in WIL involves multiple projects. HEQCO is conducting surveys on the experience and impacts of shifting WIL to an online model and asking critical questions about accessibility, equity and inclusion. These projects will combine federal and survey data, in partnership with Academica, to examine the experiences of students, employers and administrators.

### **Skills Consortium [Quality] *Fall 2023***

HEQCO established a Skills Consortium to explore effective ways to teach essential skills. Through a request for proposal process, seven institutional projects with a focus on

innovations or interventions relating to the acquisition, development and/or articulation of transferable skills were selected. A final report on these projects will focus on recommendations for the province-wide improvement of the teaching of transferable skills.

### **Social Mobility [Access] *Winter 2024***

The benefits of postsecondary education for social mobility are well established, but they are not experienced equally. Using a combination of federal data and survey responses, this project will examine who benefits the most from attending college or university and why the benefits are not equal for all graduates. The report will consider labour market performance, inter-generational impacts and unseen barriers for students.

### **Hamilton Community Research Partnership Project [Access] *Summer 2023***

The Hamilton Community Research Partnership (CRP) is a coalition of six organizations — Hamilton’s public and catholic school boards, McMaster University, Mohawk College, the Hamilton Community Foundation and HEQCO. The CRP was organized to address a gap in available data about educational pathways, while being mindful of stakeholders’ privacy concerns. Despite the volume of information they collect, school boards and postsecondary institutions lack information on educational pathways between the two education stages. Together, the CRP created a shared, de-identified data set that provides insight into student pathways to and through secondary and postsecondary education in Hamilton. HEQCO-published reports, so far, have addressed critical questions for student access: Are graduates of Hamilton secondary schools attending postsecondary? How can school boards improve postsecondary outcomes for underrepresented groups? How are students who attend postsecondary doing once there? And how can colleges and universities better accommodate the needs of incoming students? Future work drawing on the data will focus on numeracy skills and other predictors of postsecondary access and success.

### **Evaluation of Destreaming Supports in Hamilton [Access] *Summer 2023***

In light of the Ontario Government announcement that streaming in Grade 9 is coming to an end in all subjects, it is important to evaluate the impact this will have on student outcomes and equity. In partnership with two Ontario school boards, math destreaming interventions such as mentorship programs, courses aimed at learning gaps and additional support resources will be evaluated to determine their impact on student success and test and assessment performance. The project will include data on use of supports, surveys of students, interviews with teachers and an analysis of student achievement data such as EQAO scores and course grades.

### **Universal Design for Learning (UDL) [Access, Quality] *Spring 2023***

Recent HEQCO reports on accessibility and supports for students with disabilities have emphasized the importance of embracing Universal Design for Learning (UDL) across institutions. This project is aimed at facilitating institution-wide uptake of UDL principles and practices at Ontario's colleges and universities by gathering evidence about the best approaches. Through a series of discussion-focused events, the project will examine the barriers and opportunities for engaging institutional staff and implications for equity, diversity and inclusion principles when adopting UDL. The project will result in a report of recommendations and the establishment of a community of practice that an Ontario college plans to sustain/lead.

### **Confederation College's Indigenous Knowledge Implementation Packsack [Quality] *Summer/Fall 2023***

Continuing the work of Confederation College's Learning Outcomes Assessment Consortium project, this initiative is focused on sharing best practices, tools and advice for embedding Indigenous Learning Outcomes throughout the learning process.

### **Postsecondary and Workplace Skills (PAWS) [Quality] *Summer 2023***

In the final phase of HEQCO's Postsecondary and Workplace Skills (PAWS) project, Employment and Social Development Canada will examine the labour market outcomes for students who participated in the earlier PAWS assessments to examine how literacy and numeracy are connected to employment and earnings. Tax file information from five years after assessment will be used along with data from Statistics Canada.

### **Experiences of Refugee Students [Access, Quality] *Spring 2023***

As part of a partnership with the Newcomer Student Alliance, HEQCO will examine retention, graduation and labour market outcomes for refugee students using data from Statistics Canada and interviews. Recent global events have led to a possible increase in refugees and while they are counted in the system as domestic students, refugees often face similar barriers and challenges as international students.

### **Access Evaluation (Students with Disabilities) [Access] *Summer 2023***

In the January 2020 Annual Letter of Direction, HEQCO was tasked with reviewing the Ministry of Colleges and Universities' special purpose grants to support students with disabilities. The request also asks for a review of best practices in other jurisdictions for funding institutions to provide specialized support for students with disabilities. HEQCO awaits project definitions and data from the Ministry.

- *Project was put on hold by MCU in 2020 due to the lack of available data. The topic was included again in HEQCO's 2022 Annual Letter of Direction.*

### **Impact 2022 [Access, Quality, System Design and Sustainability]**

This proposed project is an update to work HEQCO published in the spring of 2015 that offered a comprehensive analysis of postsecondary performance across Canada. Using a wide range of indicators for colleges and universities, each province's postsecondary system will be evaluated based on their operating cost per student to examine the correlation between the performance of a system and the funding it receives. An Ontario-focused component of the project could examine institutional performance based on institution type, size, program mix and/or location. A new aspect of this version of the project will be an exploration of the connection between issues of equity and system accountability. This project was planned for the previous business cycle, however it has been delayed by pandemic restrictions in access to Research Data Centres as well as the availability of up-to-date data required for the analysis.

### **Strategic Mandate Agreement Outcomes [Access, Quality, System Design and Sustainability]**

Strategic Mandate Agreements (SMAs) have been in place between the Ontario Government and the province's colleges and universities for close to 10 years. The most recent agreements are aligned to the government's shift to a performance-based funding model. It is important to provide an outcomes-based assessment to examine the impact of these changes and to use the data generated to develop system-level insights for the government and institutions that can inform future accountability agreements. This project will also consider alternate forms of accountability controls. HEQCO is reviewing the publicly available SMA data and is considering research and assessment opportunities. Depending on the final research questions, it may be necessary to request data from MCU.

### **Postsecondary Persistence [Access] *Summer/Fall 2023***

Building on the recent data sharing agreement between the Ministry of Colleges and Universities and HEQCO, this project will expand the understanding of factors that affect Ontario students' persistence in postsecondary education. The analysis will focus on persistence outcomes according to student characteristics such as socioeconomic status, gender, immigration status, program of study and institution type.

### **PSE Non-completers in Ontario [Access, quality, sustainability] *Fall 2023***

This project is being pursued in partnership with the Social Research and Demonstration Corporation (SRDC) and focuses on the characteristics and labour market outcomes of those who enrol in an Ontario PSE program but do not persist to graduation ("non-completers"). The work will complement recent HEQCO research focused on graduate outcomes for Ontario credential holders and will extend HEQCO's work on access. The

issue of outcomes for non-completers is also an important public policy issue; governments and students invest in postsecondary education, and it is important to understand the outcomes of students who may not fully benefit from a return on their investments.

### **Postsecondary Students' Mental Health (MCU Evaluation) [Access, Quality] *Fall 2023***

In HEQCO's most recent Annual Letter of Direction (September 2022), the Minister requested that HEQCO complete a report on PSE activities (in Ontario and other jurisdictions) that support students' mental health. The project will include a literature review and jurisdictional scan, and will identify key themes, issues and potential opportunities.

### **Annual Conference 2023 *Fall 2023***

HEQCO's work is strengthened through ongoing dialogue with sector partners. Following a hiatus because of pandemic health measures, HEQCO team members will organize a one-day conference in fall 2023. The event will include speakers, concurrent sessions and opportunities for networking.

### **Quick Stats *Spring 2023***

Quick Stats is HEQCO's compendium of data on Ontario's postsecondary system. Data on applicants, enrolment, student experience, graduates, graduation outcomes, teaching faculty and tuition are available on the HEQCO website. This section is planned to be updated in 2023 and every two years from that point forward. Data requests to MCU will be required as part of the update process.

## **Future Projects**

HEQCO is considering future projects that align with our research framework and extend our work in access, quality and sustainability and system design. The topics noted below are placeholders; specific projects in these areas will depend on the accessibility and quality of data, and/or opportunities for partnerships. Over the coming months, we will explore our options and refine our plans.

### **Internationalization Consortium [Access, Quality, Sustainability]**

HEQCO will work with partners to explore research projects focused on the quality, accountability and sustainability of international education in Ontario. Projects may focus on:

- Labour market outcomes for international students post-graduation
- Immigration pathways/programs
- Institutional sustainability
- Community partnerships to enhance student success

### **Ontario Graduates' Pathways to the Labour Market [Quality]**

Government, students and employers continue to focus on the transferable skills needed for graduates to successfully enter the workforce and progress along a career path. Following projects pursued through the Skills Consortium, HEQCO will consider opportunities to explore skills developed in WIL and experiential learning experiences.

### **Accessibility, Inclusion and Reconciliation/Decolonization in Ontario PSE [Access, Quality]**

HEQCO is considering projects that would extend our understanding of access and equity. Future projects may have a specific (standalone) focus on equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI), or for projects focused on other key questions, an equity lens may be applied where data is available. HEQCO is considering projects to explore:

- Equitable graduate outcomes
- Goals, objectives and outcomes of EDI and Indigenization on organizational structure at Ontario colleges and universities.

### **Entry Points for Lifelong Learning [Access, Quality]**

Given the changing nature of the labour market and the importance of graduates' adaptability, HEQCO will consider:

- Opportunities to track/evaluate accessibility and graduate outcomes of short credentials

- Reskilling/upskilling/microcredentials — Overview of approaches: programs aimed at quick upskilling versus those that would allow for laddering and potential advanced standing for credential enhancement.



## Agency Performance Metrics

HEQCO's performance metrics capture the impact and scope of the research agenda and the responsible, efficient use of public funds. Introduced and refined through the previous two Business Plans, these annual metrics are intended to be transparent, output-driven, relevant and straightforward. The use of reporting metrics on research performance is a fraught process and adjustments will be required moving forward.

### Research

Research is at the core of HEQCO's work. Metrics for reporting research impact are challenging to develop and strict quantitative measures may not capture the scope and reach of HEQCO's work. Efforts are currently underway to develop an additional qualitative metric that can be included in future business plans.

Research output: Number of HEQCO-authored/published publications, including research reports, government evaluations and assessment projects (including the freedom of speech annual review) and briefing notes. *Note: this metric previously included blogs and commentary products, which are now captured in the communications section under distribution and outreach.*

Target: 12

Knowledge mobilization and sector outreach: The number of times HEQCO staff present at conferences, roundtables and seminars on HEQCO research projects, or serve as a convener for sector stakeholders. These include virtual/remote conferences or events.

Target: 12 annually based on current staffing FTE

### Administration

As a government agency HEQCO works to responsibly and efficiently use public funds in a way that provides value to the government and people of Ontario. The metrics included for operational performance are intended to capture the success of HEQCO in making effective use of its allocated financial resources.

Percentage of administrative overhead: Ratio of administrative overhead to actual expenses. This includes the salaries, benefits, IT, office equipment and operations costs of non-research staff.

Target: <10%

Maximizing funding deployment while managing within budget: Deliver HEQCO's mandate within the annual operating budget while maximizing mobilization of funding for research purposes. (Note: as a provincial agency HEQCO is prohibited from operating with costs beyond allocated funding revenues)

Target: >90% of budgeted funds deployed

## Communications

Addressing the challenges facing higher education requires more than government policy. HEQCO's commitment to sharing its work publicly helps inform the Ministry of Colleges and Universities as well as institutional leaders, faculty, students, employers and the general public, and allows for informed discussions that help solve the difficult problems facing the sector. The metrics for assessing communications help capture not only individual report readership, but how many are interested in continuing to read HEQCO's work. These metrics reflect the knowledge mobilization goals of HEQCO's communication activities, including a renewed focus on research publications and fewer commentary products.

Percentage of subscriber growth: The growth percentage of the collective subscribers to HEQCO's email mailing list, Twitter account, Facebook page, LinkedIn page and any future social media platforms.

Target: 5% growth from previous year

Readership: The number of visitors to research product pages, including reports, commentary and resources, on HEQCO's website.

Target: Maintain, within 5%, the three-year average of top 20 products

Distribution and outreach: The number of direct email outreaches to stakeholders/target audiences through accessible, bilingual products with a focus on digital formats on the HEQCO website. These include research products, blogs and commentary, marketing materials and communications products.

Target: 20 products based on current FTE and research framework

## Financial Requirements

Approximately 85% of HEQCO's \$4.1M operating budget is allocated to research — both internal and external — which is the core business of the agency. The remaining funds support council governance, executive services and administration.

- Staff development and continuing to build capacity in the project pipeline and in research productivity.
- The furthered easing of COVID-19 pandemic restrictions in 2022 led to early plans for an in-person HEQCO conference again in the fall of 2023.
- Following HEQCO's decommissioning of its office space on August 30, 2020, the expectation was that an alternate office space would be secured by the end of December 2021. That expectation has now been updated through the experience gained as a virtual agency and HEQCO has demonstrated a strategic advantage through the remote agency operating model.
- Through discussions with the Ministry of Colleges and Universities and Ministry of Infrastructure, HEQCO was informed that it will be part of phase one of the Centralization of Broader Real Estate Authority of government agencies. As a result, future decisions relating to a physical location for the agency would become part of the responsibilities of the Ministry of Infrastructure in consultation with HEQCO. The three-year financial forecast has been updated to remove the capital costs relating to a lease agreement since HEQCO's preferred operating model is to continue as a virtual agency at this time.

The renewal of the agency under the new President and CEO and Vice President, Research and Policy continues in 2022/23. HEQCO continues to move forward with the Strategic Research Framework and supports the undertaking of program evaluation work on behalf of the Ministry of Colleges and Universities. HEQCO remained stable with its current FTE count in the 2022/23 cycle transitioning the remaining temporary staff to HEQCO employees. HEQCO requests that its current base budget be preserved for the 2023/24 cycle to continue delivery on the mandate of the agency. In future, HEQCO would require additional resources to fund any commissioning and operating costs associated with an office location if HEQCO is required to transition away from the current virtual agency operating model.

Appendix 1 provides an estimate of financial resources needed for 2023–2026.

Appendix 2 provides the Risk Assessment Reporting Tool for 2022/23 required by the Agencies and Appointments Directive and approved by HEQCO's Board of Directors.

## **Risk Management**

HEQCO staff continue to work with the Audit Committee to ensure financial controls and oversight are effective and adequate, including updates to employ best practices wherever possible. HEQCO continues to receive clean audit opinions from external auditors in their annual report, which includes a review of HEQCO's internal processes and financial controls. Following a market check on the cost of our annual audit services, HEQCO will be transitioning to an engagement with a new audit firm for the 2022/23 fiscal year.

As part of the leadership renewal occurring in 2020, HEQCO introduced the use of a Risk Heat Map to monitor on a quarterly basis the key risk factors for HEQCO's operations. The Risk Heat Map is presented to the Audit Committee and the Board each quarter with updated mitigation strategies and actions taken to ensure appropriate risk management.

In 2021, the HEQCO Board welcomed the appointment of three new members who have received their Order in Council for their first term on the Board. To assist the Minister in the future recruitment of Board Members with the knowledge and experience needed to support the Board's oversight role, a Board Member Skills Matrix was developed to identify the current strengths of the existing members. This Skills Matrix identifies the key areas of expertise considered important by the Board to support their work in agency governance and accountability. The Board Member Skills Matrix is provided to the Minister when an upcoming Board vacancy is expected. HEQCO has a minimum of two expiring appointment terms of board members in 2023, therefore the updated matrix will be provided to the Minister's office to assist in the selection of the most appropriate candidates.

## **Staff Retention and Development**

HEQCO makes considerable investments in the selection, training and professional development of our contract and permanent staff. Given the multi-year nature of certain projects, staff retention is critical to the continuity and quality of the research products. To support the retention and development of staff, HEQCO works within existing provincial regulations regarding compensation, augmented by best practices in equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI); talent management (including performance assessments); mentoring; professional development opportunities; media-interview and writing skills; as well as opportunities for project management and leadership skills development. Facilitated training and development has been provided to all HEQCO staff in 2022 to enhance the understanding of how to create an equitable and inclusive environment both within the workplace and within the context of HEQCO's research projects.

In 2020, HEQCO welcomed Janice Deakin as the new President and CEO and Julia Colyar as Vice President, Research and Policy. In conjunction with developing a new research agenda, an HR review was conducted to ensure the capacity of the agency to deliver on its mandate and ambitious internal and external research plan. HEQCO has 21 full-time equivalent staff encompassing research, administration and governance functions. In addition, HEQCO continues to provide work-integrated learning opportunities for up to six Ontario postsecondary students and recent graduates through its internship program.

HEQCO's staff continue to work remotely and have developed processes and embraced new technology to ensure HEQCO is able to operate flexibly and efficiently in this virtual environment. While initially considered a short-term measure due to the pandemic, HEQCO continues to monitor and evaluate our future needs for a physical location and prefers to remain a virtual agency long term. Ideally, any future location would provide the flexibility to convene meetings, conferences and workshops, and provide the opportunity for an exchange of ideas as well as staff and sector collaboration.

## **Appendices**

Appendix 1: Financial Outlook

Appendix 2: Risk Assessment Reporting Tool for 2022/23

## Appendix 1: Financial Requirements

		2022/2023	2023/2024	2024/2025	2025/2026	Notes
	Account Descriptions	Actual+Forecast	Forecast	Forecast	Forecast	#
<b>REVENUE</b>	Transfer Payments	4,100.0	4,100.0	4,100.0	4,100.0	1
	Less Capital Purchases	16.4	17.0	17.0	17.0	
	Conference Registration Revenue	-	77.5	-	80.0	2
	Deferred revenue	24.5	23.6	23.6	23.6	
	Interest	16.6	19.6	18.0	16.0	
	<b>Total Revenue</b>	<b>4,124.7</b>	<b>4,203.7</b>	<b>4,124.6</b>	<b>4,202.6</b>	
<b>EXPENSES</b>	<b>Council Governance &amp; Executive Services</b>	<b>9.2%</b>	<b>9.5%</b>	<b>9.7%</b>	<b>9.8%</b>	
	Board per diem	4.8	7.5	6.6	6.6	
	Salaries & benefits	341.8	354.4	361.5	368.8	6
	Travel & Communications	3.5	5.0	3.0	3.0	
	Services, supplies and equipment	26.9	28.4	28.9	29.5	4,5,8
	Depreciation expenses	2.0	2.0	2.0	2.0	
	<b>sub total</b>	<b>378.98</b>	<b>397.35</b>	<b>402.07</b>	<b>409.84</b>	
	<b>Research</b>	<b>85.3%</b>	<b>84.8%</b>	<b>84.3%</b>	<b>84.2%</b>	
	Research contracts, seminars & workshop, data purchases, translation, communications	1,083.6	1,009.3	867.6	879.5	
	salaries & benefits	2,152.7	2,263.6	2,308.9	2,355.0	6
	Travel & communications	11.8	12.0	12.0	12.0	
	Services, supplies and equipment	252.1	261.6	267.2	272.9	4,5,8
	Depreciation Expenses	20.1	20.1	20.1	20.1	
	<b>sub total</b>	<b>3,520.3</b>	<b>3,566.6</b>	<b>3,475.7</b>	<b>3,539.6</b>	
	<b>Administration</b>	<b>5.5%</b>	<b>5.7%</b>	<b>6.0%</b>	<b>6.0%</b>	
	salaries and benefits	208.6	222.3	228.7	235.1	6
	Travel & communications	0.1	0.2	0.2	0.2	
	Services, Supplies and equipment	15.1	15.8	16.4	16.4	4,5,8
	Depreciation Expenses	1.5	1.5	1.5	1.5	
	<b>sub total</b>	<b>225.4</b>	<b>239.8</b>	<b>246.8</b>	<b>253.2</b>	
	<b>Total Resource Requirements</b>	<b>4,124.7</b>	<b>4,203.7</b>	<b>4,124.6</b>	<b>4,202.6</b>	

- Notes:
- 1 The budget plan for 2023-2026 and beyond is based on an annual allocation of \$4.1 million.
  - 2 HEQCO plans to host two conferences (2023 & 2026) and expects to receive revenue through ticket sales.
  - 3 Project expenditures are reported on the accrual basis of accounting.
  - 4 Common expenses (IT support, services, office supplies) are allocated to each department by FTE.
  - 5 Cost of services, supplies and equipment assumed to increase by 1% per year.
  - 6 Salaries and benefits assumed to increase by 2.5% in 2023/24, and 2% in 2024/2025 and 2025/2026 fiscal years.
  - 7 HEQCO has been a virtual operation, working from home since Sept. 1, 2020 as is expected to remain virtual for the next three years.
  - 8 Audit expenses are assumed to increase by 4% each year as per the terms of BDO Canada LLP.
  - 9 HEQCO's current FTE headcount is 23.5.
  - 10 Forecasts for 2023-2026 fiscal years include estimates and assumptions.
  - 11 Annual budgets are reviewed and approved by the board each year.

AGENCY NAME	RISK CATEGORY	RISK TITLE	RISK DEFINITION	ROOT CAUSE(S)	EXISTING CONTROLS	EXISTING CONTROLS, EFFECTIVENESS	RESIDUAL LIKELIHOOD	RESIDUAL IMPACT	RESIDUAL RISK SCORE & STATUS	RISK TREATMENT APPROACH	ACTION PLAN	DUPLICATE	STATUS	COMMENTS
Indicate the agency's name.	Select the applicable risk category from the dropdown list. Reference the OPS Risk Assessment Methodology.	Briefly summarize the risk in a few words. The risk title should reflect what the risk is.	Describe the risk, i.e. the effect of uncertainty on objectives. It can be characterized either as potential negative (threat) or positive (opportunity) consequence or event that deviates from an expected outcome.  The definition should be limited to 1-2 sentences, and should: a) State with "The risk of" or "The risk that" b) Then include the impact/consequence of the risk.  c) Then describe the risk. E End with the event that caused the risk.  Here is a sample Risk Definition (the letters in brackets are for clarity only, do not include them in your definition): (a) The risk that the agency is unable to sustain critical services (C) due to funding shortfall (D) stemming from aggressive revenue projections.	Optional Describe the root cause(s) of the risk. The root cause is the issue that sets in motion the cause-and-effect reaction that ultimately leads to the risk.	Identify tangible/sustainable policies, process or practices that are in place today that reduce the risk. List the risk assessment rationale (Columns 1 and 2).  Fully Effective Partially Effective Ineffective  None (1) Likely (2) Possible (3) Remote (4) Not Assessed  This should be based on recent working knowledge of the controls.	Indicates the level of effectiveness of Existing Controls in Column F.  Indicators include:  Fully Effective Partially Effective Ineffective  None (1) Likely (2) Possible (3) Remote (4) Not Assessed	Indicates the likelihood of the risk occurring when Existing Controls in Column F are considered. Indicators include:  Insignificant (1) Minor (2) Major (3) Critical (4) Not Assessed	Indicates the impact of the risk when Existing Controls in Column F are considered. Indicators include:  Insignificant (1) Minor (2) Major (3) Critical (4) Not Assessed	The residual risk score and status will be automatically calculated with the formula of Residual Likelihood (Column 8) x Residual Impact (Column 9).  Low (1-4) Medium (5-8) Medium-High (9-14) High (15-20)	Determine the most appropriate Risk Treatment Approach. Selections include:  Accept Mitigate Transfer Avoid  Accept to accept the risk as is, with no additional actions required.  Mitigate: to take actions to reduce the risk.  Transfer: to transfer the risk to a third party, whether through insurance, or external means.  Avoid: to stop the activity that is contributing to the risk.	No action is required where the Risk Treatment option "Accept" is selected.  At a high level, insert each action if possible in chronological order, that will be taken to either avoid, mitigate or transfer the risk (or to maximize the opportunity). When there is more than one action for a given risk, please identify each action separately, with its own due date and status.  Actions detailed here should be SMART (specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and time-bound and, at a high level, detail how they will reduce the likelihood and impact of the risk, and identify each action owner.	Specify the date when each action will be completed.  Additional context should be added in the Comments (Column 15).  On Track: Action is on track to be completed by due date. Delayed: Action is not on track to be completed by due date. Completed: Action has been completed. NA - Requisitioned as Ongoing Control: It has been determined that Action fits better as an ongoing control and has been added to Existing Controls (Column 7). No Longer Required: Action will no longer be completed or will not be tracked as a mitigating action for the risk.	Specify the status for each action. Options include:  On Track: Action is on track to be completed by due date. Delayed: Action is not on track to be completed by due date. Completed: Action has been completed. NA - Requisitioned as Ongoing Control: It has been determined that Action fits better as an ongoing control and has been added to Existing Controls (Column 7). No Longer Required: Action will no longer be completed or will not be tracked as a mitigating action for the risk.	Provide any additional context with respect to the risk and/or action plan, including any progress to date specific to each action identified.  For action plans: * If Action is now "Completed", specify here when requirements have been met. * If Action is now "Delayed", specify here the revised plan to deliver as soon as possible. * If Action now has a revised due date, include that here.
Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario (HEQCO)	Strategic/Governance	Fulfillment of mission and mandate	HEQCO needs opportunity and resources to provide (1) independent, cutting-edge, non-partisan research that leads to new policy directions and (2) evidence-based assessments and evaluations of existing policies and programs. Constraints on growth of research personnel would impact HEQCO's ability to fulfill its original research and assessment and evaluation mandates at risk.		HEQCO Business Plan and Annual Research Plan regularly review the resources required for the Agency to continue to meet its social mandate.	Partially Effective	Possible (3)	Moderate (3)	#REF!	Accept				Adequate financial resources are required to continue to attract highly respected leadership and skilled and talented researchers to carry out the agency's social mandate. As a virtual agency, HEQCO does not require a permanent office location but will work with the Ministry (including Ministry of Infrastructure) to ensure resources are available for the occasional need of a suitable physical location for the agency to convene meetings, conferences and workshops and provide the opportunity for an exchange of ideas and staff collaboration.
Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario (HEQCO)	Strategic/Governance	Missed/management of Objectives	The agency's objectives, as reflected in its business/research plan do not align with Ministry objectives stated in the mandate letter.		HEQCO's strategic direction is informed by the Minister's mandate letter. The Agency or HEQCO Board, The Deputy and HEQCO staff meet regularly with ministry counterparts. Strategic directions are updated annually in HEQCO's three-year rolling business/research plan approved by the Ministry.	Partially Effective	Unlikely (2)	Minor (2)	#REF!	Mitigate	Action 1: The Agency will continue to work with the Ministry to ensure timely delivery of the Mandate Letter to incorporate objectives into the Agency business plan.	Ongoing	On Track	
Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario (HEQCO)	Strategic/Reputation	Meeting Public or Stakeholder Expectations	HEQCO research findings or sector evaluation may be questioned by particular stakeholder groups, do not appear to be objective, or may not reflect media assessments. Stakeholders disagree the relevance and work of HEQCO. Government policy initiatives affect HEQCO's plans and stakeholder expectations.		As an agency HEQCO is well positioned to put controversial and difficult questions into the mix. The commitment to evidence-based research maintains confidence. Reports are externally peer reviewed. The research partnership approach is used with stakeholders/institutions. Findings are disseminated widely (posted on the website). Strategic advice is sought from stakeholders and as appropriate they are invited to all on expert panels. The ECOPANEL meets with stakeholders and participates in conferences, workshops, etc. locally and internationally. The recent mandate review by government confirmed HEQCO's relevance. There is ongoing dialogue with government and the sector.  Due to constraints on disciplinary spending and COVID-19, HEQCO activities to engage and consult stakeholders, such as the annual conference, were cancelled. With the increase in virtual events and meetings due to COVID-19, HEQCO is currently connecting with stakeholders and partners in discussions to make sure its research is timely and relevant to the needs of the sector.	Partially Effective	Unlikely (2)	Minor (2)	#REF!	Mitigate	Action 1: Ongoing dialogue with the government and the sector to ensure engagement is maintained.	Ongoing	On Track	
Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario (HEQCO)	Strategic/Governance	Internal Policies, Procedures and Processes	Policies or directives are not adhered to within the organization. Policies are not up to date or difficult to adhere to government policies and directives (i.e. Open Data).		HEQCO's policies and procedures are reviewed and updated as needed. All policies are discussed with board/staff and posted on the SharePoint document management system. Contractual templates related to directives and must be agreed to by research partners. Ongoing dialogue with research partners, they view how policies apply to their work.	Partially Effective	Unlikely (2)	Minor (2)	#REF!	Mitigate	Action 1: Provide information and training for all staff and board members as regular meetings on any policy or directive updates.	Ongoing	On Track	
Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario (HEQCO)	Strategic/Governance	Agency Compliance with OPS Directives, Policies and Guidelines	Agency policies do not reflect government policies and directives. Potential risk of a change in government policy or directives that HEQCO is not aware of. Requirements of government directives are not met. Fraud or abuse in expense claims.		The MOU lists applicable policies and directives. The Ministry regularly informs the agency of new/revised directives and policies. HEQCO consults the Agency Governance website for information. Policies/directives are incorporated into HEQCO processes. The CRM project management system and contract templates. Designation of duties process for multi-person oversight of expensive claims. HEQCO's ODA framework was reviewed by Internal Audit Division. Ministry staff ensure HEQCO is aware of changes to OPS Directives.	Partially Effective	Unlikely (2)	Minor (2)	#REF!	Mitigate	Action 1: Regularized policy reviews ensure the latest information can be incorporated into processes to ensure compliance.	Ongoing	On Track	
Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario (HEQCO)	Strategic/Governance	Annual Business Plan	HEQCO Business Plan (BP) does not meet Agency goals and the Board/HEQCO staff requirements for approval. HEQCO does not post the Business Plan (BP) as required by the AAO. Delivered ministerial approval of business plans may ultimately prevent long term planning.		There is ongoing dialogue between the Board and the Deputy CEO. HEQCO staff meet regularly re: research priorities. HEQCO consults its process to ensure timely submission and posting deadlines. BP planning processes allow to meet requirements of the AAO.	Partially Effective	Unlikely (2)	Minor (2)	#REF!	Mitigate	Action 1: In the absence of approval, HEQCO will work on the assumption that long term BP releases are aligned based on ongoing dialogue with the ministry.	Ongoing	On Track	
Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario (HEQCO)	Strategic/Governance	Internal governance and management of board	The roles of the chair, CEO, board directors are not clearly defined leading to the board making improper decisions.		Board members receive an orientation document including functions/directives that define roles/responsibilities and board government policies and directives. CEO and staff roles are defined by job descriptions. CEO and board members attend ethics and governance training. Board members are required to sign a Conflict of Interest declaration annually and to declare conflicts in board meetings.	Partially Effective	Rare (1)	Moderate (3)	#REF!	Mitigate	Action 1: Arrange additional training for board members and staff as needed.	Ongoing	On Track	
Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario (HEQCO)	Strategic/Governance	Risk and Issue Management	Risks are not mitigated and issues are not managed.		Risks are formally assessed annually and monitored quarterly by the board. Issues are identified and addressed at weekly senior management meetings. Critical issues are managed within the context of a Ministry/Agency Communications Protocol.	Fully Effective	Unlikely (2)	Minor (2)	#REF!	Accept				
Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario (HEQCO)	Strategic/Governance	Performance Measurement	Agency performance is below stated KPI's or measures and/or relevant.		Performance measures are set out in the agency's mandate letter, stated and reported in the Business and Research Plan. KPI's are reported in the Annual Report. CEO and staff performance is reviewed annually against objectives. The CRM system provides management information reports. Management monitors project status reports.	Partially Effective	Unlikely (2)	Minor (2)	#REF!	Mitigate	Action 1: Objectives are incorporated into the staff performance review process to support meeting Agency KPI's.	Ongoing	On Track	
Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario (HEQCO)	Strategic/Governance	Reliability of Financial Systems and Financial Management Processes	Financial information is not to date, accurate, or reliable. Internal financial planning processes and controls are not in place. Payments are not made in a timely fashion.		The Sage 50 accounting system provides financial records. Cashier provides payroll services. Financial staff cross-check each other's work for all transactions. A second level of checking is provided by the Director. Finance and administration. Designation of duties and requirements of the Designation of Authority (DOA) involve multiple persons in the process for reconciliation, journal entry, payroll, payments. Bank statements are reconciled monthly. Account liabilities are updated and reconciled monthly. Senior management meets monthly to review financial commitments. All financial transactions are ready available for audit. HEQCO's financials are audited by an external independent auditor. Quarterly financial reports are provided to the board and minister. Reports are immediately available on request.	Partially Effective	Rare (1)	Moderate (3)	#REF!	Mitigate	Action 1: Professional development training provided to assist staff to further enhance skills.	December 31, 2022	On Track	
Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario (HEQCO)	Strategic/Governance	Budget Planning Process	The agency does not meet budget planning requirements or timelines. With no current budget funding, the timing of first quarterly statement of the financial position from the ministry can jeopardize the agency's ability to meet first quarter commitments.		HEQCO complies with MOU corporate requirements. If approved, a detailed budget surplus from the previous year is used to improve the first quarter pressures. HEQCO plans activities within its budget allocation and submits request reports on time.	Partially Effective	Rare (1)	Moderate (3)	#REF!	Mitigate	Action 1: The Agency will continue to work with the Ministry to ensure timely delivery of the Annual Funding Confirmation Letter to align funding allocation with the budget.	Ongoing	On Track	
Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario (HEQCO)	Strategic/Governance	Delegation of Authority Controls	Transactions are not properly authorized.		Delegation of authority (DOA) rules are incorporated into agency documents (contracts, purchase orders, etc.) processes and procedures. Designation of duties requires multiple sign-offs, provides oversight of transactions. Expenditures over \$100,000 are reported to the Board.	Fully Effective	Rare (1)	Moderate (3)	#REF!	Accept				



Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario (HEQCO)	Operational/IT	Security of IT Records (Memory sticks, Shared drives, etc.) and Creating, Managing and Complying with Record Retention Schedules	IT records are not secure. The agency does not comply with records retention schedules. Paper records are not secure.	Access to records is limited within HEQCO's controlled access system. Access to system drives is limited on a need-to-know basis. The agency's hosted IT service provider hosts HEQCO data in a secure location with three server locations to ensure file server redundancy. Staff is aware of IT policies and procedures for safe storage of data. Multifactor authentication is used to implement access HEQCO. Documents are retained and backed up electronically. All new HEQCO records are digital and retention policies are followed. All staff are trained on record management functions related to their positions. Paper records need to be historical and are stored by non-Mission and can be readily reviewed as necessary. In the event of a privacy breach the Federal and provincial Information and Privacy Commissioners would be immediately notified along with all persons who are affected.	Partially Effective	Unlikely (2)	Minor (2)	#REF!	Mitigate	Action 1: Enhance IT security where possible including any available updates to Multifactor authentication and ESET protections.	Ongoing	On Track
Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario (HEQCO)	Operational/Human Resources	Succession Planning	Unexpected vacancies lead to interrupted service.	Attempts have been made to assign development responsibilities to cover for unexpected absences. Vendors of record can quickly provide temp staff, support services. Researchers can be drawn from lists of previous competitors.	Partially Effective	Unlikely (2)	Minor (2)	#REF!	Accept			
Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario (HEQCO)	Operational/Policy	Compliance with Code of Ethics and/or Conflict of Interest Policy	Staff/board members are not versed in public service ethics and conflict of interest rules.	Copies of the COI and Ethics Code are provided to board members/staff when they are appointed. New hires and appointees must sign an attestation to confirm that they have read these policies. Both policies are posted on the widely accessible SharePoint system.	Partially Effective	Unlikely (2)	Minor (2)	#REF!	Mitigate	Action 1: Refresh training to be provided regularly.	Ongoing	On Track
Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario (HEQCO)	Operational/IT	Strategic or Operational/Plan for Managing IT Resources	IT resources do not support business needs. IT supports do not adequately serve the remote workforce. Staff home IT services may be insufficient to meet the needs of remote work.	IT infrastructure has been mapped, updated and attributed to meet business needs. SharePoint and CRM systems local project and records management HEQCO website has been completely revamped and updated to accessible WCAG AA standards. IT service level agreements are reviewed and will be revised if necessary to ensure that the remote workforce is fully supported. HEQCO has established policies for addressing staff IT needs for equipment and technical support.	Partially Effective	Rare (1)	Moderate (3)	#REF!	Mitigate	Action 1: Capital planning to ensure system upgrades can meet the needs of remote work.	Ongoing	On Track
Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario (HEQCO)	Strategic/Governance	Board Governance, Accountability and Oversight	Slow appointments process creates operational difficulties for the agency.	The chair alerts the minister of upcoming vacancies well in advance of the occurrence. Lists of possible appointments are provided. HEQCO regularly reviews the Deputy and advisory liaison staff of potential vacancies and provides a matrix of the skills of the existing board members.	Partially Effective	Possible (3)	Minor (2)	#REF!	Accept			
Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario (HEQCO)	Operational/Human Resources	Staff Shortage and Salary Compensation	Salied employees are not available to meet agency needs. Staff/leave retention becomes an issue because of the transition to a remote workplace. Things hinder affect the agency's ability to attract and retain staff.	Staff hiring competitors receive an excellent response. Employees have access to a budget allocation for training which must be work related. Staff are provided with the support necessary to work from home. HEQCO has successfully transitioned to remote work as a virtual agency and has no short-term requirements for permanent office space. HEQCO's traditional recruitment area for recruiting has been the large pool of post-PhD grads and post-doctoral fellows in the Toronto area but this pool has been diminished with the current remote work format. Position classifications and salaries are regularly reviewed and compared with ministry and similar agency equivalents as appropriate.	Partially Effective	Unlikely (2)	Minor (2)	#REF!	Mitigate	Action 1: Ongoing engagement with staff to understand any issues relating to remote work and staff satisfaction.	Ongoing	On Track
Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario (HEQCO)	Operational/Program Delivery	Service Demand	The year-to-year financial business model is not helpful as HEQCO's work involves multi-year projects. Budget cuts threaten operations and agency if it doesn't have sufficient financial resources to accommodate increased year demand for its services from the ministry.	HEQCO utilizes partnerships to partially mitigate the problem. As well, we attempt to phase projects to try to avoid the issue of uncertainty related to year to year variance in budget allocation. When demands for additional projects at the request of the ministry strain budget capacity, these projects have been supported by additional funds from the ministry through transfer payment agreements. Interim and final reports are provided.	Partially Effective	Possible (3)	Insignificant (1)	#REF!	Accept			
Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario (HEQCO)	Operational/Program Delivery	Service Effectiveness	Non-completion of projects by research partners, if quality issues affecting internal or external research projects. HEQCO work does not meet high standards. Quality of HEQCO to staff its responsibility to external stakeholders and recruitment requirements to postsecondary institutions, student mobility, and student success due to lack of access to the Ontario Education Number (OEN) databases held by government. HEQCO research projects are at risk because data sources such as StatsCan and the use of RDCs are available, and partners such as school boards do not have staff available to participate.	Contracts include interim deliverables, time reviewed, and can be cancelled or not renewed. Partners are subject to an external review and editorial review. We are invited to participate in national and international forums for international experts present at our events. Our participation in partnerships is sought by international agencies (e.g. Lumina Foundation) in multi-national projects. HEQCO sponsors college efforts by MCJ to facilitate limited access to appropriate OEN data compared to other MCJ. We continue to participate with MCJ on the request to gain access. PIPA compliant access to OEN databases in order to find matches on the complete and less robust sources of institutional and government data to do the best possible research for MCJ. HEQCO staff are creative in finding data and do their own surveys to support research projects such as the Accessibility of Remote Learning Project. Unusual sources of data are sought out through partners such as the Business and Higher Education Researchable (BER) which has access to a large database of employees. HEQCO is contributing to the virtual RDC model with StatsCan.	Partially Effective	Possible (3)	Moderate (3)	#REF!	Mitigate	Action 1: The Agency will continue to work with the Ministry to provide access to data to enable the research projects to be completed.	Ongoing	On Track
Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario (HEQCO)	Operational/IT	IT Strategy, Privacy and Reliability	IT resources do not support business needs. IT supports do not adequately serve the remote workforce. Staff home IT services may be insufficient to meet the needs of remote work. Personal information is inadvertently disclosed.	IT infrastructure has been mapped, updated and attributed to meet business needs. SharePoint and CRM systems local project and records management HEQCO website has been completely revamped and updated to accessible AA standards. IT service level agreements are reviewed and will be revised if necessary to ensure that the remote workforce is fully supported. HEQCO has established policies for addressing staff IT needs for equipment and technical support. All data for research is scrubbed if personal identifiers. Personal information of staff/board members is kept in HR files in a locked cabinet and secure directory accessible only to the Director, Finance and Administration and two staff persons. Hiring and RFP processes prescribe that personal information be safeguarded throughout the process.	Partially Effective	Rare (1)	Moderate (3)	#REF!	Mitigate	Action 1: Continued training for staff on IT privacy and security to ensure reliability of the HEQCO infrastructure.	Ongoing	On Track
Higher Education Quality Council of Ontario (HEQCO)	Operational/IT	IT Hardware, Procurement and Capital Projects	Loss of critical information due to disaster. HEQCO procurement can potentially emphasize the government and/or the agency. Capital projects are over budget due to cost escalation and delays.	Systems are current and kept up to date. IT service provider backs up HEQCO information nightly. IT service provider's Toronto facilities are at risk, back up is available in Mississippi and ultimately in the USA. HEQCO IT procurement practices follow government directives. RFP and contract templates reflect government requirements. Access to information is restricted to relevant staff. The IT procurement process must be approved by the CEO and is controlled by the Director, Finance and Administration. Capital projects are estimated, tracked and limited to renovations or computer refresh. The RFP process is clear. Contracts are strictly monitored. Cost overruns must be signed off by the CEO and Director, Finance and Administration. Projects over \$100,000 must be reported to the Board.	Partially Effective	Unlikely (2)	Minor (2)	#REF!	Mitigate	Action 1: Review of protocols and system reliability for data and system backups.	Ongoing	On Track