

SSHRC  CRSH

STRATEGIC PLAN

# MOMENTUM

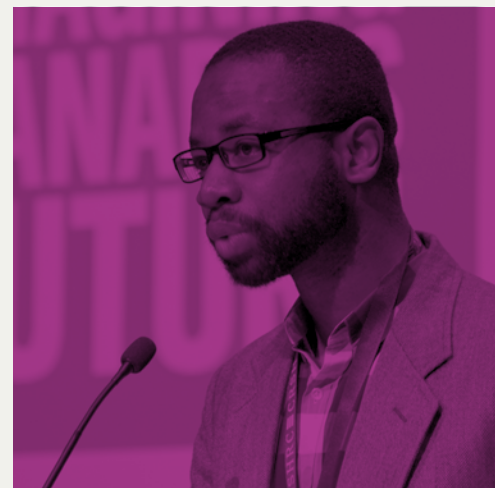
## 2020-2022



Social Sciences and Humanities  
Research Council of Canada

Conseil de recherches en  
sciences humaines du Canada

Canada 



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## PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

As a new decade begins, the pace of global change continues to accelerate. Thriving in this changing world requires innovative thinking, and new ways to use knowledge and ideas. In this regard, the social sciences and humanities have never been more important, responding to emerging challenges and taking full advantage of new opportunities. In the end, our disciplines will provide the tools and the knowledge required to ensure the well-being of Canadians and of societies around the world.

The social sciences and humanities have an even larger contribution to make as we confront the realities of racism and discrimination and deal with major social upheavals such as those caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Events such as these create widespread impact on the economy, global and domestic politics, international collaborations, social interactions, use of technologies, and the daily lives of individuals. Social sciences and humanities research is at the core of studying and documenting new phenomena, bringing

forward historical and ethical perspectives, and contributing to finding new, innovative solutions—not only during the crisis itself, but also as Canada strives to find its place in the emerging postpandemic world order.

As a steward of public funds and the public trust, SSHRC is responsible for using resources wisely and effectively, and is accountable to the people of Canada. We are grateful for the government's unprecedented investment through recent federal

budgets, including \$215 million for social sciences and humanities research over five years, and \$55 million per year onward, to be used in support of research excellence. SSHRC has also taken on an expanded leadership role in delivering interdisciplinary research programs on behalf of all three federal research granting agencies.

Our plan for the next two years is firmly grounded in harnessing our strengths for the benefit of all Canadians: world-class research, a talented and

diverse research community, strong partnerships across a range of sectors, and a never-wavering commitment to innovation. At the heart of our ability to achieve the objectives set out in this plan rests one critical resource: our dedicated staff. I am so very proud of their ingenuity, grit and flexibility in these challenging and complex times. On behalf of the senior leadership at SSHRC, I look forward to working with all of our colleagues to continue realizing our ambitions as agents of knowledge creation, knowledge sharing, and talent development in the public interest.



Ted Hewitt, PhD  
PRESIDENT, SOCIAL SCIENCES AND  
HUMANITIES RESEARCH COUNCIL





## INTRODUCTION: STAYING ON COURSE IN UNCERTAIN TIMES

Over the past five years, the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) has advanced the contributions of world-class research in the social sciences and humanities to meet Canada's long-term challenges and promote new opportunities for Canadians. A strong research ecosystem is vital to improving our communities, our economy, our cultural fabric, and the overall quality of life in this country.

SSHRC supports research excellence and innovative ideas emanating from a research community of 25,000 full-time university professors, over 65,000 graduate students and postdoctoral researchers, and thousands of college faculty—representing roughly 54% of Canada's postsecondary researchers. Through grants, fellowships and scholarships, SSHRC helps Canada's researchers do what they do best: train the next generation of talented, creative thinkers and doers; build knowledge and understanding about people, cultures and societies; and work with partners across all sectors to drive innovations that address the challenges of today and tomorrow.

SSHRC also oversees the delivery of a number of large programs that support interdisciplinary research and strengthen the overall research environment. Via the Tri-agency Institutional

Programs Secretariat (TIPS), SSHRC administers these programs on behalf of the three federal research granting agencies: SSHRC, the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR), and the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council (NSERC).

We are currently navigating uncertain times due to the COVID-19 pandemic, and unprecedented mobilization around issues of racism and social justice. In the midst of these challenges, SSHRC will stay on course. Our plan for 2020 to 2022 enables us to move steadily forward with ongoing initiatives and priorities, as we build on the momentum generated over the past five years. It also allows us to respond with agility and flexibility to help Canada flourish now and in the future.



IMAGINING  
CANADA'S  
FUTURE



# BUILDING ON OUR ACHIEVEMENTS

Research in the social sciences and humanities contributes to the economic, cultural, social, technological, environmental and intellectual well-being of Canadians. In the past five years, SSHRC has increased support for social sciences and humanities research, while assuming a larger role in advancing excellence across Canada's research community as a whole. Throughout the period, we have remained steadfast in our commitment to foster, support and promote top-tier Canadian research and talent.

“SOCIAL SCIENTISTS AND SCHOLARS PUSH THE BOUNDARIES OF KNOWLEDGE AND HELP US BETTER UNDERSTAND THE WORLD AROUND US. TO BE THE BEST AND MOST INNOVATIVE COUNTRY THAT CANADA CAN BE, WE ALWAYS HAVE TO CONSIDER THAT HUMAN DIMENSION. THIS MEANS THAT WE NEED CUTTING-EDGE THINKING ABOUT PEOPLE, HUMAN BEHAVIOUR AND CULTURE WHEN WE MAKE DECISIONS ABOUT COMMUNITIES, BUSINESSES, AND GOVERNMENT. SIMPLY PUT, TECHNOLOGY AND HUMANITY MUST PROGRESS IN EQUAL MEASURE.”



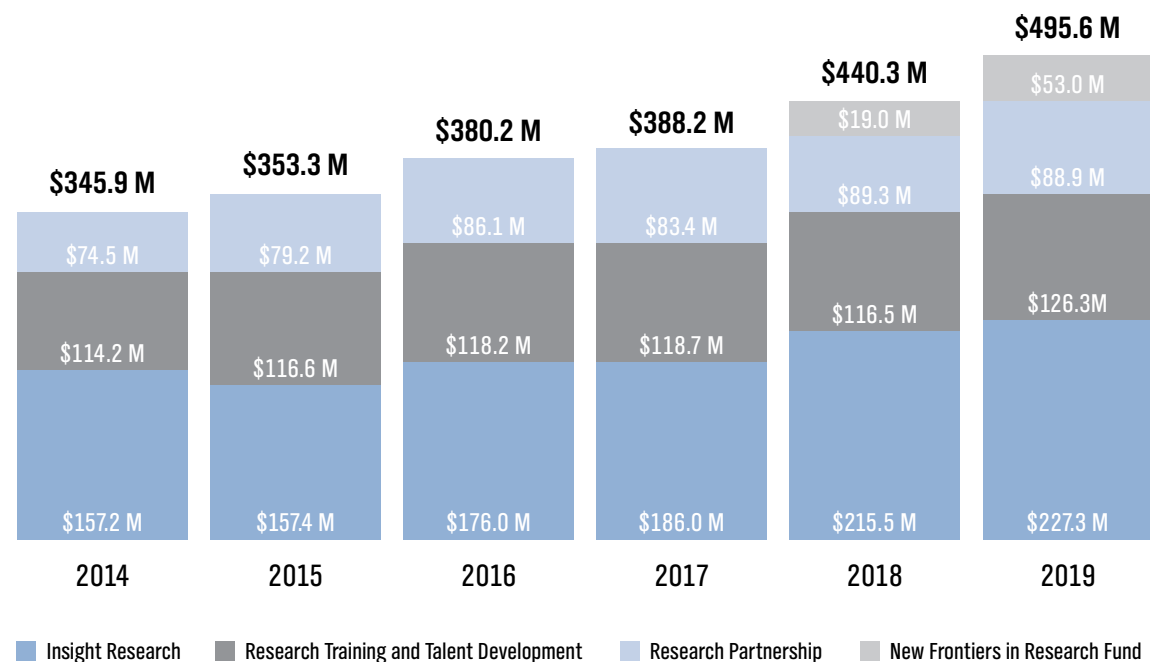
– THE HONOURABLE NAVDEEP BAINS  
Minister of Innovation, Science and Economic  
Development, SSHRC Impact Awards, 2019

HERE ARE SOME  
OF THE **HIGHLIGHTS**  
FROM OUR MANY  
ACHIEVEMENTS  
OVER THE PAST  
FIVE YEARS:

## INCREASED SUPPORT FOR WORLD-CLASS RESEARCH IN THE SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES

Our investments in the production and use of knowledge have continued to grow. Over 2014 to 2019, SSHRC awarded more than \$2.4 billion in funding to social sciences and humanities research and researchers in Canada. Total funding increased by 43% over the period, and the share of total researchers receiving support increased from 17% to 27%. SSHRC programs promote the training of highly skilled people; develop talent; support world-class research that improves our collective understanding of individuals and societies; provide opportunities to connect researchers and research with a variety of audiences; and uniquely assist in the formulation of lasting solutions that produce productive and prosperous communities.

SSHRC's spending on its main funding opportunities from 2014 to 2019

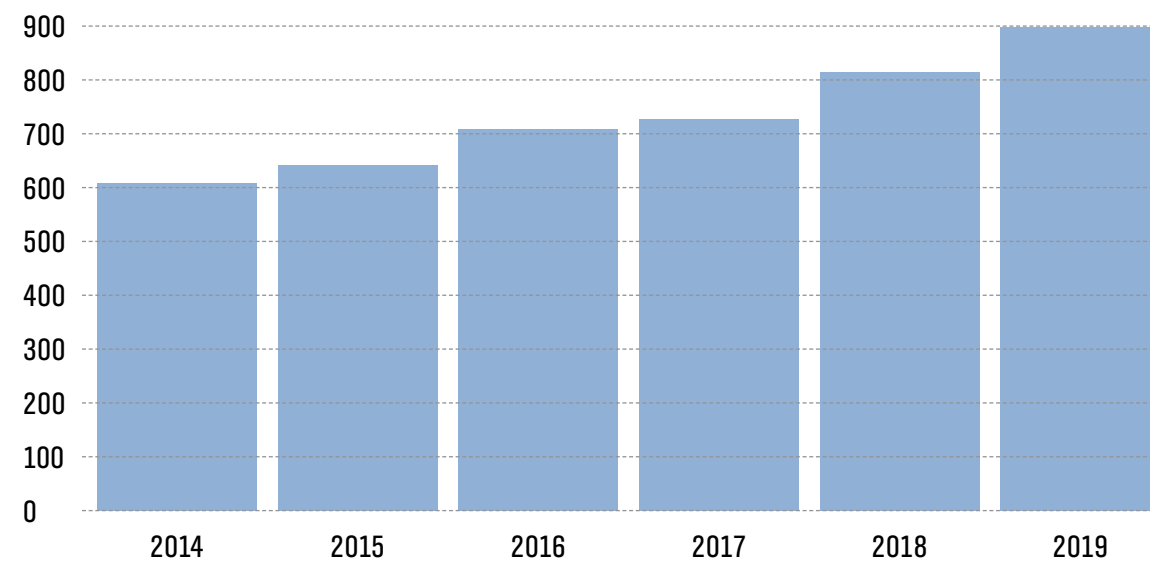


\*Note: Sums may not amount to total due to rounding

## A LEADERSHIP ROLE IN INTERDISCIPLINARY RESEARCH AND TRI-AGENCY PROGRAMS

The Government of Canada has placed significant confidence in SSHRC to deliver key strategic programming in support of research in Canada, including through the Canada Research Chairs Program, the Research Support Fund and other programs. SSHRC's funding of interdisciplinary research has steadily grown since 2014, and we have taken on a greater role in delivering tri-agency programs. In 2018, we launched the New Frontiers in Research Fund (NFRF) which will invest \$275 million over five years to support international, interdisciplinary and transformative research.

Tri-agency/Interdisciplinary funding programs managed by SSHRC (\$M)

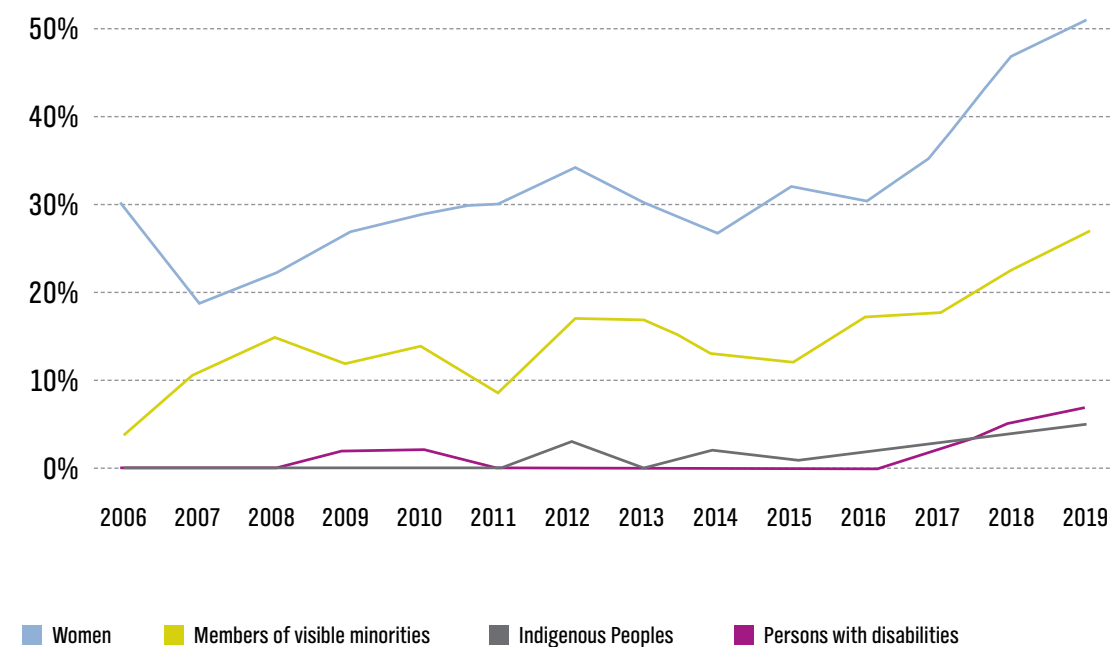


Note: The total investments in the tri-agency/interdisciplinary programs managed by SSHRC (including the Canada First Research Excellence Fund, Canada Research Chairs Program, Canada Excellence Research Chairs Program, Canada 150 Research Chairs Program, Research Support Fund, and NFRF) represent a 44% increase between 2014 and 2019.

## PROMOTING EQUITY, DIVERSITY AND INCLUSION

SSHRC has continued to work with CIHR and NSERC to advance research excellence by promoting broad and equitable participation in Canadian research. While more work remains to be done, we have made significant progress in addressing inequities in programs like the Canada Research Chairs, and in advancing the participation of designated groups in SSHRC programs and adjudication committees. Applying gender and diversity analysis is helping us to assess how diverse groups of people may experience policies, programs and initiatives, and to facilitate equitable access to funding, and a more inclusive research community.

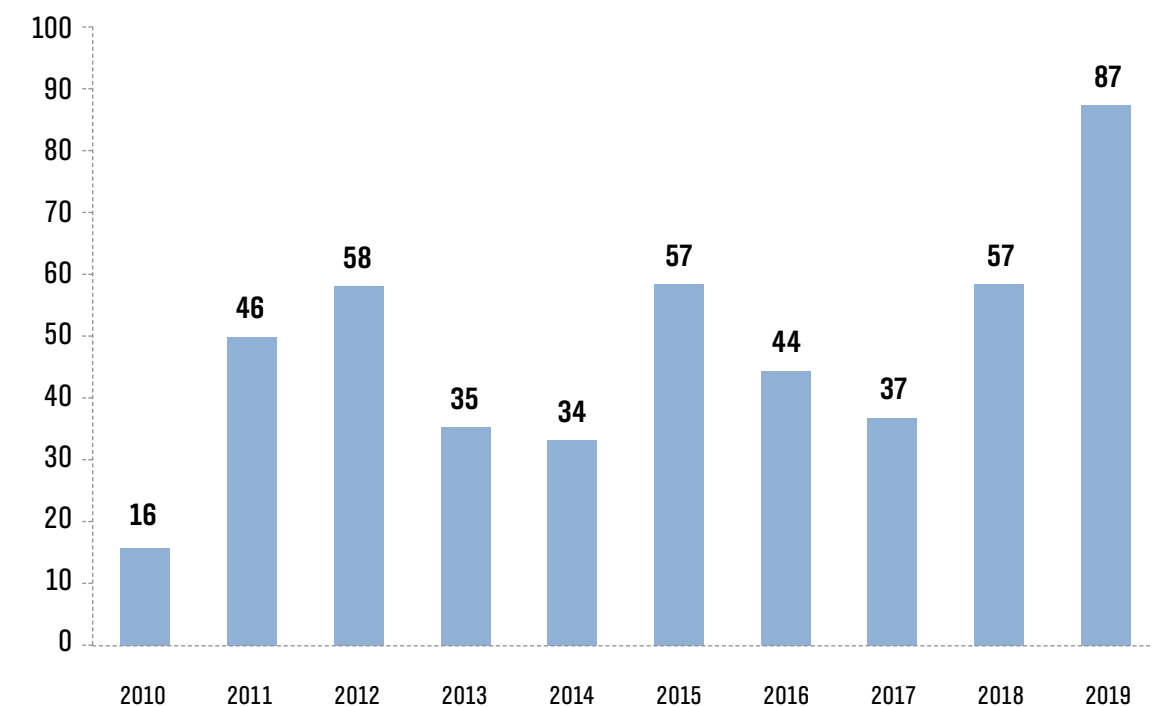
Research Chairs Program: Percentage of nominations submitted for individuals who self-identified as belonging to among the four designated groups, from 2006 to 2019



## SUPPORT FOR INDIGENOUS RESEARCH AND RESEARCH TRAINING

Through extensive engagement with Indigenous partners, and on behalf of the granting councils, SSHRC co-developed a strategy for an interdisciplinary research and research training model that contributes to reconciliation. The strategy sets out four directions to strengthen the capacity of First Nations, Métis, and Inuit communities to lead their own research and partner with the broader research community: building relationships with First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples; supporting research priorities of Indigenous Peoples; creating greater funding accessibility; and championing Indigenous leadership.

Self-identified Indigenous organizations involved in SSHRC partnerships





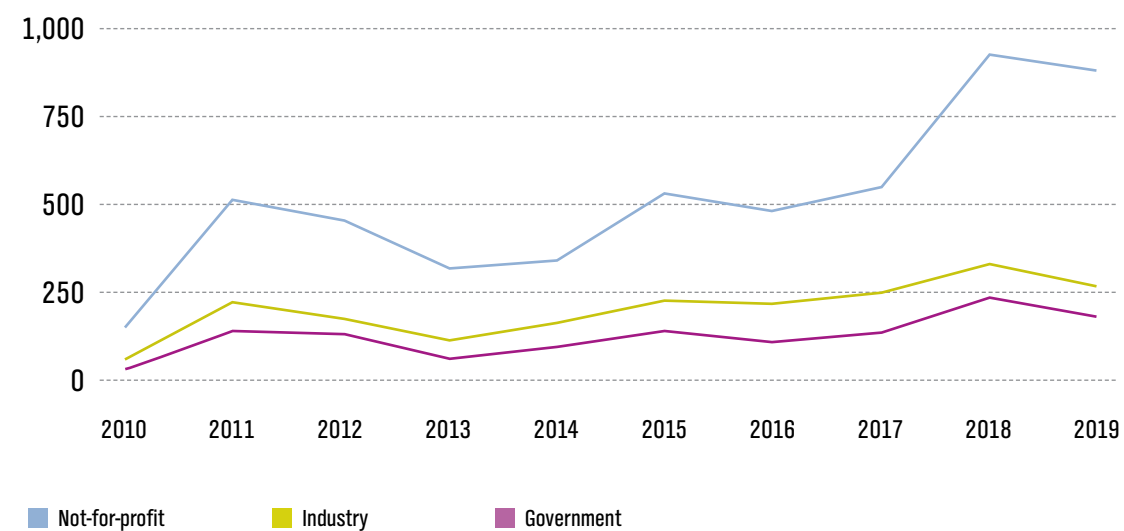
## NEW PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATIONS

In developing a range of new partnerships and opportunities across stakeholder groups, SSHRC has clearly demonstrated the value of social sciences and humanities research contributions, particularly in the area of policy development and planning. Increasing the number and range of SSHRC collaborations and partnerships creates unique opportunities for Canadians to learn and work with their peers, and to conduct and communicate their research.

### PARTICIPATION OF NON-ACADEMIC PARTNERS:

SSHRC has broadened the participation of non-academic partners in its funded projects, with over 720 industry, government and not-for-profit partners involved in funded proposals for 2018, up 47% from 2017. In addition, we developed partnerships with many federal government departments and agencies, on issues such as refugee integration, housing, environmental assessment, defense and security issues, and combatting online disinformation.

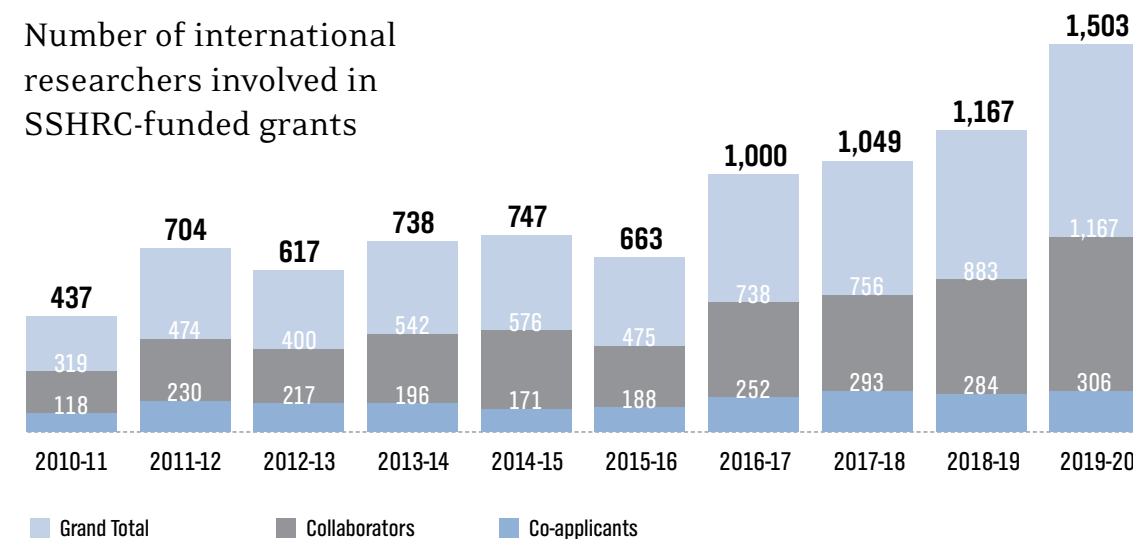
Number of non-academic partners in SSHRC partnerships



### INTERNATIONAL COLLABORATIONS:

SSHRC has worked diligently in recent years to enhance its reputation as a global leader in research funding. The participation of Canadian social sciences and humanities researchers in globally recognized international collaborations has grown. Around 70% of SSHRC-funded researchers are involved in collaborations with their international peers during their award period. In addition, 12% of SSHRC's grantees were cited for international distinctions or awards in 2018, compared with 7% in 2016. SSHRC has also developed a number of collaborations with international funding partners, such as the Canada-United Kingdom Artificial Intelligence Initiative. This partnership aims to build competitive and resilient economies, and to maximize the social and health benefits of artificial intelligence.

Number of international researchers involved in SSHRC-funded grants



### COLLABORATING ON FUTURE CHALLENGE AREAS:

SSHRC has also worked to stimulate research and knowledge mobilization on critical and emerging issues, notably through our Imagining Canada's Future initiative. In 2018, following rigorous horizon scanning, we identified 16 future challenges that will have a major impact on Canada in the next decade. The challenge areas will benefit from knowledge and talent contributed by the social sciences and humanities. In 2019, we launched the first of three annual Knowledge Synthesis Grants on future challenges identified by key stakeholders and partners as being the most critical to Canada's future: Living Within the Earth's Carrying Capacity, Working in the Digital Economy, and The Emerging Asocial Society.



# OUR PLAN FOR THE NEXT TWO YEARS

Over the coming two years, we will build on these successes by focusing on five main objectives that represent the enduring ambitions of our work at SSHRC. For each objective, we have established a set of strategies that will help us sustain the momentum of our ongoing programs and projects, respond rapidly to evolving crises, and maximize the overall impact of the research we support.

Our plan builds on SSHRC's strong record of achievements, to continue funding world-class research, training and innovation to Canada in a time of global turmoil and change. It also supports our efforts to create a more equitable, diverse and inclusive research enterprise in Canada, and to build a modern workplace for SSHRC. The plan is the result of community and staff consultation and engagement, and will enable us, over the two-year period, to maximize the value and benefits we provide to Canadians.

# 1 ENHANCE CANADA'S GLOBAL LEADERSHIP IN SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES RESEARCH

Canada has a strong international reputation for producing high-calibre discovery research. As a recent Council of Canadian Academies expert panel study on research and development in Canada demonstrates, this is no less true in the disciplines supported within our mandate.

Pushing the boundaries of research excellence has inspired a renewed sense of Canadian leadership. Achieving a more equitable, diverse and inclusive research enterprise is essential to continue to generate the excellent, innovative and impactful research necessary to advance knowledge and respond to national and global challenges.

Importantly, SSHRC also contributes to research excellence through our ongoing efforts to reduce the systemic barriers and biases experienced by women, Indigenous Peoples, people with disabilities, and members of visible minority groups. Helping to grow the capacity of First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities to lead their

own research and partner with the broader research community is an immediate priority.

Driving and delivering an increasing number of interdisciplinary and international research initiatives, along with our core programs in the social sciences and humanities, will also keep SSHRC—and Canada—at the forefront of research excellence. We will continue to base the awarding of all research grants, scholarships and fellowships on rigorous assessment criteria and merit review processes that align with international best practices.

We will achieve this objective by doing the following:

## ADVANCING EQUITY, DIVERSITY, AND INCLUSION:

SSHRC will continue to support equitable access to funding opportunities for all researchers; incorporate equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) in program design and research practices; and collect and analyze EDI-related data for consideration in decision-making. We will continue to promote and implement the equity targets within the Canada Research Chairs Program, as well as related EDI institutional measures, in 2020 and beyond. We will incorporate gender-based analysis plus in developing, evaluating or modifying our policies and programs. Training for review committee members and SSHRC staff will continue to ensure EDI considerations are integrated into merit review processes.

## STRENGTHENING INDIGENOUS RESEARCH CAPACITY:

We will lead the implementation of initiatives and activities under the four strategic directions of the tri-agency Indigenous strategic plan: building relationships with First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples; supporting research priorities of Indigenous Peoples; making granting agency funding programs more accessible; and championing Indigenous leadership, self-determination and capacity building in research. A new Indigenous leadership circle will provide advice to all three funding agencies on the implementation of the strategy. We will review administrative barriers to accessing research funding, offer specific funding opportunities, and create a tri-agency Indigenous reference group to enhance peer review approaches for Indigenous research.



## ENABLING INTERDISCIPLINARY AND INTERNATIONAL RESEARCH COLLABORATIONS:

We will develop and pilot a tri-agency peer review mechanism that will make it easier for investigators to secure funding for novel research that crosses disciplinary boundaries. As we increase our participation in international research responses to COVID-19, we will develop a new international strategy for SSHRC that will guide future international partnerships. SSHRC will continue delivering the NFRF program to support groundbreaking interdisciplinary research. Over the next two years, we will support new joint initiatives for international collaboration within the program, and award the first large-scale institutional grants under the program's Transformation stream.



# 2 GROW CANADA'S RESEARCH TALENT

Producing impactful research requires developing, increasing and maintaining a talent pool of highly skilled researchers and innovative thinkers. Canada is striving to be a world leader in the development of talent throughout the entire research career life cycle.

SSHRC supports and trains researchers at all stages of their careers. We are committed to broadening and deepening Canada's talent pool, with a strong focus on increasing access for our diverse population. Our ongoing work to advance EDI in the research ecosystem, and to remove

barriers for Indigenous students, highlighted in the first objective, above, will help increase and diversify Canada's skills base. Inspiring students and training early career researchers will equip Canada's next generation of scientists and scholars for success, both within and beyond academia.

We will meet this objective by doing the following:

## PREPARING STUDENTS FOR FUTURE SUCCESS IN RESEARCH:

We will complete the harmonization of the tri-agency Canada Graduate Scholarships program, including integration of new scholarships resulting from Budget 2019 measures. We will also implement additional federal government funding, announced in April 2020, to support students and postdoctoral researchers affected by the COVID-19 pandemic. Research training in the social sciences and humanities will continue to be supported through delivery of regular programs such as the SSHRC doctoral and postdoctoral fellowship grants, as well as the Vanier and Banting tri-agency programs.

## INCREASING EARLY CAREER RESEARCHER OPPORTUNITIES AND TRAINING:

We will work with the other federal research granting agencies to develop and implement measures to support early career researchers. Key initiatives will: increase access to research funding opportunities designed to support establishment of researchers' academic research careers; further support early career researchers in developing the required skills, experience and opportunities to establish their research careers; and introduce reporting standards for accurately monitoring and tracking emerging researchers' successes in academia, to inform future program decisions.



## DEVELOPING SKILLS IN COMMUNICATION AND KNOWLEDGE MOBILIZATION:

Through initiatives like our annual Storytellers competition, and our collaboration with Global Affairs Canada for the International Policy Ideas Challenge, we will help students build critical skills in research communication and outreach.



# 3 STRENGTHEN THE RESEARCH ENTERPRISE IN CANADA

SSHRC has strong collaborative relationships with research institutions and other organizations with a stake in the future of Canada's higher education and innovation systems: postsecondary leaders, research administrators, policy-makers, industry allies, and not-for-profit and community organizations. These relationships help us deliver effective policies and programs.

Cultivating new partnerships with Indigenous organizations, government, not-for-profit organizations, and industry will help create a more vibrant, inclusive research community. Diversity contributes to a strong and resilient community that will enable a coordinated response to the COVID-19 crisis and during the postpandemic recovery period. Efforts to promote a diversified community also include addressing differences in research approaches and perspectives based on language, and supporting research in areas such as social and political responses to inequality. SSHRC is at the forefront of redefining practices

in scientific and scholarly research, including promoting open science and responsible stewardship of research data. A robust culture of open access and responsible stewardship of research data will strengthen the research enterprise, enhance research excellence, and benefit Canadian researchers working in international partnerships, as funders around the globe implement more stringent data management requirements.

We will meet this objective by doing the following:

## BUILDING AN INCLUSIVE RESEARCH COMMUNITY:

We will strengthen our leadership role in creating an equitable, diverse and inclusive research enterprise, through new partnerships with Indigenous organizations and community groups, and further incorporation of EDI principles into our interactions and programs (for example, the Canada Research Chairs programs). We will also align our programs and policies with the *Accessible Canada Act*, to identify, remove and prevent barriers to accessibility. We will also review and renew our actions that help to ensure a strong Canadian research enterprise in both official languages.

## STRENGTHENING RESEARCH ECOSYSTEMS AT POSTSECONDARY INSTITUTIONS:

We will highlight impacts associated with support for the indirect costs of research, through new reporting approaches for the Incremental Project Grants and the Research Support Fund. This funding helps postsecondary institutions maintain the equipment, facilities and administrative support needed to foster a strong, world-class research environment, as well as invest in priority projects to improve the research environment. These two programs will support our postsecondary institutions as they adapt and adjust to new models of research, the development of which is being accelerated by COVID-19. We will also support the community by administering the new tri-agency Canada Research Continuity Emergency Fund, announced in May 2020. The Fund provides an additional \$450 million in federal government funding to ensure that academic research staff can keep their jobs, safeguard their research, and continue their important work after the crisis ends.



## PROMOTING OPEN SCIENCE AND STEWARDSHIP OF RESEARCH DATA:

We will monitor and review the Tri-Agency Open Access Policy on Publications, which promotes access to peer reviewed journal publications arising from agency-supported research. We will also launch the tri-agency research data management policy to create a robust environment for data stewardship in Canada. SSHRC will also continue to support the platforms that enable access to research publications and data. One example is the Pan-Canadian Knowledge Access Initiative begun in 2020, which supports a dissemination platform for many of Canada's top social sciences and humanities journals. Similarly, since 2004 SSHRC and CIHR have funded the Canadian Research Data Centre Network, which ensures researchers across Canada have access to a vast array of social, economic and health microdata provided by Statistics Canada.





# 4 CONTRIBUTE INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS TO GLOBAL CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

Social sciences and humanities research can contribute greatly to our national debates, provide unique insights, and address complex global challenges—ranging from climate change to migration; anti-Black and other forms of racism, discrimination and inequality, to the wise use of emerging technologies. For example, by applying a social science and humanities lens to the federal pandemic response policies for COVID-19, we build understanding of their potential impacts on our behaviours, and can help strengthen cities, workplaces and educational systems.

SSHRC partners and shares research results with communities, businesses and governments who use the new knowledge to innovate and improve people's lives. In addition, our Connection program

specifically supports activities, tools and networks that facilitate the flow, exchange and use of research knowledge.

We will meet this objective by doing the following:

## ADDRESSING GLOBAL CHALLENGES:

Through our Imagining Canada's Future initiative, we will continue to mobilize research to improve the well-being of Canadians. We will partner with public, private, not-for-profit and academic sectors to address future challenge areas. For example, we will launch a Knowledge Synthesis Grants competition on Working in the Digital Economy, and hold a national forum convening interdisciplinary Knowledge Synthesis Grant holders and key stakeholders on the topic of Living Within the Earth's Carrying Capacity. We will also continue to fund and lead research partnerships to better understand the socio-economic dimensions of COVID-19 and any future pandemics.

## SHARING AND DEMONSTRATING THE VALUE OF RESEARCH:

We will increase and further target our communications activities under a new corporate communications strategy, with a focus on demonstrating the value and insights of research. We will continue to support the research community in effective communication of the benefits of research to Canadians, for example through our Storytellers competition. We will highlight the expertise of social science researchers on the human and social dimensions of the COVID-19 crisis, as well as on longer-term recovery and resilience.



# 5 BUILD A NIMBLE, FORWARD-LOOKING SSHRC ORGANIZATION

At SSHRC, we recognize that our people are our most valuable asset. Our leadership role in Canada's research ecosystem, and the service we provide to our community, is inextricably linked to the extraordinary efforts of our skilled and dedicated staff. As our organization continues to grow in size and scope, we are committed to developing and supporting our internal talent, while upholding values of respect, trust, diversity and inclusion in the workplace.

At the same time, SSHRC must move quickly to meet the organizational challenges of this new decade. While we continue adapting to new ways of working that have been accelerated by the advent of the COVID-19 pandemic, we must also ensure sustainability is embedded within the culture of our organization. Building the workplace of the future requires knowledge, dialogue, a shared sense of

purpose, a culture of collaboration, and equipping staff with the right skills and most effective tools. By empowering our people to do their best work, SSHRC can continue to create innovative solutions to problems facing Canada and Canadians today and in the future.

We will meet this objective by doing the following:

## INVESTING IN OUR WORKFORCE AND WORKPLACE:

As we continue to adapt to the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic, we will advance new strategies and plans for workplace and workforce renewal. This will include integrating leading technologies and information practices, along with targeted training. We will work with staff to ensure they are equipped with the skills and tools necessary to work safely, efficiently and collaboratively "from anywhere, at any time". We will prepare for the move to new SSHRC offices, ensuring that principles of collaboration, sustainability and accessibility are integrated into our workplace planning. In tandem, we will renew and integrate human resources policies to provide our workforce with updated people management strategies and action plans firmly embedded in EDI principles. This includes promoting EDI in internal staffing processes, at all levels.

## MODERNIZING OUR OPERATIONS:

We recognize that continuing our work on the vital interface between staff and our research community is critical. We will further the discovery phase for modernizing the grants management system across the three federal research granting agencies. The tri-agency grants management solution will provide a single platform to better support applicants, administrators and reviewers. A more harmonized and integrated approach will provide staff and the research community with a more efficient and user-friendly experience. We will also prepare for the migration to a new financial management system, and complete our transformation into a digital and data-driven organization.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We wish to acknowledge the contributions of our governing council members, SSHRC staff, and members of our diverse community of researchers and partners in the development of *Momentum 2020-2022*. We value your input and passion for creating a better world through social sciences and humanities research.

# AT A GLANCE

## SSHRC'S STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES FOR 2020-2022

### 1. ENHANCE CANADA'S GLOBAL LEADERSHIP IN SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES RESEARCH BY:

- advancing equity, diversity and inclusion;
- strengthening Indigenous research capacity; and
- enabling interdisciplinary and international research collaborations.

### 2. GROW CANADA'S RESEARCH TALENT BY:

- preparing students for future success in research;
- increasing early career researcher opportunities and training; and
- developing skills in communication and knowledge mobilization.

### 3. STRENGTHEN THE RESEARCH ENTERPRISE IN CANADA BY:

- building an inclusive research community;
- strengthening research ecosystems at postsecondary institutions; and
- promoting open science and stewardship of research data.

### 4. CONTRIBUTE INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS TO GLOBAL CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES BY:

- addressing global challenges and sharing; and
- demonstrating the value of research.

### 5. BUILD A NIMBLE, FORWARD-LOOKING SSHRC ORGANIZATION BY:

- investing in its workforce and workplace; and
- modernizing its operations.

