

GLOCAL Essay Contest 2026

Exploring Key Civic Issues in Canada Today

Application Form: <https://forms.gle/P9k25mTuqdvzbhdw6>

1. Program Overview

The **GLOCAL Essay Contest 2026** is a national initiative designed to engage youth in thoughtful, evidence-based reflection on public issues shaping life in Canada.

The contest invites young people to explore civic challenges and opportunities through research, lived experience, and comparative insight. It emphasizes **clarity of thinking, use of evidence, and civic responsibility**, rather than opinion or ideology.

This contest is designed to be:

- Accessible to beginners and experienced writers alike;
- Credible and recommendable by educators;
- Scalable nationally;
- Reusable as a long-term civic literacy initiative

2. Program Objectives

The contest aims to:

1. **Strengthen civic literacy** among Canadian youth by encouraging evidence-informed thinking about public issues.
2. **Develop research and writing skills** in an accessible, non-academic format.
3. **Create a national platform for youth civic voices** grounded in facts, analysis, and lived experience.
4. **Build a lasting public resource** of high-quality youth essays that can inform discussion, education, and community engagement.
5. **Identify and nurture emerging civic thinkers** for future research, volunteering, and leadership opportunities.

3. Target Participants

The contest is open to **Canadian youth aged 15–35**, including:

- High school students
- College and university students
- Newcomers and permanent residents
- International students studying in Canada
- Overseas Canadians (comparative/global perspectives welcome)

No prior research experience is required.

4. Core Principles

The contest is guided by the following principles:

- **Evidence over opinion:** Claims should be supported by facts, examples, or credible sources.
- **Accessibility:** Plain language is encouraged; academic jargon is not required.
- **Non-partisanship:** Essays should be civic, not partisan or promotional.
- **Respect and responsibility:** Topics involving communities, identities, or sensitive issues must be approached thoughtfully and with sensitivity.
- **Curiosity and learning:** The contest values exploration and insight over “right answers.”

5. Themes & Topic Areas

Participants may choose **one primary theme** from the list below or propose another relevant civic issue.

Civic Themes (Non-Exhaustive)

Social Systems

- Public Health
- Mental Health
- Education Systems
- Housing & Homelessness
- Public Safety

Governance & Democracy

- Local Governance
- Provincial Governance
- Federal Governance
- Elections
- Civic Data, Transparency & Accountability

Rights, Justice & Inclusion

- Legal Literacy
- Justice System
- Anti-Discrimination & Human Rights
- Disability, Accessibility & Inclusion
- Gender Equality

Communities & Identity

- Indigenous Matters & Reconciliation
- Cultural Heritage & Identity
- Community Development

- Community Storytelling

Economy & Work

- Employment & Labour
- Economics
- Trade
- Finance
- Fiscal Policy
- Economic Inclusion

Technology & Society

- AI & Technology
- Media Literacy
- Cybersecurity & Digital Safety
- Digital Civil Society

Mobility & Global Canada

- Newcomer Experiences
- International Students & Temporary Residents
- Overseas Canadians & Global Citizenship

Infrastructure & Resilience

- Transportation & Infrastructure
- Urban, Rural & Northern Communities
- Emergency Preparedness & Resilience

Other

- Participants may propose another civic issue relevant to Canada.

Comparative perspectives (e.g., comparing Canada with another country or region) are welcome where relevant.

6. Essay Prompt

Participants are invited to respond to the following prompt:

Choose one civic issue that affects life in Canada. Explain why it matters, what is currently working or not working, and what could be done differently or better. Use evidence, examples, or lived experience to support your analysis.

Optional guiding questions:

- Why does this issue matter today?
- Who is most affected?
- What trade-offs or tensions exist?
- How does Canada compare to other places?
- What realistic improvements could be made?

7. Essay Format & Requirements

Eligibility of Essays

Participants may submit:

- a **newly written essay**, or
- an **essay written in 2025** (including school or university coursework),

provided that the participant makes a clear case for why the essay is relevant to this contest and aligns with the theme **Evidence, Ideas, and Civic Life**.

To ensure fairness and intentional participation, all submissions must include a **short contextual statement** (see below).

Required Contextual Statement (Mandatory)

All participants must submit a **Contextual Statement (100–300 words)** explaining:

- When and why the essay was written,
- How it relates to the chosen civic theme,
- What the author has revised, reflected on, or learned since writing it (if applicable),
- Why the essay should be considered a meaningful contribution to this contest.

This ensures that reused coursework reflects **active civic engagement**, not passive resubmission.

Submission Streams

Participants must select **one stream** at the time of submission:

- 1. Secondary School Stream**
 - a. Grades 9–12 (or equivalent)
- 2. Undergraduate Stream**
 - a. College or university undergraduate students
- 3. Graduate Stream**
 - a. Master's, PhD, or professional degree students
- 4. Open / Professional Stream**
 - a. Early-career professionals, educators, practitioners, community researchers, or others no longer in formal schooling

The Open / Professional Stream allows participation beyond academia while maintaining a clear review context.

Essays will be assessed relative to the stream selected.

Length & Format

- **No strict word limit** is imposed. **APA citation recommended.**
- Participants are encouraged to write at a length appropriate to their stream and argument.
- Clear, well-structured writing is valued more than length.

Essay format:

- The submission file must be in **Microsoft Word file format**.
- The submission must be typed, legible, and properly formatted.

Language & Style

- Submissions may be in **English or French**.
- Plain language is encouraged.
- First-person writing is permitted where relevant.
- Academic citation styles are welcome but not required (links acceptable).

Originality & Use of AI

- Essays must represent the participant's **own thinking and analysis**.
- AI tools may be used for brainstorming, editing, or clarity support.
- AI may **not** replace original reasoning or argument development.

8. Submission Process

Participants must submit their essay through the following Google Form:

<https://forms.gle/P9k25mTuqdvzbhdw6>

Accessibility & Support

If you require accessibility accommodations or have questions about the submission process, please contact admin@glocalfoundation.ca before the deadline.

9. Evaluation Criteria

Essays will be assessed using the following criteria:

1. **Clarity of argument and structure**
2. **Understanding of the civic issue**
3. **Use of evidence or examples**
4. **Depth of civic insight**
5. **Accessibility and communication**

10. Recognition & Incentives

Participants in the **GLOCAL Essay Contest 2026** may receive the following forms of recognition:

- **Electronic Certificates of Participation** for all eligible submissions;
- **Recognition of time spent** on essay research, writing, mentorship, revision, and knowledge mobilization as **civic participation and service hours**;

- **Electronic Certificates of Recognition** for Outstanding Essays, as determined by the review panel;
- **Publication of outstanding essays** in GLOCAL's electronic journal and digital knowledge platforms following editorial reviews;
- **Civic Travel Grants of up to \$1,000** awarded to the **Top 20 essays of the year**, to support participation in approved civic learning, conferences, or public engagement opportunities;
- **Invitations to present selected essays** through virtual civic discussions and/or in-person national or regional showcases.

11. Timeline

- Call for Submissions Opens: Thursday, December 18, 2025
- Submission Deadline: January 16, 2026 (Early Action), March 16, 2026 (Regular Action), May 16, 2026 (Late Action)
- Review Period: Ongoing
- Mentorship & Revision: Ongoing
- Results Announced: Spring/Summer 2026
- Publication & Showcase: Fall 2026

12. Governance & Review Process

- All submissions will be reviewed by the **GLOCAL Research Team**.
- **Senior researchers, academics, and experienced practitioners** are invited to apply as **Volunteer Editors** to support the review process and mentor youth writers. Interested individuals may submit a brief resume to admin@glocalfoundation.ca with the subject line: **"Application: Volunteer Editor – Canadian Civic Essay Contest 2026."**
- GLOCAL reserves the right to decline or remove submissions that do not meet basic standards of **respect, originality, academic integrity, or civic responsibility**, or that otherwise fall outside the scope of the contest.

13. Long-Term Vision

The **GLOCAL Essay Contest** is an **annual civic initiative**, building a growing archive of youth perspectives on Canadian public life. Over time, the contest will:

- Support civic education across schools and communities
- Contribute to public dialogue
- Feed into GLOCAL's broader research and civic engagement ecosystem
- Serve as a trusted reference for educators and youth alike

14. Contact & Further Information



For questions, accessibility accommodations, or partnership inquiries, participants may contact admin@glocalfoundation.ca with the subject line **“Inquiry - Canadian Civic Essay Contest 2026.”**