



# CIHR TRAINING AND CAREER SUPPORT PROGRAM EVALUATION SUMMARY

## About the CIHR Training and Career Support Program

Since 2001, the [Canadian Institutes of Health Research \(CIHR\)](#) (in collaboration with the other Tri-agencies) has contributed to Canadian health research capacity building by providing training and career support through a variety of mechanisms and approaches (i.e., direct awards, indirect stipends, and training grants) that have funded trainees and researchers across health disciplines.

Between 2000-01 and 2016-17, CIHR delivered ~561 direct award programs and funding opportunities, funding 8,337 awards. Over this period, CIHR invested \$966M in direct training and career awards (i.e., funding support given directly to an individual trainee through an award program versus indirectly through a supervisor's research grant or directly through a research or training grant). Agency-specific investments have decreased over time, while Tri-agency investments have increased.

*Health Research Training at CIHR: <https://cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/50507.html>*

## Results: What We Found

- CIHR investments in direct training and career award support (TCS) contribute to the achievement of objectives and priorities in the CIHR Act and Roadmap II, and align with federal government priorities.
- Currently, CIHR provides most of its direct TCS awards at the training levels, in particular at the Postdoctoral level, with limited career awards beyond research grants to support the transition to independent research careers.
- In terms of what programs are offered, CIHR's direct training programs complement Tri-agency programs by providing awards in priority areas, opportunities for international study (Doctoral and Postdoctoral levels), and supporting trainees unique to health research.
- CIHR's direct TCS programs (and Tri-agency programs) do not address the need to provide sustained support (across multiple levels) for scientific careers in health research, as outlined in the CIHR Act.
- Broadly, the current TCS Program (which includes investments in the next generation of researchers to build and maintain Canada's health research capacity) does not align with the objectives and priorities of the CIHR Act, Roadmap II, and the Training Strategy, and lacks indicators that reflect the full range of CIHR's TCS activities and investments (i.e. the indicators focus on Tri-agency program objectives such as attraction and retention, and the attainment of leadership and research positions).
- CIHR's direct training programs contributed to health research capacity building by supporting trainees who have pursued research careers. The majority of CIHR award recipients are working full-time in the academic sector.
- Funding at the Postdoctoral level has had a greater impact on recipients' productivity and career outcomes compared to funding at other training award levels.
- There is a need for trainees to obtain transferable skills given that about one-half of award recipients did not secure tenure/tenure-track positions and up to one-quarter work in sectors other than academia.
- The current TCS Program has no description of how expected results are produced across all training support mechanisms as well as gaps in performance measurement data.
- Current direct training and career support programs lack specific objectives for training, mentoring, or multidisciplinary training; however, award recipients have developed research skills and engaged in multidisciplinary collaborations.
- Programs with specific objectives related to training, mentoring, and multidisciplinary training have been sunset and there is a potential gap in indirect capacity building objectives with the sunset of the Foundation Grant Program.

*Planning, Evaluation and Results Branch, Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR), March 2021*

## Recommendations and Management Response

- 1 CIHR needs to continue to provide funding that contributes to building health research capacity to meet the objective of the CIHR Act and the needs of trainees and the health research community. Specifically, CIHR should continue to:
  - a. provide support for international study at the Doctoral and Postdoctoral levels; and,
  - b. provide support at the Postdoctoral level for both Postdoctoral fellows and post-health professional degree recipients.
- 2 CIHR needs to define and outline how it will achieve “the provision of sustained support for scientific careers in health research” as specified in the CIHR Act, across the full spectrum of training and career support mechanisms (both direct and indirect).
- 3 CIHR needs to align investments and activities in training and career support to meet the objectives of the Act, the training strategy, and the next strategic plan.
- 4 CIHR needs to improve the monitoring and performance measurement of all training and career support activities and investments (both direct and indirect).

**Response:** Management agrees and in addition to investments, CIHR will be developing a framework and implementing an action plan to address gaps in training and support across all career stages, transitions, and paths, and will improve the assessment of training and career support activities.

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## About the Evaluation

CIHR's Evaluation Unit conducted the evaluation in 2019 to meet requirements of the [Policy on Results](#), inform the Training Strategy, and the 2020-2030 Strategic Plan, and to provide CIHR senior management with valid, insightful and actionable findings regarding:

- Needs addressed by the program;
- Effectiveness of program design in supporting outcomes; and,
- Achievement of expected results.

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### Scope



Covered CIHR direct training and career support awards for the period from 2000-01 to 2016-17



First thematic evaluation of CIHR's suite of direct training and career support award programs



Excludes indirect funding (trainees supported by researchers) and Tri-agency awards (previous evaluation findings incorporated but no primary data collection)

### Methodology



Analyses of documents, end of award reports and other administrative data, including previous evaluations of CIHR and Tri-agency award programs



Surveys of recipients and applications to the New Investigator and Clinician Scientist award programs



Environmental Scan of national and international award programs, bibliometric, and funding trajectory analysis.

Full Evaluation Report: [LINK](#)

Management Action Plan (MAP): [LINK](#)

Planning, Evaluation and Results Branch, Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR), March 2021



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