



Dementia Research and Innovation  
Funders Alliance

A Voice for Healthy Brain Aging

# REPORT: THIRD ANNUAL MEETING OF THE ALLIANCE

Ottawa, Canada  
November 18<sup>th</sup>, 2025

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# Report: Third Annual Meeting of the Dementia Research and Innovation Funders Alliance

## Overview and Executive Summary

Over 20 member organizations of the Dementia Research and Innovation Funders Alliance ('the Alliance') and other partners in research convened in Ottawa on November 18, 2025, for the third annual meeting to:

- Review findings from the first Alliance-led mapping survey, as well as results from the environmental scan of Canada's dementia research and innovation landscape carried out by [CIHR funded](#) researcher Dr. Juanita Bacsu; and,
- Align priorities and define key strategic deliverables for 2026 and beyond to strengthen and advance the objectives of the Alliance.

Strategic themes and actionable priorities that emerged from discussions included:

- **Identifying dementia research and innovation funding gaps and taking strategic action** through the analysis of Alliance member contributions and investments reported in the first annual Alliance-led survey;
- **Closing the implementation gap** in dementia research and innovation by improving the translation of high-quality evidence into practice (uptake), and measuring that adoption (impact);
- **Strengthening cross-sector partnerships** and coordinating funding to maximize collective impact;
- **Enhancing Alliance visibility** through enhanced internal communications and focused external messaging; and
- **Building a sustainable infrastructure** with shared values across dementia research and innovation funders and community partners.

# Using Data to Map the Dementia Research and Innovation Ecosystem

## Mapping the Aging Brain Health and Dementia Research and Innovation Landscape in Canada

Dr. Juanita Bacsu, who was [awarded](#) a CIHR Planning and Dissemination Grant (Summer 2024) to undertake a mapping of the Canadian dementia research and innovation landscape, presented her findings to the Alliance. Dr. Bacsu's presentation focused on critical needs, gaps and actions in dementia prevention, advancing therapies and enhancing quality of life, in alignment with [Canada's National Dementia Strategy](#).



### Dr. Bacsu identified the following priority areas for research:

- Bridge Knowledge to Action: Implementation Gap
- Strengthen Diversity and Equity
- Research and Innovation: From Silos to Synergy
- Prioritize Lived Experience

To learn more, please visit: [Dr. Bacsu's webpage](#).

#### Quatre recommandations clés

#### Four Key Recommendations

##### Cartographie de la recherche sur la santé cérébrale et la démence au Canada

À l'aide d'une analyse thématique, quatre recommandations stratégiques ont été formulées. Ces recommandations visent à combler les lacunes identifiées et à faire progresser la recherche sur la santé cérébrale et la démence au Canada.

##### Mapping Brain Health & Dementia Research in Canada

Using thematic analysis, four strategic recommendations were identified. These recommendations were designed to bridge identified gaps and advance brain health and dementia research in Canada.

#### Cartographie de la recherche sur la santé cérébrale et la démence au Canada

##### Méthodologie exhaustive

Ce projet a permis de répertorier les centres de recherche, d'élaborer un protocole d'examen structuré, d'analyser les examens menés par le Canada et de recueillir les avis d'experts afin de cerner les lacunes, les besoins et les domaines d'innovation en matière de recherche afin de faire progresser la recherche sur la santé cérébrale et la démence au Canada. Notre méthodologie comprenait quatre éléments clés :

|                                 |                                                                                                                                                                                    |  |
|---------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|
| Analyse environnementale        | Cartographie de 95 centres de recherche, domaines d'intérêt et répartition géographique à travers le Canada afin d'orienter les études sur la démence.                             |  |
| Protocole d'examen exploratoire | Élaboration d'un protocole d'examen complet basé sur les cadres Arksey & O'Malley et PRISMA-ScR.                                                                                   |  |
| Examen exploratoire des revues  | Analyse des examens menés par des chercheurs canadiens entre 2020 et 2025 afin d'identifier les lacunes importantes dans les connaissances en matière de recherche sur la démence. |  |
| Groupe de discussion d'experts  | Recueil d'avis d'experts via trois groupes de discussion réunissant 20 membres de l'Alliance des bailleurs de fonds de la recherche et de l'innovation sur la démence.             |  |

#### Mapping Brain Health & Dementia Research in Canada

##### Comprehensive Methodology

This project mapped research centers, developed a structured review protocol, analyzed Canadian-led reviews, and gathered expert insights to identify research gaps, needs, and areas for innovation to advance brain health and dementia research in Canada.

Our methodology included four key components:

|                           |                                                                                                                    |  |
|---------------------------|--------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|--|
| Environmental Scan        | Mapped 95 research centres, focus areas, and geographic distribution across Canada to guide dementia studies.      |  |
| Scoping Review Protocol   | Developed a comprehensive review protocol based on Arksey & O'Malley and PRISMA-ScR.                               |  |
| Scoping Review of Reviews | 2 led reviews to identify gaps in research.                                                                        |  |
| Expert Focus Groups       | Gathered expert insights via three focus groups with 20 Dementia Research and Innovation Funders Alliance members. |  |

**Transformer les connaissances en actions**  
Comblent le fossé entre la théorie et la pratique grâce à des stratégies accessibles en matière de recherche, d'éducation et d'adoption concernant les risques modifiables afin de promouvoir la santé cérébrale au niveau de la population.

**Recherche et innovation**  
Passer des cloisonnements aux synergies grâce à la recherche et à l'innovation technologique, en favorisant la collaboration, la coordination et les partenariats.

**Renforcer la diversité et l'équité**  
Renforcer la recherche inclusive auprès des groupes recherchant l'équité, en investissant dans des actions de sensibilisation adaptées à la culture et ancrées dans la communauté afin de lutter contre les obstacles à la recherche, la stigmatisation et la méfiance.

**Donner la priorité à l'expérience vécue**  
Mettre en avant les priorités en matière de recherche, les besoins et les expériences vécues des personnes vivant

**Bridge Knowledge to Action**  
Address the implementation gap through accessible research, education, and uptake strategies to modifiable risks to promote brain health at the population level.

**Research & Innovation**  
Move from silos to synergies with research and technological innovation, promoting national and global collaboration, coordination, and partnerships.

**Enhance Diversity & Equity**  
Strengthen inclusive research with equity-focused groups, investing in culturally tailored, community-based outreach to address research barriers, stigma, and mistrust.

**Prioritize Lived Experience**  
Elevate the research priorities, needs, and lived experiences of people living with dementia and care partners.



# Using Data to Map the Dementia Research and Innovation Ecosystem

## Data Insights: Alliance-Led Mapping of the Dementia

An inaugural survey was launched to Alliance Members in 2025 to collect 5-year baseline data (2020-2025). This will be compiled with annual survey data going forward to build the evidence base to support meeting the research and innovation goals of Canada's national dementia strategy, map the dementia research and innovation landscape and inform how the Alliance can shape future investments for collective impact (see appendix 1).

Recommendations stemming from the survey results include:

- Expanding funding to underrepresented regions to ensure better reach and more balanced funding distribution;
- Boosting core investments (i.e., training, knowledge mobilization);
- Leveraging existing data and insights brought forward to improve the annual members survey; and,
- Aligning priority research with emerging trends, such as early detection, health equity, biomarkers, artificial intelligence and digital health.

### Key Takeaways

Discussion following the data presentations focused on the gap between the objectives of the research pillar of Canada's national dementia strategy and current funding, emphasizing equity, lived experience and scaling evidence-informed practices and programs.

The Alliance aims to identify opportunities for organizations to align investments and share resources by moving high level insights into practical, collaborative initiatives. There is strong interest in fostering cross-organization collaboration to maximize existing resources rather than seeking new funding.

Participants called for policy maker and clinician engagement to bridge the implementation gap, while also expanding training capacity and reaching important audiences through Alliance member activities. There was also discussion on how to strengthen communication and knowledge sharing, and how to expand the Alliance's reach and visibility across research, policy and community sectors.

# Supporting the Growth of the Alliance

Dr. Courtney Genge [Program Advisor Aging in Place Challenge program at National Research Council Canada] presented strategies to embed shared values into organizational processes of Alliance member and into the Alliance governance to strengthen collaboration and enhance impact across the dementia research and innovation funding landscape.

## Key Takeaways

Alliance members emphasized the importance of embedding shared values, such as promoting transparency, knowledge stewardship, active engagement, equitable practices and meaningful recognition of lived and living experience, to achieve the Alliance's mission.

The Alliance explored developing key resources to foster and integrate these shared values into the work and governance structure of the Alliance, and to strengthen collaboration and reduce duplication. Learning from and building on the experiences of other similar organizations (e.g., Canadian Cancer Research Alliance) will be crucial in supporting the Alliance's growth, sustainability and overall impact.





# Alliance Priorities for 2026 and Beyond

Based on the discussions at the Alliance annual meeting, the Alliance will:

- **Enhance internal capacity and communication**

- Refine and relaunch the annual Alliance-led data and mapping survey, create internal shared resources, such as a repository of best practices and funding opportunities and increase communication between members throughout the year, to maximize impact.
- Initiate virtual Alliance meetings to be held between the annual in-person meetings to increase engagement of Alliance members and to share deeper information about member organizations programs and planning.

- **Strengthen visibility and branding**

- Develop external-facing materials and activities, such as a unified web presence (e.g., website and digital platform), produce external communications (e.g., a series of op-eds), create partner and researcher video content, and host external webinars or newsletters.
- Establish a unified presence at key conferences, such as the Canadian Science Policy Conference, and participate in other relevant events to share consistent, collective messaging and share information.

- **Act on Alliance-led survey results and expand community engagement and partnerships**

- Leverage insights gleaned from the Alliance-led data and mapping survey to identify and fill research and innovation funding gaps. Increase outreach to regional organizations and other research and innovation funders to expand membership in the Alliance and better represent the entire Canadian funding ecosystem.
- Address barriers to joint investments and implement strategies for deeper partnerships and collective impact through joint funding calls.

## Conclusion:

The annual meeting concluded with a strong call to transition from planning and discussion to concrete action, leveraging the Alliance's collective expertise to increase internal capacity and communication between members, enhance visibility and branding, and community engagement and partnerships.

Participants emphasized the need to prioritize activities that deliver the greatest value within limited resources, clarify the key impact questions guiding the Alliance's work related to aging brain health and dementia research in Canada, and ensure responsibilities are distributed equitably among members for sustained engagement and long-term commitment.

For more information about our work, please visit our websites:

- [The Alliance](#)
- [The Brain Health and Cognitive Impairment in Aging Research Initiative](#)





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# Appendix 1: 2025 Alliance Annual Survey Results - Mapping the Dementia Research and Innovation Ecosystem



The Alliance-led survey provides an annual snapshot of Canada's dementia research and innovation funding landscape. It highlights research and innovation trends and gaps, offering actionable insights to guide future investments.

*\*Results from this survey are self-reported by Alliance members.*

## Survey Objectives

1. Evaluate progress on Canada's national dementia strategy research and innovation goals
2. Map and analyze Canada's dementia research and innovation landscape
3. Inform future investments and demonstrate impact

## Key Survey Takeaways

The following survey insights can drive collective action, strengthen member connections and help accelerate research and innovation:



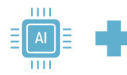
Balance geographic funding distribution through partnership and infrastructure



Prioritize prevention, early detection, and health equity



Drive long-term impact through training, capacity building, and knowledge mobilization



Report and disseminate emerging trends in biomarkers, artificial intelligence and digital health

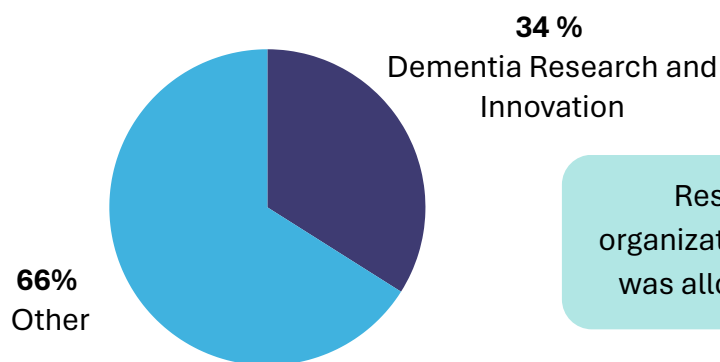
## Respondents

- 15 out of 30 Alliance members (50%)
- Primarily located in Ontario (80%)
- Have a national funding portfolio (80%)
- Have been active in the ecosystem for >6 years (87%)



# Funding in the 2024-2025 reporting period\*

\*April 1, 2024 to March 31, 2025



Total organizational spending:  
\$133,643,219

Responding Alliance members reported total organizational **spending** of over **\$133M**. A third (> \$45M) was allocated to dementia research and innovation.

**37 new funding calls** related to dementia research and innovation were launched, funding over **200 Nominated Principal Investigators**. In total, **over 440 projects** were active during the reporting period.

## New Funding Calls

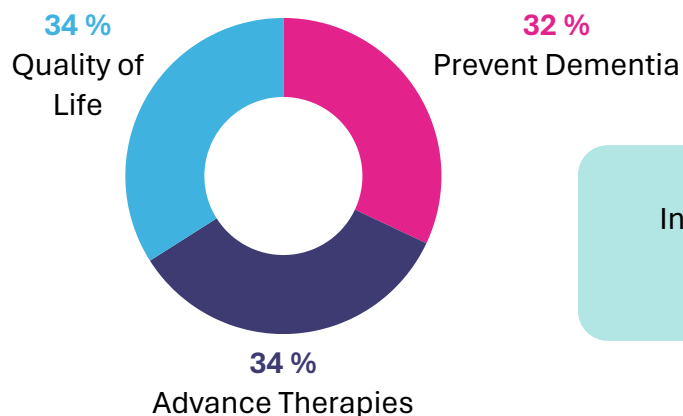
37

## New Projects

440+

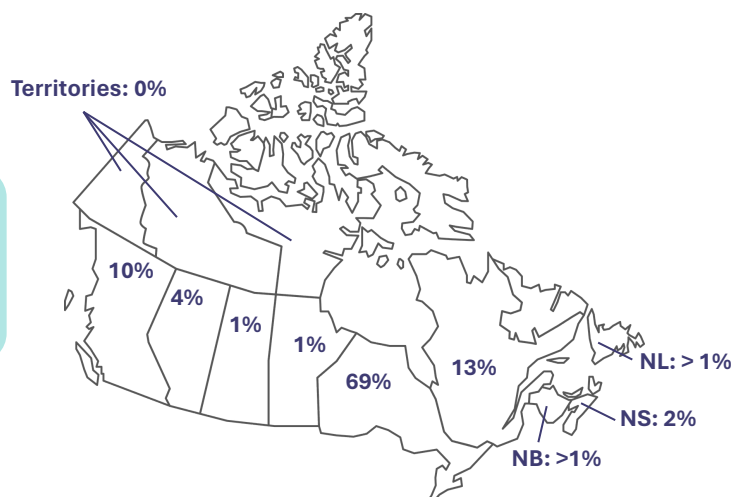
Principal Applicants

200+



Investments were evenly distributed amongst the **national dementia strategy** objectives.

Funding was concentrated in Ontario (69%), followed by Quebec (13%) and British Columbia (10%).



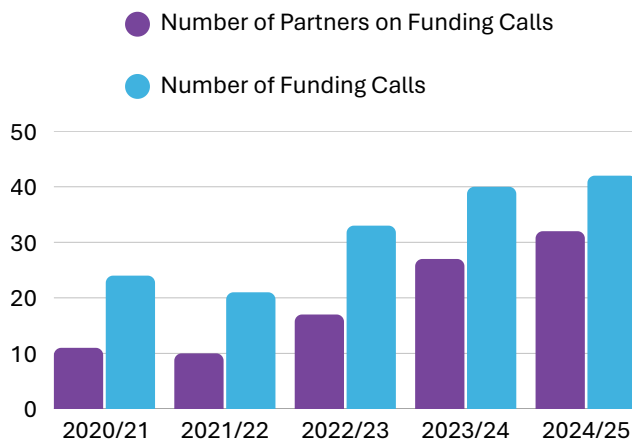


# Five-year Snapshot: Insights from 2020-2025

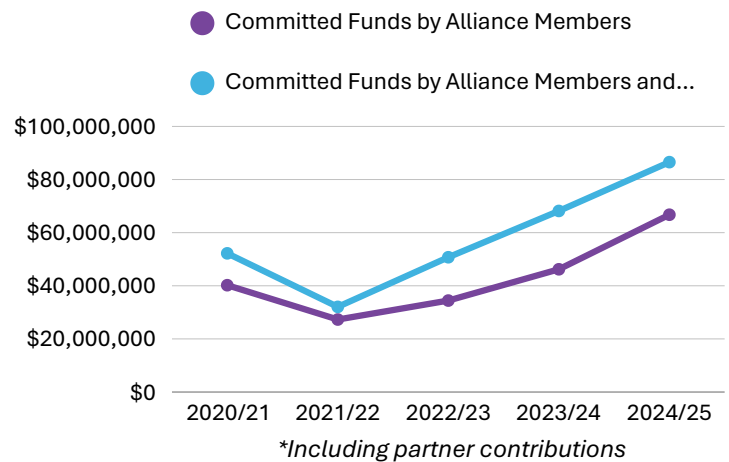
Over the past five years, responding Alliance members reported more partnerships on funding calls, increased **committed** funds and funding calls, and an overall increase in projects funded.

**Committed funds** represent the amount of funds an organization has **allocated** to spend towards funding activities and may be spent over multiple years.

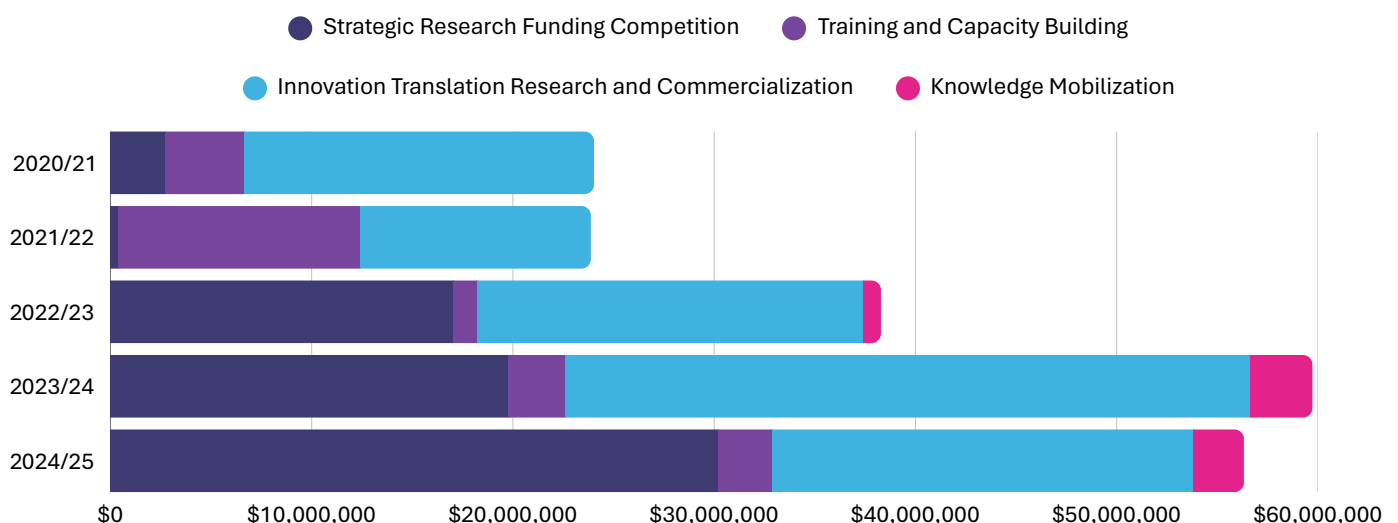
## Partnerships and Funding Calls



## Committed Investments to Funding Calls



## Total Investments by Type of Funding Call



Between 2020 and 2025, responding Alliance members reported a **continuous increase in the total investments made in strategic funding calls**, more prominent investments being made in **knowledge mobilization** and more varied investments in **training and capacity** alongside **innovation translational research and commercialization**.