

Request for Proposal

Assessment Developer Vendor

RFP Reference Number: RFP 2025-03

RFP Release Date: June 2, 2025

Question Submission Deadline: June 9, 2025, 11:59pm EST

Question Responses: June 16, 2025

RFP Closing Date: Monday June 23, 2025, 11:59pm EST

Selection Notification Date: July 16, 2025

1. INTRODUCTION

About the ACOTRO and the SEAS Program

The Association of Canadian Occupational Therapy Regulatory Organizations (“ACOTRO”) is the national organization of occupational therapy regulators in Canada. Our goal is to promote consistency and excellence in regulating occupational therapy across Canada.

As part of its mandate, the ACOTRO oversees and administers the Substantial Equivalency Assessment System (“SEAS”) program. The SEAS program provides a single, centralized process for the assessment of educational qualifications and competencies of internationally educated occupational therapists (“IEOTs”). SEAS determines whether the education and competencies of IEOTs are substantially equivalent to Canadian-educated occupational therapists (referred to as credentialing and foreign qualification recognition). SEAS is a high-stakes credentialing program, and those IEOTs determined to be substantially equivalent can apply for licensure to practice occupational therapy in Canada. IEOTs who successfully complete SEAS must also complete the National Occupational Therapy Certification Exam.

Occupational therapy is a regulated health care profession in Canada. Occupational therapists are held accountable for their actions, must adhere to the standards of the profession, and provide safe client care within the occupational therapy professional scope of practice, relevant legislative framework, and the occupational therapist’s personal competence. Occupational therapists in Canada are autonomous health care professionals. Decisions made by occupational therapists are formed from critical evaluation of evidence-based research, professional judgment using the occupational therapist’s previous learning and

experiences, and information gathered from the client assessment and other key partners and/or professionals. Occupational therapists synthesize and analyze information from these diverse sources to inform the occupational therapy service plan. Occupational therapists also integrate the complexity of the client's issues, needs and goals into occupational therapy services. A lack of knowledge, skill, and judgment in critical thinking, communication, and collaboration may impact on the occupational therapist's ability to practice safely and/or effectively. It is paramount that the SEAS credentialing program can assess these important competencies.

Since its launch in 2015, SEAS has evaluated the credentials of over 1400 IEOTs. Due to the relatively small numbers of IEOTs applying to SEAS in earlier years and the need to assess critical thinking and clinical reasoning in the health care environment, the original SEAS assessments were designed to be hands on. Occupational therapy education curriculum is evaluated for every IEOT (one curriculum evaluator to one IEOTs curriculum). Competence is assessed via a full day oral exam with one evaluator to one IEOT. The nature of these assessments presents challenges for streamlining the credentialing process. The number of IEOTs applying to SEAS continues to increase each year, with approximately 200 applying in 2024. Occupational therapists play a vital role in Canada's health care system, and IEOTs help the profession meet the requirements of the health care workforce.

The SEAS program is rooted in the Pan-Canadian principles of enhancing transparency, fairness, timeliness, and consistency in this foreign qualification recognition process. Oversight of the SEAS program is provided by the SEAS Oversight Committee, which is comprised of Occupational Therapy regulatory college executives and the SEAS program manager.

More information about ACOTRO and the SEAS program can be found here:
<https://acotro-acore.org/seas/>

About the SEAS Improvement Project

The ACOTRO is now embarking on an initiative ("SEAS Improvement Project") to enhance, streamline, and strengthen the SEAS program with leading innovative assessment solutions and navigational support for IEOTs. A strengthened SEAS program will ensure that the ACOTRO can manage the increasing volume of IEOTs seeking registration in Canada with expediated processes so that qualified IEOTs can enter the Canadian healthcare workforce faster.

The current SEAS program includes evaluations to recognize qualifications and verify competence of IEOTs. The entire SEAS program can be completed remotely, so that IEOTs can work and live in their home country while completing SEAS. The main evaluations/components of the SEAS program are:

1. Qualification Recognition:
 - a. The IEOT obtains an Education Credential Assessment from World Education Services (“WES”) to verify that the IEOT has an occupational therapy degree that is equivalent to a minimum Canadian bachelor’s level degree
 - b. Evaluation of foreign education (Profession Specific Credential Assessment, “PSCA”)
 - i. The IEOT submits curriculum documents from their occupational therapy education program and evidence of clinical fieldwork completed.
 - ii. The content of the education is evaluated to determine equivalence to a Canadian occupational therapy education program. The IEOTs curriculum is measured against the Canadian occupational therapy Education Benchmark (2012).
 - iii. The IEOT completes a self-assessment questionnaire (see attached document) encouraging reflection on their occupational therapy education.
2. Competency Verification:
 - a. The Jurisprudence Knowledge Assessment Test (“JKAT”) assesses the IEOTs knowledge of relevant legislation, regulations, and standards of practice for Occupational Therapy practice in Canada. Exam format is multiple-choice. The exam is also intended to be a learning opportunity for the IEOT and as such the IEOT is permitted to have the JKAT e-learning module open during the exam.
 - b. The competency assessment is a high-stakes, full day oral exam assessing the IEOTs knowledge, skill and/or judgment in the Essential Competencies of Practice for occupational therapists in Canada (2011).
3. Final Determinations:
 - a. After the IEOT completes all SEAS assessments, a Determination Committee makes decisions about substantial equivalency and the need for any gap-filling to address gaps in competencies.
4. Completion of mandatory gap-filling if required:
 - a. IEOTs with significant competency gaps are referred to a course that is instructor led in a hybrid learning model.

The entire SEAS Improvement Project is expected to be completed by May 2028 and will focus on strengthening and redesigning the following components:

1. IEOT navigational supports and exam preparation resources,
2. The evaluation of foreign education (PSCA),
3. The jurisprudence knowledge assessment test,
4. The competency assessment,
5. The Determination Committee’s capacity for making final determinations,

6. Gap-filling courses and modules, and
7. Implementation of a candidate management system and data management solution (a separate RFP for a business management consultant vendor has been released for this project component).

A re-envisioned SEAS program will:

- Be cost efficient and scalable to meet the increasing numbers of IEOTs seeking to practice occupational therapy in Canada.
- Simplify the IEOTs navigation through the SEAS program with pre-arrival information and support, and exam preparation resources.
- Integrate all SEAS assessment components with each other and streamline the SEAS process.
- Implement a secure and user-friendly candidate management system.
- Simplify and streamline data management and report generation.
- Update all assessments and exams to the 2021 Competencies for Occupational Therapists in Canada from the 2011 version; publication available [HERE](#).
- Ensure all assessments are defensible, reliable, and secure and can support disability and religious/cultural/spiritual accommodation needs.
- Enhance transparency, fairness/equity, timeliness, and consistency in the SEAS foreign qualification recognition process.
- Include an ongoing process/test maintenance plan that is manageable within the constraints of a not-for-profit's budget and staffing resources.
- Strengthen the IEOTs capacity to demonstrate their educational qualifications and competence and support constructive reflection of their education.
- Adopt leading evaluation practices of foreign education so that the IEOTs education evaluation results contribute relevant and key information to decisions about substantial equivalency.
- Strengthen the jurisprudence knowledge assessment test to reflect the current Canadian regulatory and health care environment and to better prepare IEOTs for integration into the Canadian health care system.
- Strengthen the capacity of the high-stakes competency assessment to verify IEOT competence and provide relevant information for the Determination Committee.
- Strengthen the Determination Committee's capacity to recognize IEOTs foreign credentials and verify competence to make transparent, fair, and reliable decisions about substantial equivalency and gap-filling requirements.
- Provide on-demand gap-filling courses/modules for mild to moderate competency gaps and an accessible course for significant competency gaps.
- Have quality assurance processes and documentation, policies and

procedures to deliver a defensible and equitable credential assessment process.

ACOTRO's official languages are English and French. IEOTs will choose to complete the SEAS program in either English or French, and therefore all assessments, exams, resources, etc. must be available in both languages. Translation costs are covered in a separate budget from the budget for this RFP.

The ACOTRO has received two grants to fund the SEAS improvement project. Project activities will begin with strengthening and streamlining the way that the SEAS program evaluates the IEOTs foreign occupational therapy education content (the PSCA). To meet the project objectives for both funding partners, the PSCA project is subdivided into phases 1 and 2. The focus of this RFP is the phase 1 activities.

SEAS has trained evaluators who review the occupational therapy curriculum content of every IEOT applicant. The foreign occupational therapy education is compared to Canadian occupational therapy education (Canadian Occupational Therapy Education Benchmark, 2012). Refer to the attached PSCA summary report template. The SEAS Determination Committee use the PSCA result to support their substantial equivalency determinations.

There are two PSCA streams:

- Low-stakes stream
 - a. IEOTs in this stream are not required to meet the minimum requirement on the PSCA. A determination of substantial equivalency can be achieved with a PSCA score below the minimum requirement.
- High-stakes stream
 - a. IEOTs whose university grants them a bachelor's level degree, but WES determines the degree is not equivalent to a minimum Canadian bachelor's level degree must meet the minimum requirement on the PSCA.

All IEOTs must provide evidence of completion of a minimum of 1000 hours of clinical fieldwork completed during their occupational therapy education program.

There are opportunities for re-envisioning the SEAS foreign education PSCA process and considerations include:

- Access to university curriculum: some IEOTs can easily access their education curriculum documents and others cannot (which is not fair or equitable). For example, IEOTs coming from countries with war or other unrest may not be able to access their education curriculum documents from the university.
- Inconsistency of education documentation: The amount of detail in the education curriculum documents varies from university to university, with some universities sending multiple and fulsome documents; and other universities

sending few documents with limited detail. It's difficult to have a fair and equitable assessment with varying levels of detail provided. The PSCA evaluation is based on the evidence of course completion and program content the applicant is able to submit.

- Cost to translate non-English/French curriculum documentation: IEOTs are required to translate their education curriculum documents to English if the original documents are not in English or French. This can be a significant cost to these IEOTs (e.g., \$16k - \$20k Canadian dollars in cases where multiple documents are sent).
- Criteria used in curriculum assessment: There are currently 41 criteria to assess the education curriculum of IEOTs; this is cumbersome and time-consuming to find supporting evidence of each criterion within the curriculum documents. A re-envisioned assessment would determine the most relevant and important education criteria for informing the final determination and gap-filling requirements.
- Value of IEOT self-evaluation tool: IEOTs often do not have copies of the curriculum documents because they are sent directly to SEAS from the university. Currently completion of the self-evaluation tool is required after the initial SEAS application phase.
- Reliance on education benchmark: The PSCA is currently based on the 2012 occupational therapy education benchmark developed by the Association of Canadian Occupational Therapy University Programs (ACOTUP) and the Canadian Association of Occupational Therapists (CAOT). The re-envisioned PSCA will move towards use of the Competencies for Occupational Therapists in Canada (2021) rather than the education benchmark.
- Small data set for many universities/countries: IEOTs apply to SEAS from many countries worldwide. However, with the relatively small numbers of IEOTs applying, compared to other healthcare professions, historical data for many of the universities/countries is quite small. In an attempt to streamline the PSCA process, SEAS has begun to form relationships with universities where there is consistent evidence that the university's occupational therapy education program is similar to a Canadian program. Small data set limits the extent that this activity can be rolled out to other international universities.

Phase 1 (the focus of this RFP) – The ACOTRO is seeking proposals that outline a plan to gain a solid understanding of the current PSCA process, identify gaps, needs, and opportunities, and propose innovative and leading solutions. Phase 1 activities in this RFP are expected to start in July 2025 and be completed by March 2026.

The Phase 1 activities and results are expected to address the opportunities and challenges noted above, and include evaluation and solution proposal:

1. **Evaluating:**

- Exploratory activities to confirm
 - The role/purpose and value of the PSCA in the recognition of foreign credentials
 - The role/purpose and value of the IEOT self-reflection tool
 - IEOT streams
 - Strengths and gaps in the current process, and opportunities
- Activities may include but are not limited to:
 - Background research, review of current PSCA exam tools/blueprints and historical data
 - Creation of tools to collect and analyze qualitative and quantitative data
 - Leverage the extensive knowledge and expertise of SEAS staff and system partners (such as the SEAS Oversight Committee)
 - Conduct tools with key players/partners, such as SEAS staff, PSCA evaluators, Determination Committee members, IEOTs
 - Note: in-person meetings are planned for Toronto, Ontario, approximately January 2026 (to coincide with the launch of the larger project) with key players (SEAS staff, PSCA evaluators, Determination Committee members, and the successful consultant from this RFP). Travel, accommodation, and meals will be covered under a separate budget from this RFP and follow set federal government rates and allowances.

2. **Proposing Solutions and Final Report:**

- Propose solutions and implementation plan for foreign education evaluation strategies that meet the goals, needs of a re-envisioned SEAS credentialing program (Solutions would be implemented in the next phase of the larger SEAS Improvement Project).
- A plan to transition to the Competencies for Occupational Therapists (2021) and away from the Education Benchmark (2012).
- Provide a final report for Phase 1 project activities, input received, final outcomes and decisions with rationales, and test maintenance requirements.

Note that the ‘current state process’ of the steps and tools used in the SEAS program will be available to the successful vendor.

Subsequent Project Phases (included in this RFP as an FYI): The Phase 1 activities are part of a larger three-year initiative to streamline and redesign all activities used to assess the substantial equivalency of IEOTs – the SEAS

Improvement Project. It is expected that the RFP for the full SEAS Improvement Project will be released in the fall of 2025.

The successful vendor for this current RFP (RFP 2025-03) would be encouraged to bid on the subsequent RFP(s). Vendors who can support all aspects of the SEAS Improvement Project will be given preference in selection for this current RFP.

2. PROPOSAL SPECIFICATIONS:

The proposal should include, but is not limited to:

Vendor Details:

- Current range of client services your organization provides,
- Your organization's vision, mission, values, and governance,
- An organizational chart including the reporting relationships of those identified in the proposal and their relationship to senior leadership and executive management,
- Your organization's viability and stability, and description of any current litigation,
- Professional background and expertise of team members who would be responsible for the contract and their respective roles in the engagement,
- Services that your organization offers and/or approach that would be of added value to augment and support the requirements of this RFP and the entire SEAS Improvement Project,
- Available services and options for ongoing test maintenance and program support,
- Your website address,
- Description of insurance coverage
 - o At its own expense, the vendor shall purchase and maintain insurance appropriate for its business and activities including without limitation the following insurance coverage: (i) Commercial General Liability in an amount not less than CAD\$2,000,000 per occurrence, insuring against bodily injury, personal injury and property damage including loss of use thereof, on an occurrence basis; (ii) cyber liability insurance coverage in an amount not less than CAD\$1,000,000 per occurrence, and (iii) Professional Liability insurance in an amount not less than CAD\$5,000,000 per claim, insuring against errors, omissions or negligence in the rendering of services by the vendor to ACOTRO, and for at least two (2) years after the completion of services, on a claims made basis. The vendor shall provide ACOTRO with evidence of all required insurance in the form of certificate(s) of insurance at the time at which a contractual agreement is signed and/or at ACOTRO's request.
- Information about your organization's approach to exam security,

- Your organization's procedures to protect intellectual property,
- How your organization adheres to The Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act (PIPEDA), and organization-wide security procedures and policies,
- Your organization's safeguards and quality control procedures, including disaster recovery and business continuity plans, and
- Identify any risks to successful completion of the project and propose mitigation strategies.

Vendor Expertise:

- Vendor knowledge and experience relevant to this RFP and the SEAS Improvement Project, and
- Engagements you are working on and/or have completed in the not-for-profit, regulatory, credentialing sectors and how these engagements compare to the requirements in this RFP.

Price Quote:

- Provide fees for the requirements of this RFP. Fees should not exceed \$42,000 CAD, plus tax if applicable.

Submission of Questions:

Inquiries, interpretations, and questions regarding this RFP are to be directed to Jill Kovacs, in writing, at jkovacs_conf@coto.org.

E-mailed questions may be received up to Monday June 9, 2025, 11:59pm EST.

Written responses to all questions received will be sent to all potential vendors who submitted questions. The answers will be emailed to potential vendors by Monday June 16, 2025.

Submission:

A complete electronic version of your proposal (Microsoft Word or PDF) noting the RFP Reference # can be emailed to:

Association of Canadian Occupational Therapy Regulatory Organizations (ACOTRO)

Attention: Jill Kovacs, jkovacs_conf@coto.org

Closing date and time: Monday June 23, 2025, 11:59 p.m. EST. Proposals received after the closing date and time may not be considered.

Upon closing, the ACOTRO will review all proposals for completeness. Only complete proposals will be reviewed for further consideration.

Period of Agreement:

The term of any contractual agreement will be from the date of the award up to March 2026.

Selection Process and Criteria:

Proposals will be shortlisted, and these vendors will be invited to participate in an interview as part of the RFP process to select the successful vendor. The ACOTRO appreciates all submitted proposals but only those invited to an interview will be contacted.

Shortlisted vendors will be required to provide three client references (preferably related to similar engagements) – to include name and title of reference, phone and email contact information.

The ACOTRO reserves the right to reject any or all proposals and to accept the proposal deemed most favourable to the interests of the ACOTRO.

Selection Criteria include:

- Vendor's qualifications (knowledge and expertise); related work experience and depth of experience such as:
 - o Experience working with small, not-for-profit Canadian organizations, including the challenges and opportunities these organizations may encounter,
 - o Experience and expertise with design and delivery of high-stakes health care credentialing programs and exams,
 - o Knowledge of healthcare regulation and licensure,
 - o Capacity to carry out the project, including professional and other resources,
- Capacity to support the entire SEAS Improvement Project with innovative, industry-leading approaches and solutions that support the principles, goals, and needs of a re-envisioned SEAS program,
- Overall strength of proposal,
- The specific work plan and approach proposed, including recognition of the principles, goals, and needs of a re-envisioned SEAS program,
- Proposed project budget and vendor's timeline,
- Distinguishing features, services, and/or benefits the vendor can offer ACOTRO,
- Related experience performing similar engagements with successful completion.

RFP Terms and Conditions:

The ACOTRO will not be responsible for any costs incurred by the vendor in preparing and submitting proposals and/or attending interviews. The ACOTRO accepts no liability of any kind prior to the signing of a contract.

Submission of a proposal will not obligate, nor should it be construed as obligating the ACOTRO to accept any such proposal or to proceed further with the project. The ACOTRO may, in their sole discretion, elect not to proceed with the project, and may elect not to accept any or all proposals for any reason.

At all times, the vendor has the responsibility to notify the ACOTRO, in writing, of any ambiguity, divergence, error, omission, oversight or contradiction contained within the proposal as it is discovered.

Vendors may amend or withdraw their proposals prior to the closing date and time specified in the RFP by way of written or faxed notice to Jill Kovacs at jkovacs_conf@coto.org.

After the closing date and time, proposals submitted are final and may not be altered by subsequent offerings, discussions, or commitments unless the vendor is requested to do so by the ACOTRO.

The vendor must identify any information in its proposal that it considers to be confidential or proprietary.

All proposals and accompanying documentation received under this competition will become the property of the ACOTRO and will not be returned.

The ACOTRO has reserved the right to waive minor non-compliance by a vendor with the requirements of the RFP. This will allow the ACOTRO to consider and possibly accept any proposal which is advantageous even though the proposal may be non-compliant in some minor respect.

The ACOTRO reserves the right to accept or reject, in whole or in part, any or all proposals.

The ACOTRO reserves the right to cancel and/or re-issue this RFP at any time for any reason without penalty.

The vendor's proposal may form part of the contractual agreement by attachment and will be incorporated by reference. Claims made in the proposal may constitute contractual warranties. Any provision in the proposal may be included in the contractual agreement as direct provision thereof.

The successful vendor agrees to obtain and maintain all professional certifications and licenses, insurance, necessary to lawfully provide the services required under this request for proposals.

Contract Negotiation:

The ACOTRO will negotiate a contractual agreement with the preferred vendor. If the ACOTRO is unable to negotiate an acceptable contractual agreement, then the second preferred vendor may be selected, and a contractual agreement developed. The ACOTRO Executive, at any time and without liability, may withdraw from negotiations with any potential vendor.

Attachments:

1. PSCA Self-Assessment Questionnaire (attached separately)
2. PSCA Summary Report Template (below)

PSCA date:

Applicant Name:

ID#:

PSCA SCORE: %**FW Hours:****Legend: 0 – No evidence 1 – Insufficient evidence 2 – Sufficient evidence****1.0 FOUNDATIONAL KNOWLEDGE**

0	1	2	1.1 Anatomy
0	1	2	1.2 Neurosciences
0	1	2	1.3 Physiology
0	1	2	1.4 General Development Across the Lifespan
0	1	2	1.5 Behaviour and Social Sciences
0	1	2	1.6 Health Conditions Physical
0	1	2	1.7 Health Conditions Mental Health
0	1	2	1.8 Population health

2.0 OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY FOUNDATIONAL AREAS

0	1	2	2.1 Occupational Theories
0	1	2	2.2 Models of Practice in Occupational Therapy
0	1	2	2.3 Occupational Therapy (Occupational enablement, performance, and engagement)

3.0 OCCUPATIONAL THERAPY PROCESS/ SKILLS

0	1	2	3.1 Gathering Information
0	1	2	3.2 Analysis and Synthesizes Information
0	1	2	3.3 Awareness and Performance of Standardized Assessment
0	1	2	3.4 Goal Setting
0	1	2	3.5 Planning
0	1	2	3.6 Intervention Approach
0	1	2	3.7 Intervention Implementation
0	1	2	3.8 Intervention Skills
0	1	2	3.9 Outcomes Evaluation

4.0 CLIENT PRACTICE CONTEXT

0	1	2	4.1 OT in Children & Adolescents
0	1	2	4.2 OT in General Physical Health Adults
0	1	2	4.3 OT in General Physical Health Older Adults
0	1	2	4.4 OT in Mental Health
0	1	2	4.5 OT in Neurological/ Neuromuscular

5.0 EVIDENCE-BASED PRACTICE, RESEARCH, OUTCOME MEASUREMENT

0	1	2	5.1 Critical Thinking
0	1	2	5.2 Use of Research In Practice
0	1	2	5.3 Quality Management and Evaluation
0	1	2	5.4 Research Methods

6.0 PROFESSIONALISM & PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE

0	1	2	6.1 Self-Regulation
0	1	2	6.2 Autonomous Practice
0	1	2	6.3 Scope of Practice
0	1	2	6.4 Professional Behaviours/ Professionalism
0	1	2	6.5 Risk Management
0	1	2	6.6 Client Documentation
0	1	2	6.7 Record Keeping Maintaining Professional Responsibilities
0	1	2	6.8 Client-Centered Communication
0	1	2	6.9 Team Work
0	1	2	6.10 Assignment and Supervision
0	1	2	6.11 Managing OT Practice

CONFIRMATION OF FIELD WORK	
Total Number of Clinical Field Work	List clinical placements (i.e. community, Long term care, school, acute care, rehabilitations etc)