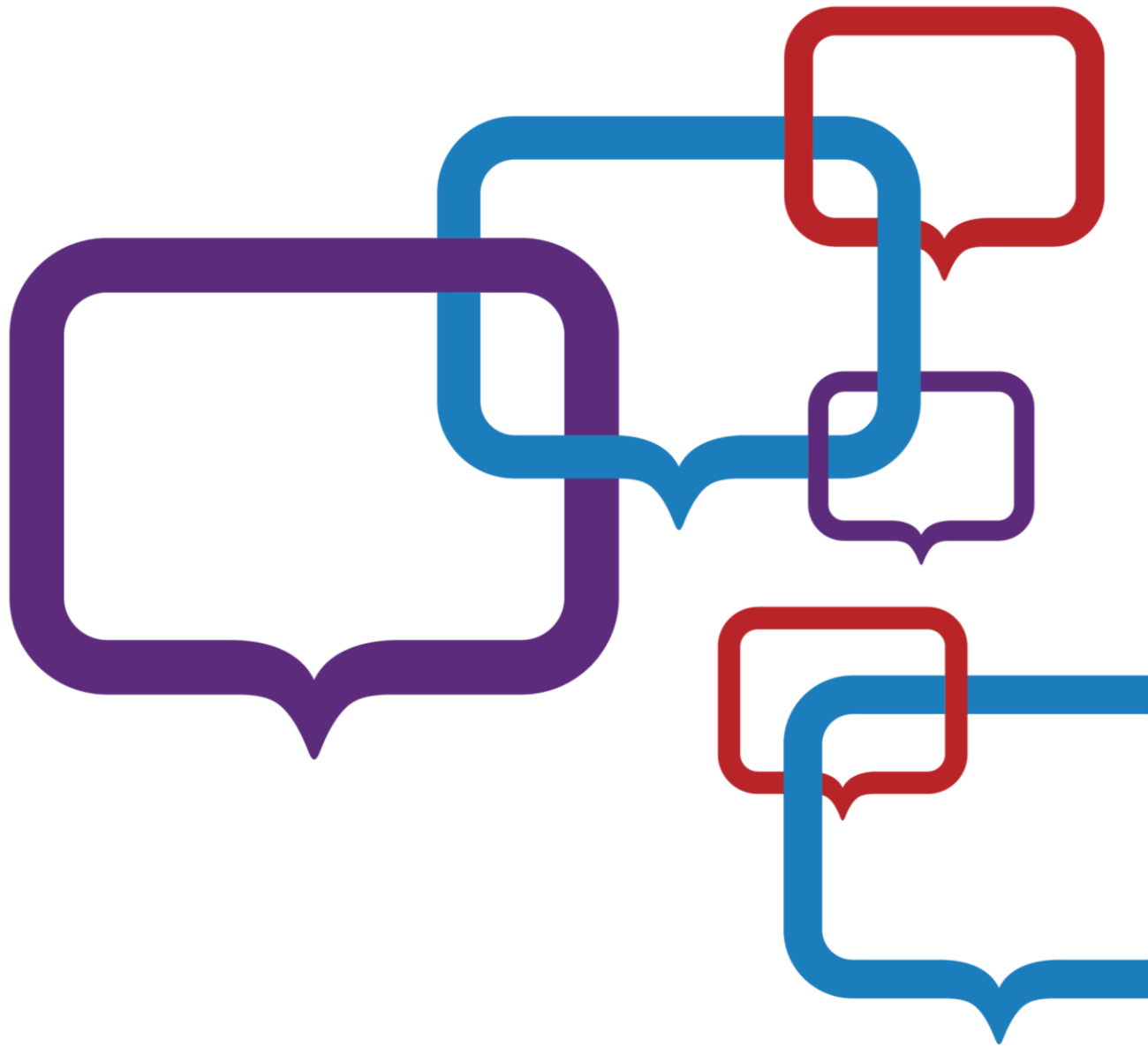




FEDERATION FOR THE
**HUMANITIES AND
SOCIAL SCIENCES**

FÉDÉRATION
**DES SCIENCES
HUMAINES**



Written Submission for the Pre-Budget Consultations in Advance of the 2025 Federal Budget

Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences



Recommendations

- **Recommendation 1:** Deliver on Budget 2024 commitments to granting councils and correct longstanding funding disparities by increasing the share allocated to HSS to at least one-third.
- **Recommendation 2:** Position humanities and social sciences as core drivers of innovation, including within national interest projects, mission-driven initiatives, and emerging technologies.
- **Recommendation 3:** Invest in national open access infrastructure.
- **Recommendation 4:** Increase dedicated support for Indigenous and French knowledge creation and dissemination.



Introduction

A strong research ecosystem powers the knowledge, skills, and talent that Canada needs to address urgent social challenges and build a more inclusive, prosperous future. Within this ecosystem, the humanities and social sciences (HSS) have a particularly vital role to play.

HSS researchers contribute deep expertise and innovative solutions to complex issues such as climate change, reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples, the rapid advance of AI, and declining public trust in democratic institutions.

Every challenge we face has a human dimension. HSS researchers provide the insights and evidence required to drive meaningful, lasting change and to support individuals, communities, and systems in adapting to evolving realities.

Despite this essential role, HSS disciplines continue to receive a disproportionately small share of federal research funding. To build a balanced and future-ready research ecosystem, the Government of Canada must allocate at least one-third of research investments across the Tri-Agency and related national initiatives to HSS.

This allocation is justified by:

- The structure of the Tri-Agency itself, which positions HSS alongside the natural and health sciences as a core pillar of federal research funding.
- The scale and reach of HSS disciplines, which account for a significant share of Canada's faculty, graduate students, and academic programs.
- The crosscutting impact of HSS, which informs the social, cultural, ethical, and institutional conditions that shape and drive inclusive innovation, while also developing the talent and critical capacities needed to lead and sustain it.
- The enduring public trust in HSS research, which is demonstrated by a [national survey](#) conducted during the 2008 financial crisis in which seven in ten Canadians supported federal investment in the HSS.



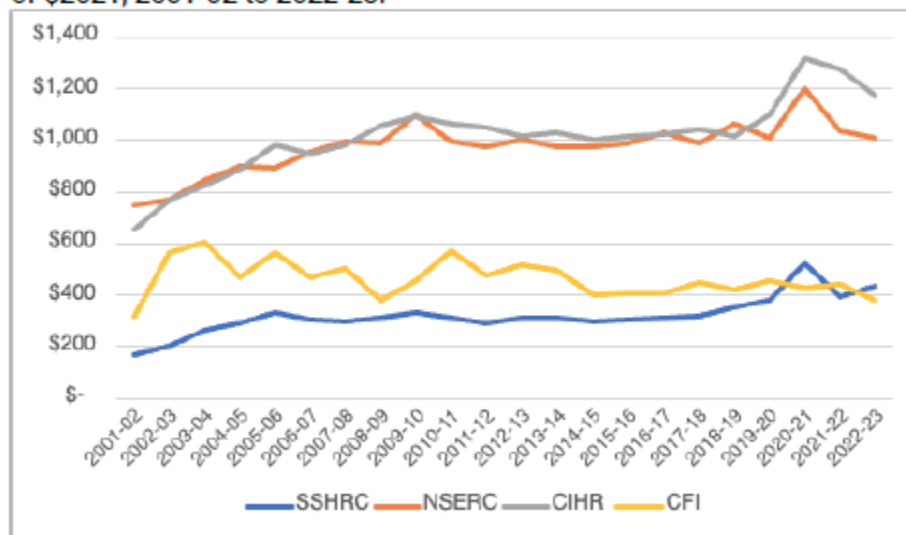
Our recommendations

Recommendation 1: Deliver on Budget 2024 commitments to granting councils and correct longstanding funding disparities by increasing the share allocated to HSS to at least one-third.

Following an extended period of community engagement and consultations, the Government of Canada announced funding increases for science, research, and post-secondary education in its Budget 2024 release. The commitments in the 2024 Budget were openly welcomed by Canada's research community and seen as providing much-needed relief to a historically strained system while increasing Canada's ability to retain research talent and renew its public post-secondary institutions.

As shown in Figure 1 from a 2025 environmental scan by Higher Education Strategy Associates (HESA) for the Federation, federal granting council funding remained essentially flat from 2008–09 to 2018. While there was a modest increase in 2018 following the Government's response to the Fundamental Science Review, HESA's analysis indicates that inflation has since eroded most, if not all, of these gains.

Figure 1: Research Granting Council Expenditures by Council, in Millions of \$2021, 2001-02 to 2022-23.



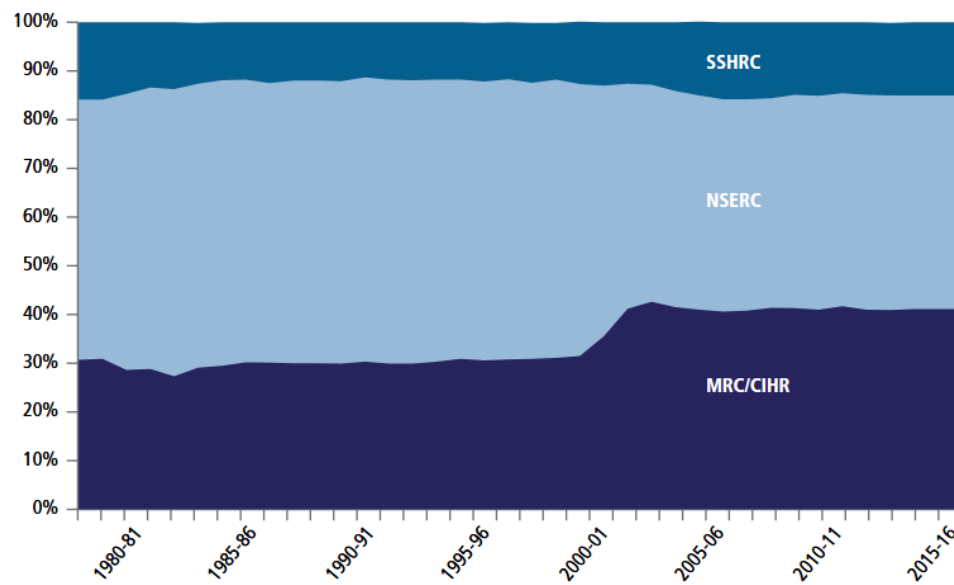
These funding realities underscore the urgency of implementing Budget 2024 investments in a timely and effective manner. Canada's three granting councils are best positioned to align post-secondary funding increases and opportunities with the needs of their community. These funding bodies are well known by the research community and are integral to the modern Canadian research ecosystem. Ensuring that these councils can continue building on their invaluable work from past decades is crucial to the successful and sustainable implementation of the new research funds announced in 2024.



However, for the councils to fulfill their mandates equitably and effectively, the Government of Canada must address the structural underinvestment in HSS.

In comparison to the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council (NSERC) and the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR), the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) has not received equitable funding. Canada's Fundamental Science Review report (2017) found that “despite claims that funds are allocated on a 40-40-20 basis across the councils, SSHRC’s share has been under 15 per cent for three decades,” as shown in *Exhibit 5.1* from the report:

Exhibit 5.1: Total Granting Council Expenditures by Council



Note: Our analysis of research funding trends in this figure excludes the Research Support Fund (RSF)—previously the Indirect Costs Program (ICP)—since it does not support researchers directly. Rather, it provides funding directly to institutions to help defray the costs associated with managing research funded by the three granting councils (e.g., electricity and administrative support).

Source: ISED.

While Budget 2024 announced additional funds to the granting councils, SSHRC is still only projected to receive 18%, leaving it below the 20% claim.¹

Given that SSHRC is one of three federal granting councils, a proportional funding target of at least one-third is justified and necessary. Increasing SSHRC’s share would help correct long-standing structural imbalances and ensure that HSS disciplines are fully resourced to advance inclusive innovation, ethical technology development, and evidence-informed public policy. This one-third allocation must also advance broader equity goals by supporting Indigenous and Francophone research, including sustained investment in Indigenous-led initiatives co-developed with First Nations, Inuit, and Métis communities, and grounded in principles of data sovereignty and self-determination.

¹ Higher Education Strategy Associates, Alex Usher. (2024 December 02). *Quick Update on Research Funding*. <https://higheredstrategy.com/quick-update-on-research-funding/>.



Empowering SSHRC to deliver one-third of research investments ensures that all parts of Canada's research system are equipped to meet national priorities.

Recommendation 2: Position humanities and social sciences as core drivers of innovation, including within national interest projects, mission-driven initiatives, and emerging technologies.

Through their community-centred approaches, HSS experts provide unique insights into many of Canada's most pressing challenges. Critically, challenges such as housing, emerging technologies, and the environment cannot be approached merely from technical perspectives; our approaches and solutions must be human-centred and anchored in values.

As the federal government strives to bolster its research and innovation to address issues of national interest, it must ensure that HSS disciplines, researchers, and experts are involved at every stage. This means dedicating at least 30% of all funds, research opportunities, and mission-driven projects to these disciplines. For example, emerging technologies such as AI and quantum are changing how technology shapes our day-to-day experiences. Yet despite these significant societal impacts, little of the \$2.4 billion dedicated to AI research in Canada is focused on understanding these social implications.²

Integrating HSS approaches and ethical considerations with emerging technologies often takes place in the final stages of the technology's development. This STEM-first, societal considerations-last approach leaves considerable room for risks and errors.

One such example came with the widespread adoption of the internet. Indigenous communities in Canada were not adequately consulted and experienced disproportionate barriers to access, which persist today.³

HSS disciplines also train the next generation of public servants, innovators, policymakers, educators, and community leaders. In 2021/2022, post-secondary enrollments in HSS totalled 1,160,256, accounting for 52.8% of all post-secondary enrollments.⁴ More recently, an environmental scan undertaken by Higher Education Strategy Associates for the Federation revealed that social science professors total just under 7,900, making these disciplines the largest fields in terms of faculty numbers. Humanities faculty were similar to other fields, with just under 4,800 professors.

With HSS students and faculty making up a significant portion of Canada's post-secondary talent, these disciplines must not be overlooked or underfunded. Investing in this talent ensures that Canada can respond to evolving labour market needs with talent and leadership prepared to provide adaptable, ethical, and socially grounded solutions.

² Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada. (2025 June 25). *Government of Canada opens applications for the AI Compute Access Fund*. <https://www.canada.ca/en/innovation-science-economic-development/news/2025/06/government-of-canada-opens-applications-for-the-ai-compute-access-fund.html>

³ Samuel Centre for Social Connectedness, Emma Greenfield. (2020 July 07). *Digital Equity for Indigenous Communities*. <https://www.socialconnectedness.org/digital-equity-for-indigenous-communities/>.

⁴ Statistics Canada. Table 37-10-0011-01 Postsecondary enrolments, by field of study, registration status, program type, credential type and gender



Recommendation 3: Invest in national open access infrastructure.

Open access (OA) is foundational to Canada's goal of making public research accessible worldwide. Yet despite policy commitments like the 2020 *Roadmap for Open Science* and the 2023–2025 Tri-Agency OA Policy review, many researchers continue to face high publishing fees and limited infrastructure. These barriers often divert funding away from research itself and disproportionately affect early-career scholars, equity-deserving groups, and those publishing in French or Indigenous languages.

To fulfill its open science commitments, the Government of Canada must invest in a coordinated national funding strategy for OA publishing and infrastructure. This strategy should include:

- Sustained investment in community-led publishers, library-based platforms, and diamond OA models
- Targeted supports for researchers from equity-deserving groups
- Alignment with Indigenous data sovereignty principles and co-developed approaches to open knowledge sharing
- Measures to enhance the discoverability, accessibility, and impact of French-language research, as recommended by the House of Commons Standing Committee on Science and Research

For HSS scholars in particular, scholarly books and monographs remain central vehicles of research dissemination; yet they often are excluded from OA funding and policy frameworks. Without targeted support, OA for long-form scholarship risks being inaccessible, under-resourced, and inequitably implemented. A dedicated stream for OA books would close a critical policy gap and reflect the publishing realities of HSS disciplines.

By lowering financial and technical barriers, such an investment will enhance global access to Canadian scholarship and ensure that publicly funded knowledge benefits all Canadians.

Recommendation 4: Increase dedicated support for Indigenous and French knowledge creation and dissemination.

Indigenous communities continue to experience disproportionate barriers to accessing research and science funding and opportunities. The Federation was pleased to see the commitment of \$30 million over three years to support Indigenous participation in research.

To ensure that these funds are implemented without disruption, the federal government must work in full collaboration with Inuit, Métis, and First Nations communities to align with their needs and priorities. This investment should be understood as part of the federal government's responsibility to advance the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action, including those that call for increased support for Indigenous-led education and research. Upholding Indigenous data sovereignty and self-determination must be central in moving these funds forward without delay.



The Federation also calls for the federal government to bolster its support for French research and knowledge dissemination. Ongoing initiatives to support French research, such as Heritage Canada's new Post-Secondary Sector and Scientific Knowledge in French Support Fund, are a promising step forward in addressing the long-standing gap in French language support in science and research. As these initiatives move forward, it is vital that at least one-third of funds and opportunities are dedicated to supporting Francophone HSS researchers. Francophone HSS researchers play a critical role in understanding cultural identity, language preservation, democratic participation, and social equity across Canada.

Conclusion

The Federation calls on the Government of Canada to secure the essential building blocks of a thriving research and innovation ecosystem by:

1. Following through on its 2024 investments in Canada's next generation of researchers and addressing structural underfunding of HSS
2. Committing to the meaningful involvement and support of HSS expertise in national research and innovation priorities
3. Establishing a national, coordinated funding approach for OA
4. Bolstering support for Indigenous research and French knowledge creation, and dissemination

With greater federal leadership and strengthened investment for HSS scholars, our country can become a global leader in the knowledge economy and secure a better future for all people in Canada.



About the Federation

The Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences (“the Federation”) represents over 160 member organizations, including universities, colleges, and scholarly associations, and a community of nearly 90,000 researchers and graduate students across Canada. We are the national voice for the HSS community, advocating for the advancement, funding, and visibility of research that shapes public policy, democratic institutions, social equity, and innovation.

The Federation plays a unique and strategic role in Canada’s research ecosystem by:

- Gathering HSS expertise from universities, colleges, and community-based organizations across the country
- Providing a national platform to communicate with and learn directly from HSS scholars through annual events like Congress, Summits, consultations, and targeted initiatives
- Leading ecosystem-wide change on key issues such as open access, graduate education, and equity
- Coordinating national advocacy to elevate the role of HSS in addressing Canada’s social, cultural, economic, and democratic challenges

For more information about the Federation, visit www.federationhss.ca.