



## SUMMARY OF THE EVALUATION OF THE RESEARCH AND KNOWLEDGE INITIATIVE (RKI)

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### What we evaluated

- The Research and Knowledge Initiative (RKI) is a national merit-based contributions program that funds research projects aimed at generating knowledge and advancing understanding of infrastructure and housing needs and challenges relevant to Canadians to support evidence-based decision-making.
- The program was approved in 2019 with \$10 million in contribution authorities until 2024 and had two intakes:
  - **Phase 1:** The first intake of projects was in 2021 and in October 2022, the program was extended to 2024-25. \$3.6 million was allocated towards two unsolicited projects approved before the first call for proposals and completed in 2022. The remaining \$6 million supported the 12 RKI Phase 1 projects.
  - **Phase 2:** In April 2023, a second phase of the RKI was allocated an additional \$10 million over 3 years to 2026.



## Evaluation context

- The RKI evaluation meets the Treasury Board's 2016 Policy on Results requirement to conduct an evaluation as a result of a program commitment.
- The evaluation covered the period from November 1, 2018, to July 15, 2024.



## How we proceeded

- The evaluation used multiple lines of evidence to gather information in support of the findings. This included a review of program and external documents, literature review, program data review, and key informant interviews.



## What we found

The evaluation found that:

- The RKI supports government and department priorities to strengthen evidence-based decision-making and foster innovation and partnerships in the Canadian infrastructure space.
- Based on early results and a limited number of completed projects, RKI projects are on track to meet the immediate outcome. The performance indicators could be improved for clarity and feasibility of measurement.
- The RKI adapted and made improvements during the program where possible. However, short program timelines and administrative requirements hindered the effective delivery of funded projects.



## Our conclusions

The evaluation found that:

- the program maintained its relevance to government and department priorities and that continued relevance could come from developing the program's knowledge-sharing role while ensuring HICC-funded research does not duplicate other publicly funded research.
- the program was able to improve some administrative issues during its lifecycle despite a context of short turnarounds between its two phases and of rapid growth and change at the department.
- early results show funded projects are on track to meet the immediate outcome of increasing partnerships, research collaborations and knowledge sharing opportunities.

- This engagement also identified potential approaches for future research programming based on the program's own lessons learned and promising practices for research programming in other federal government organizations (i.e. complementary tools for different scopes, scales and timelines of project).



## **Considerations**

Funding for the RKI program has been fully allocated and the program will end in March 2026, therefore there are no recommendations in this report. However, the evaluation provides the following considerations to inform any renewal of research-focused programming:

- Define future research role and research programming objectives in alignment with the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) and other relevant federal departments.
- Consider leveraging HICC's role as a federal entity to develop a coordination function of research programming on infrastructure, housing and homelessness across federal departments and with external organizations like CMHC. This could include developing HICC's knowledge-sharing role by formalizing existing practices within the team around developing connections and networks across RKI projects, policy research at HICC and other research initiatives within and outside HICC.
- Ensure the funding model, outcomes and indicators for future research programming are coherent with program and research-related objectives for clear and consistent reporting that demonstrate research impacts.
- Future research programming should be developed with clear objectives and a defined research agenda to streamline design and application process, remove administrative burdens and ensure the delivery of timely and relevant research.