Big Thinking Summit: Inflection Point
Call for proposals
June 9-11, 2026 | Edmonton, Alberta, Canada

The Big Thinking Summit 2026, hosted by the Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences, is a bilingual (English/French) three-day event that showcases how humanities and social sciences (HSS) research and practice drive change across disciplines, sectors, and communities, and generates real-world action. This is a pivotal moment for the HSS to shine, demonstrating its value in a time of uncertainty.

Under the theme *Inflection Point*, the Summit calls on academics, community partners, and policymakers to bring forward pressing issues, share their HSS knowledge, and forge new collaborations that generate solutions Canada urgently needs.

We invite proposals that cross disciplinary and institutional boundaries and show the impact and relevance of the HSS across diverse contexts, including policy-relevant analysis, creative practice, experimental methods, and community-based research.

We welcome submissions from academics and from those applying HSS knowledge in community organizations, publishing, policymaking, industry, the arts, and other fields.
Applicants do not need to be affiliated with a scholarly association or an institution that is a member of the Federation.

Themes
Submissions should align with at least one of the following thematic streams, which reflect the Summit's focus on collaboration, innovation, and multi-sectorial impact (including the private, public, civic, political, economic, academic and other spheres):

Networks of change
How can creative partnerships across disciplines, sectors, and communities result in responsive and impactful research? This theme highlights interdisciplinary and cross-sectoral partnerships that expand the reach and urgency of the HSS. Topics may include:
- Knowledge mobilization and co-creation across academia, government, and civil society
- Cross-sector collaboration in areas such as policy development, healthcare, education, and justice
- Collaborations that advance equity, reconciliation, or other forms of community-led change
- Ethical engagement and relationship-building

Methods in motion
How are scholars rethinking the ways they teach, research, and share knowledge to expand the horizons of the HSS? This theme explores bold methodological and pedagogical innovations that shape how knowledge is created, disseminated, and valued. Topics may include:
- Development of curricula and pedagogical frameworks to meet contemporary challenges
- Critical archival work and historical recovery

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- Creative, artistic, and embodied research methods
- Innovations in digital scholarship and data storytelling

Legitimacy at the edge

What role can the HSS play in rebuilding trust, navigating mis/disinformation, and strengthening democracy? This theme invites work that addresses historical and contemporary challenges to knowledge, legitimacy, and public discourse. Topics may include:
- Public trust in institutions and science
- Artificial intelligence and algorithmic authority
- Disinformation, misinformation, and media literacy
- Polarization and democratic backsliding

Formats

Proposals are invited from academic, community, policy, industry, and cultural presenters, highlighting the many ways humanities and social sciences knowledge and methods are put into practice.
We welcome diverse presentation styles that support engagement, knowledge mobilization, and accessibility.

Proposals may take the form of:
- **Roundtables or dialogues:** Interactive conversations among scholars, community leaders, policymakers, and practitioners. These sessions emphasize dialogue and exchange rather than formal, individualized presentations. Proposals may outline a full roundtable with confirmed participants or suggest a topic that the organizers can help shape into a session.
- **Individual presentations:** Papers, reports, case studies, posters, or talks shared by presenters. Individual submissions may be grouped by the organizers into thematic panels with time for audience discussion.
- **Lightning talks:** Short presentations (e.g. 5 minutes) designed to spark discussion and connections across topics. This format is ideal for sharing emerging research, new initiatives, or works in progress that would benefit from feedback and dialogue.
- **Creative, arts-based, or multimedia contributions:** Presentations that use film, visual art, performance, or storytelling to engage audiences in new ways. This format highlights the power of creative practice to generate dialogue, shift perspectives, and expand the reach of HSS knowledge.
- **Workshops:** Hands-on sessions where participants co-create something tangible together. Outcomes might include a policy statement, teaching resource, toolkit, or collaborative document. Workshops emphasize collective problem-solving, co-design, and producing a shared output.
- **Capacity-building labs:** Interactive sessions proposed by participants that focus on developing attendees' skills, networks, or strategies. Labs may include mentoring opportunities, training in policy engagement or grant-writing, or strategies for building collaborations.

Note: Full papers are not required. We welcome applied or practice-based contributions, exploratory projects, and works in progress. Presenters are encouraged to focus on communicating key ideas, insights, and impacts in an engaging and accessible way, rather than delivering formal academic papers to an expert audience.

Submission Details

Proposals should:
- Be no more than 500 words
- Clearly outline the session's focus, format, and intended outcomes
- If applicable: identify all confirmed or proposed presenters and collaborators

Submit your proposal by Monday, November 17, 2025, at 24:00 PT using the following form:

If you have questions about your submission or require support, please contact
events@federationhss.ca

We aim to communicate submission decisions by or before January 23, 2026.

Evaluation

Proposals will be reviewed by an interdisciplinary program committee representing diverse fields, sectors, and perspectives. Committee membership will reflect disciplinary diversity across the humanities and social sciences. Submissions will be assessed according to the following criteria:
- **Relevance:** Alignment with a thematic stream and the overall goals of the Summit.
- **Impact:** Demonstrated or potential contribution to advancing understanding, practice, or policy across disciplinary, sectoral, or institutional boundaries.
- **Reach:** Inclusivity and accessibility of approaches to knowledge sharing for a diverse audience.
- **Collaboration:** Involvement of diverse voices, including cross-sector, community, or practitioner partners.

The committee will reserve space for:
- Research by equity-denied group members
- Research and collaborations conducted in French and/or in francophone contexts
- Disciplinary diversity
- Different organizational roles and affiliations

Registration and fees

Presenters must register for the Summit two weeks after their proposal acceptance. Pricing details, including information on fees and supports, will be available by mid-October. We encourage you to check back for updates before the submission deadline.

Submission Form
Contact Information
- Name
- Email
- Affiliation
- Discipline(s)
- Role(s) (select all that apply): faculty, student, independent researcher, postsecondary leader/administrator, policy or community practitioner, other (please specify)

Proposal Details

- Title of Session
- Format(s): (select all that apply)
- Stream(s): (select all that apply)
  - If proposing an individual presentation, would you also be open to sharing it as a poster? Yes/No
- Names and affiliations of all confirmed or proposed collaborators

Abstract (500 words maximum)

Outline the session's focus, format, and intended outcomes.

Language

This is a bilingual event. The Federation will provide AI-generated French/English simultaneous captions for all sessions.

- In which language will you present? (English / French / Either)

Identity

If you self-identify as part of an equity-denied group and wish to be considered for program allocation, please indicate that here: