



DEMENTIA RESEARCH & INNOVATION FUNDERS ALLIANCE

A VOICE FOR HEALTHY BRAIN AGING

REPORT: SECOND ANNUAL MEETING OF THE ALLIANCE

Montreal, Canada
November 6th 2024

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CONNECTED**



THE ROAD AHEAD FOR THE ALLIANCE: COLLABORATION, IMPACT, AND SUSTAINABILITY

The Canadian Institutes of Health Research - Institute of Aging hosted the second annual meeting of the Dementia Research and Innovation Funders Alliance and welcomed over 30 organizations and agencies who are part of the dementia research and innovation ecosystem in Canada. The Alliance facilitates dialogues between key partners in research and serves as a uniting voice for the healthy brain aging and dementia research and innovation funding in Canada. A total of 55 individuals, including people with lived and living experience and Indigenous leadership participated in this meeting.



Three main themes emerged to pave a path forward for actions to be undertaken in the year ahead.

Collaboration

One of the primary goals of the Alliance is to foster **collaboration** among its member organizations and other interested parties, to serve as a unified national voice for dementia research and innovation and drive meaningful progress in addressing the challenges posed by dementia. The Alliance will continue to improve communication channels and facilitate collaboration between member organizations and engage a larger audience in years to come.

Impact

Demonstrating the **impact** of the activities and actions of the Alliance is critical. In the coming year, we will define the indicators that will be used to measure impact and help demonstrate success. Storytelling is a well-documented and important strategy used to illustrate impact. In part, through compelling narratives, the tangible outcomes of the work of the Alliance can be showcased.

Sustainability

Sustainability of the Alliance is critical. We will draw inspiration from other successful models in Canada, not only for its longevity of the group but also for its growth in the future. A key component of sustainability lies in fostering lasting and meaningful connections with members as well as individuals most impacted by dementia, including caregivers and those living with the condition.





Dementia Research and Innovation Working Groups

In the first year of the Alliance, three working groups were created based on suggestions brought forward at the Alliance Launch meeting in 2023. Over the course of the first year, members of the Alliance Steering Committee defined the goals and mandate for each working group. All three working groups began meeting in the later part of the first year and were composed of participants from member organizations. Collaboration between working groups will be important and will be prioritized as needed. A representative from each working group provided a short introduction on the mandate, goals and workplan of each group. The groups will function collaboratively as the scope of their work is interconnected. Additional information about the working groups is posted on the [Alliance website](#).

Working Group 1 (WG1) – Mapping the dementia research and innovation ecosystem

The discussions centered on the need to define the scope of the planned mapping exercise, including establishing clear definitions for terminology. The scope of the work should include important topics such as prevention and caregiving, while also considering both the national and international contexts to identify gaps. The importance of establishing effective data collection methods was discussed as well, including the use of existing digital platforms and the need for data visualization techniques. Sustainability of the mapping exercise is crucial and will need to be ensured.

Deliverables for 2025

First Environmental Scan and Mapping: Conduct a comprehensive mapping of the Canadian dementia research and innovation landscape, identifying agencies and groups funding research and innovation, resources available to researchers, available evidence, and gaps to inform strategic decisions and actions. This work will be supported in its initial development through funds from a CIHR Planning and Dissemination Grant. The recipient of this grant will be supported in their work, as appropriate, by the members of the Alliance.

Internal Mapping and Coordination: Collaborate with Working Group 2 (see below) to conduct a detailed internal map exercise of Alliance members, ensuring a coordinated and strategic approach to enhance the impact and sustainability of dementia research and innovation efforts.

Working Group 2 (WG2) – Funding analytics

Discussions on WG2 focused on the value of developing a standardized yearly reporting template to capture key data points that provide a comprehensive understanding of funding from Alliance member organizations. Digital tools should be leveraged for efficiency and to display results (e.g., funding trends, economic impact, strategic recommendations for funding allocation to maximize impact) in a visually appealing manner.

Deliverables for 2025

Establish a Standardized Yearly Funding Reporting Template: WG2 will collaborate with WG1 to create a template to capture yearly key data points from Alliance member organizations, including scope and type of funded research. This approach will help to align and foster collaboration among partner organizations, maintain accountability, drive continuous improvement and will contribute to demonstrating the Alliance's impact.



Working Group 3 (WG3) – Communications, Knowledge Mobilization, and Dissemination

Participants identified the need to collectively introduce the Alliance to the broader dementia research and innovation ecosystem. To do so, it was suggested to develop an external communications strategy to share our mandate and offer one clear and unified message that explains how this group will support research and innovation efforts in Canada. Additionally, internal channels of communication are essential to foster collaboration between member organizations. Lastly, it is necessary to capture the impact of our work on the public and communities we serve, focusing on translational research that is relatable to the public.

Deliverables for 2025

Communication Strategies: Develop internal and external communication strategies, including organizing internal channels and leveraging collective platforms to disseminate information to larger audiences. Establish external channels such as a website and social media presence.

Knowledge Mobilization Strategy: Create a knowledge mobilization strategy to disseminate the work of the Alliance, particularly the findings of WG1 and WG2.



A PATH FORWARD TO PARTNERSHIPS WITH EUROPE

Horizon Europe is the European Commission's new seven-year research and innovation framework program, from 2021-27. On July 3, 2024, the Government of Canada and the European Union signed an agreement allowing Canada's association with the Horizon Europe Programmes (EP), bringing together the EU with public and private partners, and in particular, national funding authorities as well as other public and private stakeholders.

One such partnership program currently under development is the European Partnership for Brain Health (EP BrainHealth). This new initiative, which was presented at this meeting, aligns with the mission of many Alliance members. The Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) Institute of Aging plans to be a partner in this initiative and has invited other Alliance members to express their interest in participating. The goal is to collaborate on the international stage to benefit Canadian researchers and, ultimately, both Canadian and international populations.

Deliverables for 2025 and beyond

Identifying shared priorities and create funding strategies: CIHR will collaborate and lead participation in this Horizon Europe partnership on behalf of Canada. Alliance members are encouraged to signal their interest in collaboration.

