

# Evaluation of the Digital Technologies Research Centre

May 2025

●●● NRC Evaluation


## About the research centre

The Digital Technologies Research Centre (DT) partners with diverse clients, collaborators and other National Research Council (NRC) research centres to drive innovation and promote the adoption of digital technologies across various sectors.


DT strives to balance fundamental research with innovation while supporting initiatives that span the technology readiness level scale. The research centre has 10 programs to facilitate research delivery, hosts 2 Challenge programs and 2 Cluster Support programs, and leads 3 collaboration centres.

## Finances and human resources

### Budget (2018-19 to 2023-24)

 Expenses (average annual): \$19.5 million  
Revenues (average annual): \$4.8 million

### Resources (March 31, 2024)

 Research centre staff: 183  
• 60% are research officers

## Clients and collaborators

 **Academia**  
31, including 29 Canadian and 2 international

 **Other government departments**  
21, including 20 Canadian and 1 international

 **Industry**  
33, including 29 Canadian and 4 international

## Key findings

### Scientific excellence

Through collaborative efforts with NRC research centres, clients and partners, DT has contributed to impactful research both in Canada and globally.

DT has seen a steady increase in publications, with a proportional citation impact that surpasses both the NRC and Canada overall. Its researchers have also received public recognition through awards, conference invitations and committee participation, and are viewed as leaders in cutting-edge research in Canada.

### Business innovation

DT assists external clients and collaborators in achieving business goals by developing new products, services and capabilities, improving operational efficiency and providing training for highly qualified personnel.

The research centre is advancing new technology, as demonstrated by the progression of intellectual property (IP) and projects through the technology readiness levels. Although commercialization is a new priority for DT, recent initiatives and newly secured license agreements highlight progress in this area. DT also works with the NRC's Industrial Research Assistance Program (NRC IRAP) to attract small and medium-sized enterprises and provides subsidies for client research work completed.

DT has achieved high levels of client satisfaction and is meeting revenue targets through collaborations with other government departments. However, there is a recognized need to diversify revenue streams and expand DT's reach within the private sector.

## Capacity, competencies and facilities

DT has had sufficient capacity to meet client needs to date. However, to keep pace with a rapidly evolving field and increasing requests from other NRC research centres, it must improve how it prioritizes its work.

DT faces challenges in attracting and retaining top talent. To counter competition from higher private-sector salaries, it is implementing mitigation strategies such as targeting early-career researchers and highlighting the benefits of working in the public service.

DT's facilities, including high-performance computing, have successfully supported collaborative research and client needs. However, concerns have emerged about the future due to aging infrastructure and the absence of a firm plan for facility upgrades.

## Progress toward identified goals

### Addressing government digital priorities

DT contributes to federal digital technology policy decisions by advising on AI policies, influencing international standards, supporting new regulations, participating in collaborative projects and producing publications cited in policy documents.

Recognized within the NRC as a leader in responsible AI development and use, DT focuses on key issues such as bias, explainability, inclusiveness and online safety. It also supports federal digital transformation through collaborative initiatives aimed at educating stakeholders and the public, as well as by developing enabling technologies.

### Enabling inclusive innovation

DT integrates Gender-based Analysis Plus (GBA Plus) into its research and technology development, ensuring a focus on the needs of underrepresented populations. Equity, diversity and inclusion are key priorities in the research centre's strategic plan. While women and Indigenous peoples are well-represented in DT's workforce, there is lower representation of racialized persons and persons with disabilities.

## Recommendations

The evaluation included 3 recommendations:

1. DT should work with its advisory board to further define the research areas it will prioritize. It should also develop an approach to selecting the most relevant projects to pursue within these research areas.
2. DT should develop and implement strategies to diversify its revenue streams, expanding its reach within both the private sector and other government departments.
3. DT should develop a facilities renewal plan to identify and prioritize its present and future facilities' requirements and set out options for accessing the state-of-the-art infrastructure necessary for cutting-edge research. The plan should also identify facilities' requirements for upgrading and maintenance.

## About the evaluation

The evaluation covered the period from fiscal year 2018-19 to 2023-24 and was conducted in line with the NRC's approved evaluation plan and the Treasury Board's Policy on Results.

It examined key areas, such as scientific excellence, business innovation, capacity, competencies and facilities, and progress toward identified priorities. A mixed-methods approach was used, including document and data review, bibliometric analysis, interviews and an expert peer review.

Visit the [evaluation page](#) on the NRC's website to access the complete evaluation report.