

CANADA FOUNDATION FOR INNOVATION

# Aiming high

Strategic plan 2023–28

**INNOVATION**

Canada Foundation  
for Innovation

Fondation canadienne  
pour l'innovation



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## About the Canada Foundation for Innovation

Since 1997, the Canada Foundation for Innovation has invested in infrastructure that researchers need to think big, innovate and push the boundaries of knowledge. State-of-the-art research facilities and equipment increase the capability of Canada's universities, colleges, research hospitals and non-profit research organizations to carry out high-quality research.

This, in turn, helps them to attract and retain the world's top talent, train the next generation of researchers and support world-class research that strengthens the economy and improves the quality of life for all Canadians.

*The Canada Foundation for Innovation's main office is located on the unceded Traditional Territory of the Anishinaabe Algonquin Nation.*

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# Foreword from the Chair of the Board of Directors

## Aiming high: A stronger future through research

In 2022, the Canada Foundation for Innovation (CFI) celebrated 25 years of providing researchers with facilities and equipment to think big, advance knowledge and make discoveries that enhance our lives. Over that period, our investments in research infrastructure helped propel Canada's place as a global leader in science, technology and innovation that, in turn, strengthened the economy by creating jobs and economic opportunities derived from research.

The CFI's 2023–28 strategic plan highlights how we aspire to continue to cultivate positive change through the research we make possible. With an eye to the future, this plan rests on five strategic pillars:

- Fostering the science of tomorrow
- Building prosperous and healthy communities
- Contributing to a sustainable world
- Inspiring the next generation
- Delivering for the research community.

This plan draws upon consultations and engagement with the institutions and communities with which we work. Their contributions ensure that the plan reflects issues of common interest and addresses some of the immediate and future challenges and opportunities they see on the horizon.

This strategic plan also reconfirms our values, which include a commitment to the principles of equity, diversity and inclusion. Closely linked with this commitment, we aim to foster ever greater partnerships and collaborations across sectors, institutions and disciplines.

We invite you to participate in our journey as we work to support science, technology and innovation for the benefit of people and communities across Canada.

Ingrid Pickering  
Chair of the Board

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# About the Canada Foundation for Innovation

## Our mandate

The Canada Foundation for Innovation was established in 1997 by the Government of Canada to provide researchers and research institutions with state-of-the-art equipment, laboratories and facilities essential for conducting world-class research that produces benefits for Canadians. We support the evolving needs of Canada's universities, colleges, research hospitals and non-profit research institutions across all disciplines.

Our objectives are to:

- Increase Canada's capacity to carry out important world-class scientific research and technology development
- Support economic growth and job creation, as well as health and environmental quality through innovation
- Expand research and job opportunities for the next generation of Canadian researchers, technicians and entrepreneurs
- Promote productive networks and collaboration among Canadian universities, colleges, research hospitals, non-profit research institutions and the private sector.

We achieve our mandate by optimizing the Government of Canada's investments in research infrastructure through contributions of up to 40 percent of a research project's infrastructure costs. Institutions — the ultimate recipients of our funding — secure the remaining 60 percent through partnerships with governments, industry, and other public, private and non-profit organizations.

Since its creation in 1997, the CFI has committed almost \$10 billion in support of over 12,500 projects at 172 research institutions in 80 municipalities across Canada.

## Our strategic vision for 2023–28

Our strategic vision for the CFI from 2023 to 2028 is to meet the challenges of today and tomorrow while growing prosperity and building a stronger future for Canada through research. By supporting Canadian research institutions to address current and emerging science and technology challenges, we will help them seize opportunities to contribute to the vitality, health and prosperity of communities. This vision reflects our commitment to Canada's research community, which we demonstrate through investments in research facilities and equipment.

# Our commitments, values and principles

This plan rests on a set of commitments, values and principles that underscore how we plan to deliver our support to the research community over the next five years.

The CFI is committed to the principles of equity, diversity and inclusion. In all our activities, we recognize that a breadth of perspectives, skills and experiences contributes to excellence in research.

Here is how we strive to realize those values:

## Equity

We aim to ensure that all researchers and their CFI-eligible institutions have the opportunity to access and benefit from our programs and CFI-funded research infrastructure through well-established, fair and impartial practices.

## Diversity

We value attributes that allow institutions and their researchers — from any background and from anywhere — to succeed. These include individual attributes such as gender, language, culture and career stage; institutional attributes such as size, type and location; and attributes that encompass the full spectrum of research, from basic to applied and across all disciplines.

## Inclusion

We encourage a culture of collaboration and partnership which includes contributions from and engagement among diverse groups of people, institutions and areas of research to maximize the potential of Canada’s research ecosystem.

We believe that nurturing an equitable, diverse and inclusive culture is the responsibility of every member of the research ecosystem, including funders, institutions, researchers, experts and reviewers.

As an organization, excellence underpins everything we do. We strive to deliver on our mandate by being:

RESPONSIBLE	COLLABORATIVE	INNOVATIVE
How we live it externally		
We remain transparent and accountable by monitoring and communicating the outcomes of our activities and investments.	We are client-focused, providing effective, efficient services and actively consulting with our stakeholders.	We believe in a bright future for Canada’s research community. Our investments allow researchers to think big and have a profound, transformative impact on society.
How we live it internally		
We are objective, ensuring the integrity and independence of our processes and decisions.	We foster teamwork, valuing and considering the opinions, and trusting the skills and knowledge of our colleagues.	We bring fresh ideas into a work environment that fosters excellence and creative thinking.

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# Consultations for this strategic plan

The CFI's executive team led our strategic planning consultations with the CFI's Board of Directors and key stakeholders from the research, academic, public, private and not-for-profit sectors. Through this process, stakeholders and partners shared the key issues they anticipate will impact research over the next five years. This strategic plan is informed by the understanding we gained from the research community and sets out a series of well-timed and purposeful actions to meet the needs of the research community.

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## Strategic and operational context

At the CFI, we are keenly aware that in 2023 research institutions face the same problems and constraints that afflict other sectors, notably labour market changes, inflation, supply-chain disruptions, the effects of climate change and geopolitical uncertainties. Within our mandate, our strategic plan factors in these exceptional conditions and their impact on research institutions and the entire research ecosystem.

We aim to invest in research facilities and equipment that make significant breakthroughs possible in all domains and disciplines of research. These investments will focus on the facilities and equipment that generate the most widely felt social and economic benefits. This means building the capacity of institutions to advance knowledge, train the next generation of researchers, and attract and retain world-class research talent.

We will provide support for institutional, international and interdisciplinary collaborations, including collaborations across the public, private and not-for-profit sectors. Because the future exists outside of the laboratory, we will be particularly attentive to how our investments contribute to partnerships with industry and to the resulting commercialization of research outcomes.

While we exist to support research, we are aware that this support has social impacts. For this reason, our strategic plan signals our intention to emphasize the principles of equity, diversity and inclusion, and ensures that these continue to be integral in both the development and delivery of our programs and policies and in our internal administration and operations. This includes continuing to support the Government of Canada's commitment to reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples in Canada.

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# Five strategic pillars

This strategic plan is rooted in our mandate to provide researchers and research institutions in Canada with state-of-the-art equipment, laboratories and facilities that are essential for conducting world-class research that produces benefits for Canadians. We support the evolving needs of Canada's universities, colleges, research hospitals and non-profit research institutions across all disciplines and domains. This includes climate change and its impacts on our health and social and economic wellbeing. Our approach will rest on the following five strategic pillars:

- **Fostering the science of tomorrow:** Our contribution to building today the research capacity that supports the science of tomorrow
- **Building prosperous and healthy communities:** Our contribution to enhancing the connection between research and communities
- **Contributing to a sustainable world:** Our contribution to environmental, social and economic sustainability
- **Inspiring the next generation:** Our contribution to promoting equity, diversity, inclusion and community
- **Delivering for the research community:** Our contribution to leveraging institutional partnerships and collaboration

## Fostering the science of tomorrow

The CFI is resolutely focused on building a strong future for Canada through research. We do this by investing in the facilities and equipment that: drive discovery and advance knowledge; contribute to the training, retention and recruitment of a new generation of talent; and bring social and economic benefits to Canada.

To foster the future of discovery, we will provide the support needed to nurture and grow research fields where Canada has a competitive advantage and will invest in new fields that are critical to our collective future. We will continue to ensure that researchers across all fields have the facilities and equipment they need to do their work. And we will ensure that new priorities and practices in research, like open science and open data, factor into how we support institutions.

Because scientific advancement and knowledge creation are not bounded by any institution or sector, we will encourage partnerships and collaboration among institutions and other social and economic entities in Canada and internationally. We will encourage institutions to make facilities and equipment accessible to researchers in order to build up research capacity within and across regions and institutions. We will do this in part by encouraging institutions to locate research equipment and tools where they can be used by industry and others in their community. We will continue to encourage applied research through support for partnerships with industry and the commercialization of research results.

Our strategic support for the research of tomorrow will provide researchers and institutions with access to facilities and equipment that drive discoveries that can be applied to create social and economic benefits.

To achieve these results, we will commit resources to the following actions and commitments:

### Funding programs and support to research

- Explore facility sharing and access agreements with national and international research institutions and organizations in the public, private and not-for-profit sectors
- Review policies and programs as they apply to national and international institutional collaborations and partnerships



- Increase the participation in assessment committees of international experts from outside Europe and North America
- Encourage institutions to share access to research facilities and equipment
- Explore means to enhance the capacity of research institutions to develop and retain highly qualified personnel to operate and maintain facilities and equipment acquired with CFI funding
- Work with the federal government to advance planning and transition for Canada's Major Research Facilities

## **Outreach and partnerships**

- Work with private and not-for-profit organizations to increase collaboration and partnerships in discovery and applied research
- Conclude agreements with Canadian and international research organizations to promote Canadian research facilities and equipment through the CFI's Research Facilities Navigator, an online directory of research facilities open to partnerships with users from all sectors
- Work with the three federal research funding agencies and other research organizations to increase opportunities for funding

## **Corporate initiatives**

- Pursue program delivery partnerships with Canadian and international research infrastructure funding programs

# **Building prosperous and healthy communities**

Since 1997, the CFI has invested in research facilities and equipment that contribute to advancing Canada's economy and society. Research institutions provide both tangible and intangible benefits to the communities where they are located and with which they share the economic and social landscape.

Recognizing that research increasingly spans many social and economic sectors, our programs will foster opportunities for all members of a community to contribute and benefit from research. To do this, we will partner with organizations from different sectors to support research.

In recognition of the vital role communities play in enhancing research prospects and results, the activities outlined in this strategic plan will result in social and economic impacts that will strengthen communities across Canada.

To achieve these results, we will commit resources to the following actions and commitments:

## **Funding programs and support to research**

- Review program eligibility and other program criteria as they apply to newly established and small postsecondary and not-for-profit research institutions
- Review program policies and guidelines as they apply to research, commercialization and partnerships with industry and the private, public and not-for-profit sectors
- Explore joint programs for applied research in partnership with regional economic actors including the private and not-for-profit sectors, and research institutions

## **Outreach and partnerships**

- Increase outreach activities toward foundations and charitable organizations to identify and develop new opportunities to leverage partner funding for CFI-funded projects
- Increase awareness campaigns around funding competitions to inform institutions about eligible costs



- Work with research institutions to find innovative ways to engage with industry
- Raise awareness among industry of opportunities for research partnerships

### Corporate initiatives

- Explore the role of not-for-profit organizations as research partners as well as funding partners

## Contributing to a sustainable world

We live in an interconnected world, where our choices and actions have impacts that are increasingly felt worldwide. In recognition of this, the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) set out a shared vision to tackle the global challenges of poverty, inequality and injustice, and environmental degradation and climate change, by 2030. Canada's research community shares in the goal of addressing these challenges through their activities. The CFI has long supported research that falls under these topics, and we will continue to do so.

Through this strategic plan, the CFI seeks to contribute to the attainment of the SDGs by leveraging our role as an enabler of research. Over the next five years, we will encourage research institutions to find ways to integrate the SDGs into the projects we fund. And as an organization with an impact of its own to consider, we will also strive to make our operations and activities more sustainable.

To achieve these results, we will commit resources to the following actions and commitments:

### Funding programs and support to research

- Document and report on the proportion of program funding devoted to multi-institutional and interdisciplinary projects that integrate the UN SDGs
- Review program policies and guidelines as they apply to the impacts of CFI-funded facilities and equipment on sustainable development

### Outreach and partnerships

- Recognize and publicize funded research projects that significantly contribute to the attainment of the SDGs
- Increase awareness about the CFI's policies and programs for extending the usable life of facilities and equipment
- Assist institutions to disseminate their sustainability plans and related mitigation measures

### Corporate initiatives

- Review how to assess and report on the CFI's impact on sustainable development

## Inspiring the next generation

The CFI is committed to promoting equity, diversity and inclusion in the research projects we fund. Our support for EDI forms part of our core values and is an essential pillar of our strategic vision. We have made progress in promoting EDI and will continue our efforts to increase participation of people from diverse groups in research activities.

We recognize that opening doors is not sufficient. Over the next five years, the CFI will include in our EDI goals the notion of *community*. This means taking steps to support the creation of integrative spaces that bring together people of all personal identities and from all professional backgrounds to promote exchanges that lead to better understanding, and contribute to discovery and innovation.

We will work with the three federal research funding agencies and other organizations to increase attention to EDI. We will also work with institutions and other research organizations to enhance opportunities for early career researchers and students to participate in projects we fund.

Equally important is how we promote equity, diversity, inclusion and community in our internal corporate functions. To this end, we will endeavour to be a leader in creating a workplace that fosters a sense of community based on a shared vision, respect and empathy.

Across the country, new colleges, universities, research hospitals and non-profit research organizations are being created. We will seek to bring them into the research community, respecting the values and knowledge they bring. Not-for-profit agencies and foundations dedicated to research are also part of the landscape today and they too must be welcomed to the research community.

With the understanding that research that involves people from a range of experiences has the greatest impact, we will encourage a sense of community among researchers and others from diverse groups. We will do this by encouraging institutions to create environments that bring people together, making them feel welcome and enabling the kind of interaction and understanding that can lead to discovery and innovation.

We recognize that investments in research facilities and equipment are also investments in the development of a new generation of research talent. We will heighten our efforts to encourage the training, recruitment and retention of new researchers through our program activities.

The CFI can also play a significant role as an enabler of reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples. We will seek ways to acknowledge the contribution of Indigenous Peoples and deepen the understanding and incorporation of Indigenous Knowledge systems and perspectives in research. We will work with Indigenous communities in Canada and our federal partners to ensure that our programs and activities support the principles of reconciliation.

To achieve these results, we will commit resources to the following actions and commitments:

### **Funding programs and support to research**

- Examine our review criteria which relate to the composition of project teams to encourage greater participation by researchers from all professional backgrounds and from diverse groups
- Encourage institutions to create spaces for researchers and others to build networks and communities across disciplines
- Partner with federally funded research organizations and others to enhance opportunities for early career researchers to participate in training and development programs
- Explore options to increase participation in Expert Committees and Multidisciplinary Assessment Committees by people from underrepresented groups and diverse professional backgrounds
- Evaluate opportunities to establish temporary advisory groups to assist in the review of CFI programs and policies

### **Outreach and partnerships**

- Highlight the contribution and participation of Indigenous and other researchers from underrepresented communities in CFI-funded projects

### **Corporate initiatives**

- Review financial policies as they apply to the remuneration of experts and others who take part in review committees
- Examine ways to foster EDI and reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples in our operations and governance, and in our programs and activities where relevant to the CFI's mandate

# Delivering for the research community

In Canada and internationally, advances in scientific research result from the combined efforts of multiple actors from the academic, public, private and not-for-profit sectors. Working with the three federal research funding agencies, the CFI plays a critical role by providing the facilities and equipment that enable researchers to formulate research proposals for federal research grants.

This collaboration extends beyond joint funding programs. As a member of the Canada Research Coordinating Committee and other federal committees and working groups, the CFI contributes to federal science and innovation policy. We also work closely with the provinces and other organizations that support research both in Canada and abroad.

We will continue to find opportunities to collaborate and partner with other organizations to maximize the impact of public funding for research. This strategic plan will result in programs and policies that foster Canada's research enterprise and enable academic and private research institutions to continue to successfully compete with the best in the world.

To achieve these results, we will commit resources to the following actions and commitments:

## Funding programs and support to research

- Explore collaboration and partnership funding and administrative agreements with federal research organizations
- Support the establishment of new regional research facilities in consultation with the institutions and the federal government
- Support the upgrade and renewal of facilities previously funded by the CFI that continue to be indispensable for research and whose usage is shared
- Discuss funding for research facilities and equipment with foreign governments, research institutions, international organizations and foundations
- Consider requiring institutional policies on non-essential duplication of research facilities and equipment

## Outreach and partnerships

- Encourage research institutions and stakeholders to establish procurement consortia for scientific equipment where possible

## Corporate initiatives

- Review funding program policies and guidelines to streamline administrative practices

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# In conclusion

## A vision to realize the best of Canadian research

Excellence has always been and will remain our core value, providing the foundation for our organization as we continue to serve the research community.

Strategic plans generally provide a roadmap for the future. But the future is our daily business at the CFI. When we hold a competition today, it is to provide the spaces and equipment that will be needed in the next two to five years. When we plan, we envision what will be required in the decades to come so institutions can make strategic choices that will enable fundamental and applied research to flourish. Researchers in Canada also aspire to be among the best in the world and require state-of-the-art research infrastructure to achieve these goals.

This plan provides the context, the tools and the means that will enable researchers to respond to critical and complex challenges and to make the discoveries that will improve our lives. The context is not only regional or national but international. We must engage on ever broader platforms. Current issues require special tools to open the way to ever greater collaboration. More and more researchers will work in teams across institutions and national borders and will need access to advanced installations and labs. The CFI will also continue to support the convergence of disciplines and the welcome inclusion of a diversity of people and ideas in our research community. As a good global citizen, the CFI will encourage and publicize efforts for sustainability in research equipment and construction as well as in our own work.

As we confidently look to the future, we will listen, take note and incorporate the best ideas of the research community in our programs and operations. We will work together with that community, all levels of government, academia and industry to achieve the goals enumerated in this strategic plan. With our Board of Directors, our Members, and our staff we will continue to serve Canada as we have over the last 25 years: with forethought, steadfastness and innovation.

Roseann O'Reilly Runte

