



July 17, 2024

Canada Research Coordinating Committee (CRCC) Secretariat  
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Re: Capstone Research Funding Organization / Organisation-cadre de financement de la recherche

The Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences (the Federation) is appreciative of the engagement opportunity presented by the federal government regarding the new capstone research organization announced in the 2024 federal budget. The Federation supports the objective of bringing strategic vision and coordination to Canada's research system while preserving those features that have led to Canada's strong record of research excellence.

The proposed structure and mandate of the new organization, outlined in the June 17 letter to the Presidents of the federal granting councils, demonstrates the government's commitment to the Canadian research ecosystem. However, the Federation urges the government to proceed with caution and careful consideration in the design and implementation of this organization to mitigate any potential disproportionate impacts that these proposed changes could have on the humanities and social sciences.

Due to the short time frame for such consultation, the recommendations presented are brief and cannot be assumed to represent all information and considerations that could have been gathered on this matter. The Federation encourages continued collaboration between the government and research communities throughout the design and implementation of the new capstone research organization.

Under the current federal research support model, the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) has been an integral part of advancing research in the humanities and social sciences in Canada, at a time when sustained support for our disciplines is more crucial than ever. The Federation's close relationship with SSHRC has allowed our organization to give a stronger voice to the humanities and social sciences community, bolstering the disciplinary impacts of these research fields and bringing the benefits of humanities and social science research to all Canadians. We would urge the federal government to maintain the leadership, autonomy, and interdependence of the federal granting councils; to build upon the important progress the councils have made in advancing Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Decolonization (EDID) and Indigenous research as part of research excellence within Canada; and to continue to meet the needs of the diverse disciplinary communities that are a cornerstone of Canada's research strength.

Aligning with the government's goals of fostering a world-class research ecosystem and responding to the call for community consultation on the new organization's design and implementation, we invite the government to consider the following recommendations:



## **Recommendation 1: Sustaining federal investment and support for the humanities and social sciences**

### *Support for Mission-Driven Research*

- To bolster Canada's world-class research system and to better support mission-driven research, investigator-driven research, and innovation, we recommend that the organization's definition of mission-driven research, innovation, and impact be expanded and clarified to account for the inherent disciplinary differences between natural sciences, engineering, health, social sciences, and the humanities. These concepts that are at the core of the new organization cannot be applied uniformly across these disciplines, since they are inherently focused on vastly different priorities. The criteria used to determine project capacity, classification, and the value of impact will differ between disciplines. For example, impact of an engineering project on cybersecurity may be new cryptographic standards. However, the impact of a project on cybersecurity in the humanities and social sciences may be a better understanding of the differing socio-economic impact of cyber-attacks on Canada's diverse communities.
- Addressing the diverse challenges facing Canadians today requires insight from all disciplines, including the humanities and social sciences. Challenges such as climate change and the advance of artificial intelligence require comprehensive interdisciplinary<sup>1</sup> input and expertise to fully address, comprehend, and manage their impact on all Canadians. For this reason, it is critical that some mission-driven research be led by the humanities and social sciences and, otherwise, be thoughtfully integrated to ensure that scientific advancement, innovation, and future research across disciplines is responsibly carried out with due considerations of ethical, environmental, legal, and social impacts alongside economic considerations.
- Moreover, the new organization should align with the government's advisory panel recommendation of a commitment to sustained, multi-year investments in the granting councils and the Canadian Foundation for Innovation (CFI). As noted in the 2023 report by the advisory panel, "mission-driven research can only advance with solid fundamental research programming in place... ..we expect that most mission-driven funding would include corresponding funding to the existing councils." Continued and increased investments in the granting councils and their work on fundamental research will ensure that Canada is prepared to face the challenges of today and tomorrow.
- Additionally, we recommend that the new structure maintain robust funding for investigator-driven research through the Councils. As research methods, criteria, and priorities differ across disciplines, it is key to the future success of the Canadian research ecosystem that all research methods, including those found in the humanities and social sciences, be accounted for and considered in funding and programming streams.
- The new organization must ensure that peer review processes are maintained and integrated into any new funding and project streams, including mission-driven. Examples should be taken

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<sup>1</sup> The use of the term interdisciplinary, typically referring to new disciplines such as gender studies, encompasses multidisciplinary and transdisciplinary research throughout this document. The Federation notes the importance of including these terms in future conversations concerning the new organization and its research priorities.



from peer review processes present within the granting councils, which are leaders in their disciplinary research fields.

*Support for the Modern Research Enterprise and Interdisciplinary Research*

- In the design and implementation of mission-driven, interdisciplinary, and international research programs, the organization should draw on the input and disciplinary expertise of the granting councils. SSHRC's role with the Tri-Agency Institutional Programs Secretariat (TIPS) has been critical in ensuring that Tri-Agency policies and programs fully leverage the insights of humanities and social sciences research.
- It also will be necessary to ensure these programs do not structurally disadvantage small and medium size institutions or the humanities and social science disciplines. As heard throughout the Standing Committee on Science and Research's study on the distribution of federal government funding among Canada's post-secondary institutions, the future success of Canada's modern research enterprise is affected by these structural concerns and these challenges must be addressed and accounted for in the new organization's design and implementation.
- As the new organization strives to encourage international research and to promote Canadian researchers to internationally competitive levels, care must be taken to ensure that the valuable contributions and progress made by the granting councils in international research continues. The recent announcement of a partnership between the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), located in the United States, and SSHRC is crucial to continuing to advance social science and humanities research to an international audience. This partnership must not be lost during the design and implementation of the new organization. Additionally, the recently announced involvement of Canada in Pillar II of Horizon Europe must continue uninterrupted throughout the design and implementation process. These recent developments showcase the value and progress already made through the federal granting councils.
- To further bolster Canada's modern research enterprise, the new organization should ensure that funding allocation to the humanities and social sciences not fall below current levels as articulated in the 2024 federal budget and should be increased to ensure parity across research disciplines. Without protective measures in place, humanities and social science disciplines may fall behind due to the inherent disciplinary differences in project capacity, impact, and value. For example, the Canadian Foundation for Innovation's funded projects in the humanities, social sciences and the arts decreased in both value and number between 2022 and 2023, such that 2023 saw the lowest funding for these disciplines since 2019. Funded projects in all other disciplines saw an increase in the average funding amount allocated per project. Protecting all disciplines and ensuring funding parity across disciplines will ensure that Canada has the capacity to fully address the most pressing challenges of our time.
- Furthermore, the organization must strive to reduce administrative burden and ensure that programming and funding streams continue to meet the specific needs of distinct disciplinary communities. In the humanities and social sciences, for example, scholarly books remain core to the mobilization of new knowledge. A study conducted by the Federation in 2022 found that,



while the market share of books as a form of knowledge dissemination has decreased in other disciplines, they continue to make up close to 70% of humanities and social science citations. This difference in disciplinary knowledge mobilization and scholarly communication showcases the distinct need for programming and funding streams that are truly interdisciplinary by encouraging all disciplines, especially the humanities and social sciences, to flourish under the new organization.

## **Recommendation 2: Embedding Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Decolonization (EDID) and Support for Indigenous Research**

- The organization should prioritize the meaningful integration of Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Decolonization (EDID) and support for Indigenous research across all areas of organization and the federal research support system. The federal granting councils have made important progress as part of research excellence on advancing EDID and Indigenous research in the Canadian research landscape, including through increasing equitable access to funding opportunities, and providing necessary guidance and support to institutions. Building on this work and ensuring that the EDID differences and needs of each discipline are met should be an immediate priority for the new organization, drawing on the expertise of these diverse disciplinary communities.
- The Federation would also urge the government to maintain the Dimensions Program to aid in accomplishing EDI oriented goals. The Dimensions Program has been vital for promoting the meaningful integration of EDI at all levels of the research enterprise and should not be lost in the design and implementation of the capstone research organization.
- The Federation also wishes to bring to the government's attention to additional EDID concerns regarding the term 'mission-driven'. This term carries religious, military and colonial connotations, and can be interpreted as exclusionary and contrary to reconciliation efforts. An alternative term, moonshot, is examined and explored in depth in a report published by Thomas Goldsmith in 2022. Additionally, the Standing Committee on Science and Research published its own report on the term moonshot. The report states "...moonshot has come to apply more broadly to risky, resource-intensive, large-scale, long-term and collaborative research programs with ambitious goals." We recommend that the government consider this term or other alternative to 'mission-driven'.
- Overall, a new focus on 'mission-driven' research must not overshadow investigator or community driven research, as this would risk excluding scholars who use methodologies and ways of knowing such as Indigenous, feminist, queer, and anti-racist methodologies and ways of knowing.
- The Federation also urges the government, in appointing the new board of directors of the capstone research organization, to achieve gender parity and significant representation of members of other equity-deserving groups. It is crucial to the success of the new organization that the diverse voices of Canada's research ecosystem be included at all organizational levels.



### **Recommendation 3: Addressing the needs and strengths of distinct disciplinary communities**

#### *New Organization, Disciplinary Communities, and the Broader Research Community Linkages*

- The Federation recommends that no less than a third (1/3) of directors on the board be drawn from the humanities and social science disciplines. The board of directors of the newly restructured Fonds de recherche du Québec, for example, includes at least three (3) expert representatives from each domain: Health, Nature & Technology, and Society & Culture. Proportional representation of all disciplines is an important measure to solidify strong linkages between disciplinary communities, decision-making processes, and the new organization.
- The federal granting councils are strong voices for their research communities within government. The leadership, autonomy, and interdependence of the councils must be protected and sustained within this new structure. Council Presidents should remain the primary decision-makers for their distinct disciplinary communities and organizations.
- The Federation urges the government to maintain representation of disciplinary communities and research experts for each agency's respective advisory bodies. These will continue to offer a unique and necessary component to foster collaboration between the government and researchers within health, natural sciences, engineering, the humanities, and social sciences.
- The proposed structure of the new organization alters the nature and authority of the Council Presidents, a position equivalent in status to a Deputy Minister. To ensure the autonomy and authority of the councils remains at the center of research support, which has been vital to fostering Canada's world-class research system, transparency in the decision-making processes of the CEO, and transparency in the advice offered by the newly proposed Board of Directors as well as the councils advisory committees will be crucial.
- The Federation also urges the organization to ensure that the CEO be held accountable to the diverse communities they will represent and that terms be limited to avoid the capstone organization being perceived as too closely aligned with any single community. Overtime, CEOs should be drawn from the three main communities on a rotational basis.

Valuable progress towards fostering a world-class research ecosystem has been made by the federal granting councils. The new organization should strive to continue this progress by aligning its structure and programming with the needs of Canada's diverse disciplinary communities, including humanities and social sciences, which must be recognized as integral to a robust research ecosystem and must be proportionately represented at all levels of design and implementation of this new system.

Humanities and social science researchers offer unique perspectives to the complex challenges of today and tomorrow and their inclusion is necessary to foster solutions to these challenges that are comprehensive, effective, sustainable, and inclusive.

To ensure that the organization achieves these goals and succeeds in harmonizing, streamlining, and bolstering the Canadian research ecosystem, the Federation strongly recommend that the government focus on establishing a representative and collaborative capstone entity prior to any legislative or programming changes to the current federal granting councils, which are the foundation of Canada's



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world-class research system. Care should be taken to ensure that the demonstrated administrative and research expertise offered by the federal granting councils is not lost in a new system.

The Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences looks forward to continued community and government collaboration on the design and implementation of the new capstone research organization to continue advancing Canada's position as a world-class leader in research in all disciplines.