

This! Is Canada: A Virtual Exchange Program

Frequently Asked Questions

Q. What is an Experiences Canada Virtual Exchange?

A. An Experiences Canada Virtual Exchange is a fun, engaging online activity that can support social studies, language, and creative studies curricula from Grades 7-12, as well as second language. It virtually twin groups or individual youth in different part of Canada based on age, grade level and shared goals and objectives for the program. Experiences Canada virtual exchange program connects young people and encourages them to discover the diverse history, geography, languages, cultures and ways of life that shape our country.

Q. How do I know if I am eligible to apply?

A. The Experiences Canada Exchanges program is accessible to groups of youth from a school or recognized community organization, and to individual youth participants. The youth must be Canadian citizens, landed immigrants or have refugee status in Canada, and reside within Canada.

Q. How old are the youth that participate?

A. Experiences Canada Virtual Exchanges are designed for youth between the ages of 12 and 17 years, Grade 7-12.

Q. How long is an exchange?

A. Participants can work at their own pace, as long as all completed student projects are submitted by June 1st.

Q. Can a student participate in more than one virtual exchange?

A. Yes, youth participants can partake in more than one Experiences Canada VIRTUAL exchange.
Virtual exchange youth participants can also participate in one (1) In-person exchange after completing their virtual exchange.

Q. How does it work?

A. Classes/Groups of youth or individual youth are twinned together based on age level and shared goals and objectives for the program. Each group will have the opportunity to choose from up to six different activity units.

Q. What are the topics for each unit?

A. There are 6 units. The topics are:

- Daily life
- History
- Geography/environment
- Economy
- Indigenous Perspectives
- Arts and Culture

Q. How many units must be completed?

A. Only the first unit on Daily Life is compulsory for all participants. A minimum of four (4) units should be completed for groups and individuals wishing to be pre-approved for an in-person exchange next year (or when it is safe to do so).

Educators, youth groups or individuals may alternatively choose to do any one or all six units; and they can choose between having their whole group work on one or more unit, or, dividing their class into smaller teams, with each group responsible for completing a specific unit.

Q. What do students have to do to complete a unit?

A. Each activity unit challenges youth to create a specific media product (i.e a video, a photo gallery, a website.) Templates, examples and step-by-step guidelines are provided for each unit/topic. Once completed, groups or individual youth participant, first share their creation with their twins through an online meeting scheduled in real time using the school or home approved platform (i.e. Zoom, Google hangout...etc.) before sending them to Experiences Canada (alternatives offered when high speed connectivity is a challenge.)

Q. What is the goal for the media products submitted by participants?

A. Each media product created by the participants contribute to a national project. The media products completed by the youth are to, first, be shared with their twins to discover each other's communities; then submitted to Experiences Canada to populate a virtual interactive Map entitled; This! Is Canada, available from Experiences Canada website, highlighting all participating communities, and offering other visitors a Virtual tour across Canada.

Q. When does our group virtually exchange?

A. The virtual exchange program launches in January 2021. The modules are to be completed at the participants' own pace although the youth media products must be submitted to Experiences Canada by June 1st.

Q. Do students miss school?

A. No, each activity unit is designed with the flexibility to permit teachers, parents/guardians to assign modules as individual or small group work-respecting social distancing protocols, with the majority of tasks completed online. The Virtual Exchange Program was designed to support and complement curricula in social studies, languages, and/or creative arts/media studies

Q. How do I find a group to twin with?

A. Groups who have connections across the county can ask to be paired together. You can indicate their name and information on your application and encourage them to apply as well. Otherwise, our staff will find a group for you by identifying a group that matches your own group's demographics and

interests. Twinning groups is based on compatible ages of youth, as well as similar interests. Other factors in twinning groups include equitable provincial and territorial distribution.,

Q. How do I apply for an exchange?

A. Applications are completed and submitted online by the Organizer. An organizer can be a teacher, a community leader such as a sports team coach for example, or a parent/guardian of an individual participant.

Q. When is the deadline to apply for an exchange?

A. First round of twinning will begin February 1st, although twinning will continue until June.

Q. When will I know if my application is accepted?

A. As soon as you submit an application online, you will receive an automated e-mail acknowledging receipt of your application. Notices of twinning are issued in early January.

Q. What if I have already applied for an in person exchange, will my application be considered for a virtual exchange?

A. Yes, if you would like your in person exchange to be considered for the virtual exchange program please contact Experiences Canada.

Q. Does Experiences Canada provide any kind of orientation to Group Organizers?

A. Experiences Canada provides on-going support and guidance throughout the virtual exchange-planning process. A detailed Organizer/Teachers Guide and a mandatory zoom introduction call are provided to ensure that Organizers are well versed in what it takes to have a successful virtual exchange.

Q. How do the students access the modules?

A. The modules are delivered through an Online Learning System that can track student's progress.

Q. What is the Organizer/Teachers Guide?

A. The organizer/teachers Guide includes an overview of the program; Participants Guidelines and Permissions and Module-by-Module Instructions including technical specifications for projects and log on information. Experiences Canada provides templates for all projects

Q. How much will a virtual exchange cost?

A. Each group pays a participation fee of \$100 upon confirmation of their twinning offer. Alternatively \$ 10 per youth participating individually. Virtual or electronic costs to produce youth projects during the exchange are paid for by the groups.

Q. What kinds of activities are involved?

A. Each activity unit is designed with the flexibility to permit teachers to assign it as individual or small group work-respecting social distancing protocols, with the majority of tasks completed online.

Q. Who chooses the participants?

A. Each organizers chooses their own participants. Groups may consist of students in an existing school class or youth from a community association such as dance troupes, music clubs, sports teams, Scouts, Girl Guides, Boys and Girls Clubs, and others. The Group Organizer is also responsible for choosing one youth to represent the group as the Youth Ambassador.

Recognising that many youth are studying independently at home this year, Experiences Canada is also offering an option for individual youth to apply and be twinned with other individual youth in Canada. A parent/guardian is responsible to submit an application and ensure the virtual comfort and safety of their child throughout the exchange project.

Q. How do I know the youth participants will be safe in this Virtual environment?

A. The safety and security of our exchange participants is Experiences Canada's number one priority. All works presented on the Experiences Canada website will require permissions from parents and/or organizers, and students will only be identified by name and school/organization as submitted to us.

As groups are directly responsible for the primary online interactions between the groups we encourage them to review school/group privacy and appropriate use policies with youth participants.

Q. Will I be required to get police checks?

A. Upon confirmation of twinning, your school or organization will be required to confirm that a police vulnerable sector check will be obtained for every person aged eighteen (18) or older who will participate **directly** in the virtual Exchange, including the Group Organizer and the Parent/Guardian of youth participating individually.

R. What if there are any behavioral issues during the virtual exchange?

A. Although an Experiences Canada representative is always available to discuss situations, the Organizers are responsible for the day-to-day supervision and overall management. All emergencies and/or incidents are to be dealt with in a timely, appropriate and professional manner by the Organizer or another responsible adult from their school or organization.

If there is an issue arising between individual participants in the exchange, please contact your Experiences Canada exchange coordinator at the earliest opportunity.

Q. Will I have to sign a contract if I am offered an exchange?

A. Yes, each group / parent will be required to sign an agreement to comply with the terms and conditions of the virtual exchange program..

Q. What if I have other questions?

A. Experiences Canada staff are available Monday through Friday from 8:30am-4:30pm (Eastern Standard Time) to answer any and all of your questions.