CIHR IRSC

Canadian Institutes of Health Research | Instituts de recherche en santé du Canada

ACTION PLAN YEAR 1 (2021–22)

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PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE

Since its creation in 2000, the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) has supported the development of new scientific knowledge and enabled its mobilization into improved health outcomes for Canadians. We can take pride in knowing that Canada's health research community is stronger and more diverse today than ever before, and that our researchers continue to develop innovations in all areas to improve the health of Canadians and strengthen our health care and public health systems. At the same time, we also recognize that there is still much more to be done.

CIHR is launching a new Strategic Plan that aims to build on its successes over the past 20 years, with the ultimate goal of improving the health of future generations of Canadians through innovations in research. The 2021–2031 Strategic Plan lays out a bold, generational vision in which Canadian researchers are global leaders in the development of ground-breaking discoveries that improve lives, and Indigenous communities lead health research that focuses on resilience, wellness, and Indigenous ways of knowing, resulting in equitable health outcomes.

Given the impact of the global pandemic, we returned to our community for feedback prior to launching the Strategic Plan to ensure that it continued to resonate. Those consultations made it clear that the Strategic Plan should be accompanied by a clearly articulated action plan that would speak to the delivery of key aspects of the Strategic Plan. We also heard clearly that such an action plan should be measured in its approach, with initiatives launched in a stepwise manner, consistent with the most pressing issues that currently confront us.

In that light, I am pleased to present the 2021–2022 Action Plan, which is the first installment of a series of annual action plans that will assist CIHR as we implement the Strategic Plan. This Action Plan outlines the key activities that CIHR will undertake in 2021, including the establishment of the Centre for Pandemic Preparedness and Health Emergencies, the beginning of a critical discussion to introduce a modernized concept of research excellence, the continued implementation of the *Action Plan: Building a Healthier Future for First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples*, and further efforts to promote equity, diversity, and inclusion within the health research community.

Many of the activities described below will require coordination and collaboration across the health research landscape. By working together with our partners and stakeholders, I am confident that CIHR will make great strides in 2021 and work to achieve the best health for all, powered by outstanding research.

MICHAEL J. STRONG
MD, FRCPC, FAAN, FCAHS
President, CIHR

About CIHR

OUR VISION

The best health for all, powered by outstanding research.

OUR MANDATE

As embedded in the CIHR Act, our mandate is to excel, according to internationally accepted standards of scientific excellence, in the creation of new knowledge and its mobilization into improved health for Canadians, more effective health services and products, and strengthened Canadian health care systems.

ACHIEVING THE VISION AND MANDATE

As Canada's health research investment agency, CIHR collaborates with partners and researchers to support the discoveries and innovations that improve our health and strengthen our health systems. CIHR was created in 2000, under the authority of the CIHR Act, as an independent agency that is accountable to Parliament through the Minister of Health. Our mission is to create new scientific knowledge and to enable its dissemination and implementation into improved health, more effective health services and products, and strengthened Canadian health systems. This is the value proposition of CIHR.

As part of the Government of Canada Health Portfolio, CIHR is vested with the responsibility to foster excellence in research that will improve the health of Canadians. As evidenced by its proven ability to deliver rapid research funding and leverage expertise throughout the COVID-19 pandemic, CIHR also plays a significant role in the whole-of-government response to addressing emerging health emergencies.

CIHR is comprised of a headquarters located in Ottawa, as well as Institutes located throughout the country that support individuals, groups, and communities of researchers and trainees across Canada.

GOVERNING COUNCIL

CIHR is governed by a Governing Council of 18 members with a broad range of expertise and experience, and who are appointed by the Governor in Council. Governing Council plays a key role in evaluating CIHR's overall performance, ensuring that the agency remains true to the CIHR Act, and has been a critical partner in the development of the Strategic Plan. As delineated in the Act, Governing Council plays a crucial role in ensuring that CIHR has a peer review process and funding programs that serve to fulfil the agency's mandate.

INSTITUTES

CIHR's 13 Institutes are integral to the success of CIHR in delivering both our vision and mandate. The scientific directors, by working closely with their individual Institute Advisory Boards (IABs), provide a critical interface with our research community. They help to ensure that the decisions of CIHR leadership and the Governing Council are reflective of the emerging health needs of Canadians, while also strategically supporting the information needs of health policy- decision makers.

About the Action Plan

This Action Plan outlines the commitments to be undertaken on a yearly basis to support the realization of the priorities and strategies in the Strategic Plan. Although commitments for the first year are firm, CIHR recognizes that commitments for subsequent years will evolve as the implementation of the plan progresses and the environment around us changes.

The implementation of the 2021–2022 Action Plan will begin in April 2021. Subsequent action plans will be released annually thereafter. This inaugural action plan reflects a transition for the organization as the country continues to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic and the agency shifts its focus toward deliverables that will support the implementation of the Strategic Plan.

CIHR's Strategic Plan has benefited from the most comprehensive engagement process ever undertaken in the agency's history. CIHR's foundational commitment to stakeholder engagement and consultation extends to our approach to implementing the action plans. For each of the actions that follow, CIHR will continue to foster collaboration with the health research community as part of our shared goal of implementing the Strategic Plan. In addition, CIHR remains committed to decision-making guided by evidence and to enhancing analytical capacity within the organization as required.

CIHR is also committed to reviewing its progress against stated commitments. Milestones achieved for each commitment will be documented to enable the assessment of progress on the strategies outlined in the Strategic Plan. Therefore, starting in 2022–2023, a report on the achievement of the previous year's actions will be included in the Action Plan.

A Performance Measurement Framework (PMF) will be developed and released in fall 2021. It will identify indicators for monitoring the implementation of the Strategic Plan. Baseline data will be collected to guide CIHR's efforts in ensuring effective monitoring and reporting on its yearly action plans over the course of the 10-year Strategic Plan. This will also serve to inform any corrective actions that may be required. The PMF will be developed through an iterative process that will involve consultation and engagement with subject matter experts in identifying effective indicators for assessing performance. Outcomes of the 2021–2022 Action Plan will provide baseline data for identifying suitable measures to support a robust PMF. Beyond our reporting annually of the achievements measured against the PMF, CIHR commits to conducting a full review of the implementation of the Strategic plan at its halfway mark (5 years). In doing so, it is our intent that the Strategic Plan and this accompanying Action Plan will be living documents that are reflective of the rapidly evolving health research needs of Canada and the interconnected world in which we live.

PRIORITY A ADVANCE RESEARCH EXCELLENCE IN ALL ITS DIVERSITY - STRATEGIES

1 Champion a more inclusive concept of research excellence (cross reference B1; B2; B3)

Actions	2021-2022*	2022-2023	2023-2024	2024-2025	2025-2026
Continue to work as a strategic partner to the Research on Research Institute (RORI) Transforming Excellence project					
Assess how CIHR currently defines and applies the concept of research excellence, including identifying systemic barriers to inclusivity					
Develop a CIHR framework for research excellence and situate it within the health research ecosystem					
Review and update CIHR policies to align with a more inclusive concept of research excellence					
Update CIHR's program design processes to align with the CIHR framework for research excellence					
Provide guidance and training to applicants, peer reviewers, and selection committee members on how to implement expectations outlined in the CIHR framework for research excellence					
Begin to implement and monitor the San Francisco Declaration on Research Assessment (DORA)					
Implement and monitor progress on DORA and adapt commitments to align with the CIHR Research Excellence Framework					
Develop coordinated and cohesive Conflict of Interest Policies to better correspond to the changing landscape					
Implement and monitor updated Conflict of Interest policies					
Advance CIHR's role in ethics of health research as a key component to research excellence					

* Fiscal year

2 Support stronger research teams (cross reference B2; B3)

Actions	2021-2022*	2022-2023	2023-2024	2024-2025	2025-2026
Assess how CIHR currently defines and supports strong research teams					
Review program design elements (e.g., evaluation criteria) to integrate innovative and novel approaches for supporting strong research teams					

* Fiscal year

3 Promote open science

Actions	2021-2022*	2022-2023	2023-2024	2024-2025	2025-2026
Develop CIHR's Open Science framework, respecting the FAIR (Findable, Accessible, Interoperable, and Reusable) and CARE (Collective Benefit, Authority to Control, Responsibility, and Ethics) principles					
Promote and implement the CIHR Open Science framework, including approaches to monitoring policy compliance					
Implement the Tri-Agency (TC3) Research Data Management (RDM) Policy, recognizing Indigenous data sovereignty and respecting the distinct rights and interests of First Nations, Inuit and Métis Peoples					
Monitor progress on implementing the Tri-Agency Research Data Management Policy					
Implement new policy expectations and an associated monitoring plan for CIHR's role as signatory to the WHO Statement on Public Disclosure of Results from Clinical Trials					
Monitor progress on implementing WHO Statement on Public Disclosure of Results from Clinical Trials					
Collaborate with other stakeholders across the national and international research ecosystem to foster infrastructure for advancing open science					

* Fiscal year

4 Enhance national and international collaboration (cross reference D3)

Actions	2021-2022*	2022-2023	2023-2024	2024-2025	2025-2026
Develop an action plan to enhance international collaboration for CIHR and Canadian health research					
Implement and monitor the action plan for international collaboration					
Engage in Canada's science governance mechanisms including priorities of the Canada Research Coordinating Committee and the Office of the Chief Science Advisor					
Work with stakeholders to examine the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and potential mitigation measures on the health research ecosystem					
Engage broadly to influence or contribute to international science policy efforts through collaboration and coordination					

* Fiscal year

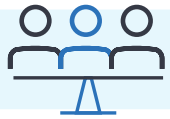
PRIORITY B STRENGTHEN CANADIAN HEALTH RESEARCH CAPACITY - STRATEGIES

1 Strengthen investigator-initiated research (cross reference E1)

Actions	2021-2022*	2022-2023	2023-2024	2024-2025	2025-2026
Conduct a critical review and analysis of CIHR's approach to funding through its existing programs					
Implement changes to the program design of the Project Grant Program (distinct from adjustments required to account for the sunset of the Foundation Grant Program)					
Implement and monitor actions in response to the critical review and analysis of CIHR's approach to funding					
Support the Discovery Phase of the Tri-Agency Grants Management System (TGMS)					

* Fiscal year

2 Promote equity, diversity, and inclusion (cross reference D1; SC1)



Actions	2021-2022*	2022-2023	2023-2024	2024-2025	2025-2026
Harmonize actions to address equity, diversity, and inclusion with Tri-Agency partners					
Identify EDI-related barriers and inform decision-making on CIHR applicants and peer reviewers					
Design and implement inclusive and ongoing engagement mechanisms with diverse members of CIHR's stakeholder communities					
Build on existing EDI/GBA+ initiatives to enhance integration of considerations in research through relevant and up-to-date EDI/GBA+ training, guidance and resources					
Enhance CIHR's policy work to further gender equity and the integration of sex, gender and other identity factors in research (SGBA+)					
Engage with organizations and members of the research community with lived experience and expertise to co-develop an action plan to address systemic racism in the CIHR funding system					
Implement and monitor action plan to address systemic racism across all aspects of CIHR					
Engage with organizations and members of the research community with lived experience and expertise to co-develop an action plan to improve accessibility in the CIHR funding system in alignment with the Accessible Canada Act (2019)					
Implement and monitor action plan to improve accessibility in the CIHR funding system in alignment with the Accessible Canada Act (2019					

* Fiscal year

3 Enhance training and career support (cross reference A1; A2; E2)

Actions	2021-2022*	2022-2023	2023-2024	2024-2025	2025-2026
Engage, and consult on remaining gaps and opportunities in training and support across all career stages, transitions, and paths					
Address key commitments in CIHR's Strategic Action Plan on Training and refresh to address identified gaps across all career stages, transitions, and paths					

* Fiscal year

4 Enhance CIHR's rapid response capacity (cross reference A1)

Actions	2021-2022*	2022-2023	2023-2024	2024-2025	2025-2026
Support the Government of Canada's ongoing response to the COVID-19 pandemic					
Mobilize knowledge from CIHR's rapid response investments related to COVID-19, in collaboration with national and international partners					
Design CIHR's Centre for Research in Pandemic Preparedness and Health Emergencies					
Implement CIHR's Centre for Research in Pandemic Preparedness and Health Emergencies and monitor performance and impact of the Centre					

* Fiscal year

PRIORITY C

ACCELERATE THE SELF-DETERMINATION OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES IN HEALTH RESEARCH - STRATEGIES

1 Advance the health and well-being of First Nations, Inuit and Métis Peoples

Actions	2021-2022*	2022-2023	2023-2024	2024-2025	2025-2026
Further the implementation of the 2019–2024 IIPH Strategic Plan and Action Plan: Building a Healthier Future for First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples					
Engage all CIHR Institutes to identify and develop opportunities to accelerate the implementation of the IIPH Strategic plan within their own Institute plans and activities annually					
Create, through engagement with First Nations, Inuit and Métis communities, new strategic initiatives aimed at improving the health with First Nations, Inuit and Métis communities					
Co-develop an engagement strategy with First Nations, Inuit, and Métis communities, including role(s) in CIHR governance					
Implement and monitor progress in achieving the objectives of the engagement strategy.					

* Fiscal year

2 Accelerate the implementation of the CIHR Action Plan: Building a Healthier Future for First Nations, Inuit and Métis Peoples

Actions	2021-2022*	2022-2023	2023-2024	2024-2025	2025-2026
Review with First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Communities and co-develop a refreshed CIHR Action Plan: Building a Healthier Future for First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples with consideration of the Tri-Agency Strengthening Indigenous Research Capacity plan					
Implement and monitor the refreshed Action Plan: Building a Healthier Future for First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples					

* Fiscal year

PRIORITY C

ACCELERATE THE SELF-DETERMINATION OF INDIGENOUS PEOPLES IN HEALTH RESEARCH - STRATEGIES

3 Remove barriers to Indigenous-led research

Actions	2021-2022*	2022-2023	2023-2024	2024-2025	2025-2026
Advance reconciliation through the co-development and implementation of science and research administration policies using a distinctions-based approach and that respect and uphold First Nations, Inuit and Métis Peoples' rights, knowledge and priorities					
Continue to implement changes to remove barriers to research funding for First Nations, Inuit and Métis Peoples					
Increase capacity for culturally safe engagement					

* Fiscal year

PRIORITY D PURSUE HEALTH EQUITY THROUGH RESEARCH - STRATEGIES

1 Reduce health inequities through research (cross reference B2)

Actions	2021-2022*	2022-2023	2023-2024	2024-2025	2025-2026
Convene a research ecosystem discussion on health inequities, including people with lived experience (cross reference A4)		■			
Identify options for reducing health inequities through research in collaboration with the research ecosystem, including research into the unintended consequences and ethical implications of health policies and programs			■		
Develop an action plan focused on supporting research and knowledge mobilization efforts to engage people with lived experience and reduce health inequities through research			■	■	
Implement and monitor the action plan				■	■
Further the engagement of people with lived experience in the design and implementation of CIHR programs and initiatives	■	■	■	■	■

* Fiscal year

2 Champion research on the determinants of health

Actions	2021-2022*	2022-2023	2023-2024	2024-2025	2025-2026
Identify priorities for research into the determinants of health		■	■		
Identify gaps and opportunities for CIHR to champion to address the determinants of health			■	■	
Develop an action plan that identifies and addresses the determinants of health and that will lead to effective prevention practices				■	■
Implement and monitor the Determinants of Health Action Plan				■	■

* Fiscal year

3 Drive progress on global health research

Actions	2021-2022*	2022-2023	2023-2024	2024-2025	2025-2026
Launch CIHR's global health research framework and promote broadly to internal and external stakeholders					
Monitor and report annually on CIHR's global health research framework and its activities					
Implement Canadian Coalition for Global Health Research's Principles for Global Health Research into CIHR programs and policies, and promote their uptake among Canadian global health researchers					

* Fiscal year

PRIORITY E INTEGRATE EVIDENCE IN HEALTH DECISIONS - STRATEGIES

1 Advance the science of knowledge mobilization

Actions	2021-2022*	2022-2023	2023-2024	2024-2025	2025-2026
Develop a CIHR Knowledge Mobilization Action Plan					
Implement and monitor the Action Plan					
Collaborate with funders and other stakeholders to coordinate investments and interventions to advance the science of knowledge mobilization					
Encourage health system organizations to become eligible to hold funds as a mechanism to increase embedded research capacity, advance learning health systems and foster knowledge mobilization					

* Fiscal year

2 Maximize results for Canadians

Actions	2021-2022*	2022-2023	2023-2024	2024-2025	2025-2026
Enhance and communicate requirements to ensure compliance with CIHR's policies related to access to research outputs and acknowledgment of CIHR funding, to make research more accessible to Canadians and increase visibility of CIHR funding		■	■	■	■
Expand the flagship Best Brains Exchange program, to enhance evidence-informed decision-making in policy and practice		■	■	■	■
Convene health research ecosystem discussion to increase the impact of investments to inform health practice and policy, drive commercialization and enhance health equity		■	■		
Strengthen CIHR's engagement to advance intragovernmental partnerships to better inform health policy	■	■	■		
Expand analytics capacity in order to ensure availability and use of data to monitor outcomes and impacts of CIHR's investments on informing policy directions/decisions			■		
Convene stakeholders in the design, implementation, and use of evidence from CIHR's major strategic initiatives		■	■	■	■
Engage with the health research ecosystem, including citizens and patients, to support understanding and availability of credible scientific information for improved health literacy		■	■	■	■

* Fiscal year

PRIORITY E INTEGRATE EVIDENCE IN HEALTH DECISIONS - STRATEGIES

3 Strengthen Canada's health systems through innovation (cross reference B1; B2; B3)

Actions	2021-2022*	2022-2023	2023-2024	2024-2025	2025-2026
Conduct a critical review and analysis of CIHR's approach to funding through its existing programs (cross reference B1) including an evaluation of the Strategy for Patient-Oriented Research (SPOR)					
Implement actions in response to the critical review and analysis of CIHR's approach to funding					
Enhance Canada's capacity to fund, conduct, and use clinical trials by strengthening highly qualified personnel, clinical trials environments, and research investments					
Renew the SPOR SUPPORT Units in collaboration with the Provinces and Territories					

* Fiscal year

1 Support employee wellness and development (cross reference B2; E1)

Actions	2021-2022*	2022-2023	2023-2024	2024-2025	2025-2026
Develop an enhanced suite of wellness programs for all CIHR employees					
Implement and monitor an enhanced suite of wellness programs for all CIHR employees					
Design the CIHR workplace of the future, including enhanced flexibility regarding location of work					
Implement and monitor CIHR's vision of the workplace of the future					

* Fiscal year

2 Review the current Institute model

Actions	2021-2022*	2022-2023	2023-2024	2024-2025	2025-2026
Continue to enhance the cooperation of CIHR portfolios and Institutes in fostering the vision of "One CIHR"					
Develop a framework that outlines objectives, scope, key components and an action plan for the Institute Model Review					
Conduct the Institute Model Review to support institute effectiveness and maximize the impact of the institute model including updating SD renewal and recruitment process					
Conduct the CIHR quintennial review, as required by the CIHR Act					
Address the recommendations of the Institute Model Review					

* Fiscal year

3 Modernize internal operations

Actions	2021-2022*	2022-2023	2023-2024	2024-2025	2025-2026
Develop a multi-year strategy to drive continuous improvements of CIHR's governance and management					
Design and deliver a suite of foundational human resource policies, guidelines and procedures that include EDI principles as reflected by Government of Canada					
Modernize the human resources classification system					
Develop an evidence-informed human resources strategy to recruit and retain First Nations, Inuit and Métis employees and support inclusivity practices					
Develop an evidence-informed human resources strategy to recruit and retain employees to increase equity, inclusion and diversity					
Identify and redress EDI-related barriers to participation in CIHR advisory and governance bodies					

* Fiscal year

4 Strengthen planning and prioritization processes

Actions	2021-2022*	2022-2023	2023-2024	2024-2025	2025-2026
Enhance capacity for an integrated planning and performance function at CIHR					
Implement and monitor the integrated planning approach for the Agency					
Develop an Integrated Investment Strategy to align research investments across funding programs to identified priorities					
Implement and monitor the Integrated Investment Strategy to align research investments across funding programs to identified priorities					

* Fiscal year

5 Enhance the vitality of the English and French linguistic minority communities in Canada

Actions	2021-2022*	2022-2023	2023-2024	2024-2025	2025-2026
Enhance and continuously improve the delivery of CIHR's mandate according to the Official Languages Act.					
Implement and monitor policy and/or program actions that address the needs of Official Languages Minority Communities (OLMC) in Canada					

* Fiscal year