

SCIENCE FOR SOCIETY

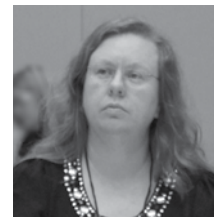
The Government of Canada's new science, technology & innovation strategy means universities must adopt a fresh approach to complement technology transfer and industry liaison. **ResearchImpact-RéseauImpactRecherche**, a network of 11 Canadian universities, is working hard to support this new approach through knowledge mobilisation

Writing in *Canadian Government Executive*, Chad Gaffield, former President of the Social Sciences & Humanities Research Council of Canada, re-imagined Canada's innovation systems. "An international consensus is now emerging around a people-centred model of innovation for successful change in businesses, government and communities. [...] The new model calls upon us to re-kindle the relationship between knowledge and society; to re-imagine and renew the historic covenant between campuses and the public; and to exploit all the ways of knowing about the past and present to tackle the world's toughest challenges."

Canadian innovation is driven by the priorities of the Government of Canada and has traditionally been based on four pillars: science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM). However, Canada's recent science, technology and innovation (ST&I) strategy, released in December 2014, includes focus areas that derive inputs from across the social sciences, humanities, health, natural sciences and engineering. Examples of these broad focus areas include mental health, healthy ageing, food and food systems, water security, disaster mitigation, responsible development in the North and gaming.



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A NEW MODEL OF INNOVATION

Most universities in Canada have a Technology Transfer office to support technology licensing, marketing, patenting and ultimately revenue generating activities. It is through these traditional concepts of university-industry liaison working primarily in STEM disciplines that universities have engaged with industry partners to support previous federal ST&I priorities. However, traditional concepts of technology transfer and industry liaison are not sufficient to support the engagement of university research in these broad focus areas of the 2014 ST&I strategy, which do not rely on patenting and start-up companies but require a people-centred model of innovation. Features of this model include engagement, collaborative research and dissemination to private, public and non-profit organisations.

Knowledge mobilisation helps address this gap. Knowledge mobilisation actively engages university research and researchers with non-academic partners working to support these broader notions of innovation. Knowledge brokers support collaborative research projects that engage

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RESEARCHIMPACT-RÉSEAUIMPACTRECHERCHE PUTTING RESEARCH INTO PRACTICE: SELECTED EXAMPLES INCLUDE:

- RIR-University of Guelph brokering services have helped inform effective transportation system planning for the City of Guelph, Ontario
- RIR-Memorial University brokers have created a robust online tool – yaffle.ca – to help rural communities engage in collaborative research
- RIR-Kwantlen Polytechnic University brokers are supporting a bio-regional food system
- In Toronto, the cooling policies for a city of 2.5 million people were informed through an internship project brokered by RIR-York University
- Knowledge brokers at Université du Québec à Montréal and Université de Montréal are creating innovative knowledge products to disseminate research to social service sector leaders

A NETWORK OF 11 UNIVERSITIES

Memorial University of Newfoundland, Université de Montréal, Université du Québec à Montréal, Carleton University, York University (lead), McMaster University, Wilfrid Laurier University, University of Guelph, University of Saskatchewan, Kwantlen Polytechnic University, University of Victoria

academic researchers with non-academic organisations to address real world problems. This co-production model of collaborative research has proven effective in enabling academic research and expertise to have impacts on those areas that have been identified as important to Canadians.

MAXIMISING RESEARCH IMPACT

ResearchImpact-RéseauImpactRecherche (RIR) is Canada's knowledge mobilisation network. Started in 2006, RIR is a growing pan-Canadian network of 11 universities that is investing in university-based knowledge brokers who provide knowledge mobilisation supports to faculty, students and partner organisations. The vision of RIR is to maximise the social, cultural, economic, environment and health impacts of academic research across local and global communities. The network believes that academic research can make a significant contribution to society by partnering academic expertise with expertise from community, industry and government organisations.

Under the leadership of our Executive Lead Committee (usually Vice Presidents Research), the pan-Canadian network is a community of practice of knowledge brokers allowing us to share and exchange information easily and effectively, ensuring knowledge brokers across the country can improve their local knowledge mobilisation practices. We practise knowledge mobilisation in a variety of institutional structures including: community service learning; a research shop model; a living lab model; a public engagement model; and professional knowledge brokers fully integrated into the research enterprise. Since we operate as a community of practice seeking the best from different models, this diversity is our strength.

RIR members are also making important contributions to the scholarship of knowledge mobilisation through local, national and international collaborative, peer reviewed publications such as a recently published paper on knowledge brokering at RIR-York University. Using ResearchSnapshot, we synthesise this knowledge into clear language knowledge products and use social media platforms to share this broadly. This is one example of how we walk the talk in knowledge mobilisation by making our own scholarship accessible to broad audiences.

LOOKING BACK TO LOOK FORWARD

As we enter into our 10th year of operation, three themes have emerged as underlying principles:

- Impact is measured at the level of our non-academic partners who produce the products, make the policies and deliver the services that have an impact on end beneficiaries. Academic impact from

traditional scholarship remains the foundation of academic research but a consideration of impacts beyond the academy are increasingly required by funding organisations in grant applications. Our experience shows that impact takes time, often expressed three to five years after the end of the research project. Impact expressed over time by non-academic research partners has implications for funding, evaluation and communication

- Meaningful engagement among collaborators requires mutual respect and shared ownership from inception to impact. We have abandoned the knowledge 'supply and demand' model and now seek to support authentic partnerships between complementary academic and non-academic expertise. This means we don't 'bridge the gap' (a knowledge transfer paradigm that reinforces academic and non-academic silos) but 'close the loop' between research and its use by creating shared spaces for collaborative research. Dissemination is necessary but not sufficient for knowledge mobilisation
- Successful knowledge mobilisation requires sustained investments in professional knowledge brokers. Knowledge mobilisation activities are frequently funded as a component of research projects, often as part of a graduate student or research employee's many other duties. Investing in dedicated and professional knowledge brokers, in the way that our universities hire technology transfer professionals, creates a high standard of knowledge mobilisation service excellence

RIR is the only Canadian network focused on supporting university-based knowledge brokers who are working to maximise the economic, social and environmental impacts across all research disciplines. Canadian universities can extend the impacts of over \$3 billion invested every year in academic research by investing in knowledge mobilisation. Maximising the impacts of research in areas of critical importance to Canada's economy, society and environment will help universities become full partners in Canada's future.

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