CANADIAN RESEARCH DATA CENTRE NETWORK

2019
Strategic Plan 2024

Yukon Territory

Northwest Territories

Nunavut Territories

Yellowknife

British Columbia

Prince George

Alberta

Edmonton

Saskatchewan

Manitoba

Newfoundland
and Labrador

Vancouver

Victoria

Kelowna

Calgary

Lethbridge

Saskatoon

Regina

Winnipeg

Ontario

Quebec

St. John's

P.E.I.

New
Brunswick

Moncton

Fredericton

Saint John

Halifax

Nova Scotia

Québec

Sherbrooke

North Bay

Gatineau

Montreal

Ottawa

Kingston

Guelph

Waterloo

Toronto

Hamilton

Windsor

London

The Canadian Research Data Centre Network (CRDCN) is a national platform for advancing social, economic and health research, for training quantitative social scientists and health researchers, and for informing key issues of public policy.
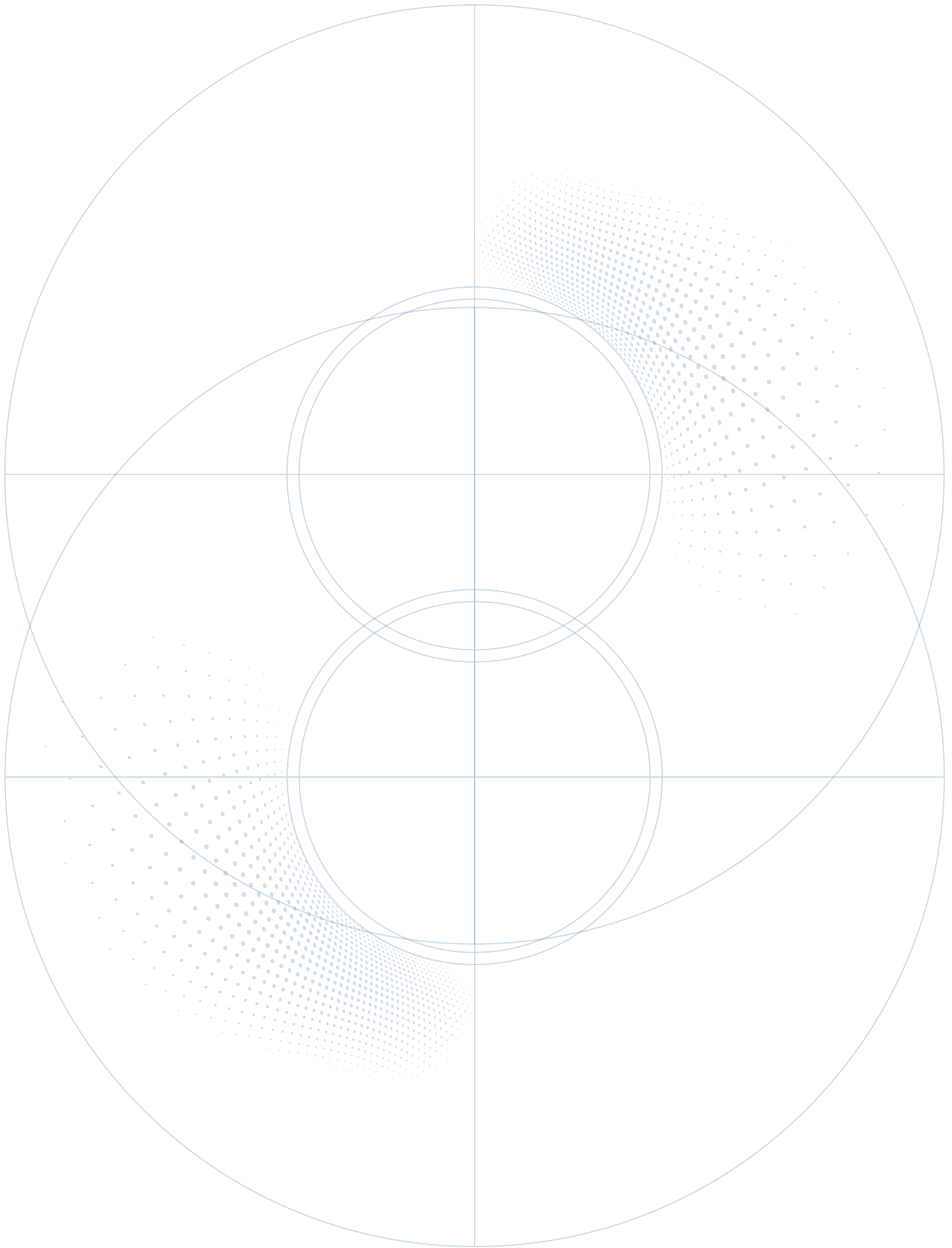
CRDCN
RCCDR

Canadian Research Data
Centre Network

Réseau Canadien des centres
de données de recherche

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The Plan in Context

The Canadian Research Data Centre Network (CRDCN) is a national platform for advancing social, economic and health research, for training quantitative social scientists and health researchers, and for informing key issues of public policy. Established in 2000 with visionary support from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC), the CRDCN has become the central source for researchers to access a wide and rapidly growing range of Statistics Canada microdata. As a hallmark of its success, the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) began co-funding the Network in 2005. In 2017, the Network was funded by the Canada Foundation for Innovation (CFI) as one of Canada's seventeen major science initiatives and the only one in the social sciences linked to health.

With its long-standing partnership with Statistics Canada, its headquarters at McMaster University and its 32 secure sites hosted on campuses across the country, the Network is unique in its national reach and proven infrastructure and as such ranks among the best platforms for microdata access and analysis in the world. In 2018 alone, the Network supported more than 1800 researchers, including 700 graduate students, drawn from a wide range of academic disciplines. The Network has produced more than 4800 publications, many in top ranked peer-reviewed journals, with a focus on advancing knowledge and informing policy in the areas of income and employment, population health and well-being, education and social development, immigration and settlement, and Indigenous and gender issues.

The Network's 2019-2024 Strategic Plan builds upon this record of success and the significant investments made by SSHRC, CIHR, CFI, partner institutions, Statistics Canada, and provincial governments. This new plan has been developed in the context of the Network's

expanding partnerships with federal and provincial governments, as well as non-profit and private sector researchers and end users. These partnerships are fully reflected in the composition of the CRDCN Board which couples the richness of the in-depth and local knowledge of leading Academic Directors with the external perspectives of colleagues with seasoned experience in the public, private and non-profit sectors. For its part, CRDCN's Academic Council, comprised of 32 Academic Directors from partner institutions across the country, ensures that the Network's priorities are well aligned with the needs of researchers and well-grounded in the operational realities of optimizing the accessibility and performance of CRDCN's distributed facilities.

This plan supersedes the Network's 2016-2021 plan to take account of external and internal drivers of change that are informing and influencing its form and function as an evolving national research platform. External drivers of particular relevance and importance are:

- Researchers' evolving expectations about why and how they engage in research as well as the means by which they use, access, process, share and curate data;

- The significant demand from all sectors for people skilled in quantitative data analysis and data science;

- Increasing public awareness regarding research involving personal data and the need for balancing access with protecting privacy;

- The evolving digital research ecosystem and the global pace of technological change;

- The growing and changing expectations of, and accountability of the Network to, government funding agencies and partners, including the evolving relationships with Statistics Canada, Compute Canada and McMaster University as the host institution;

- The growing opportunity to inform and influence public policy development across all jurisdictions; and

- The federal re-assessment of Canada's innovation and research strategy as an opportunity to position the Network as a key component of Canada's innovation and research infrastructure system.

In addition to these external drivers of change, the strategic plan has evolved to reflect important internal developments:

- The creation of the Network's multi-sector Board of Directors with responsibility to guide and steward its development as a national asset to be leveraged for the benefit of Canadians;

- The revised governance and management roles of the Academic Council and of the Academic Directors as leaders on local campuses and as contributors to the Network's efforts to meet the needs of the research community and other users;

- The Network's transition from an organization that was primarily an enabler of projects for academic researchers to one that now includes actively developing collaborative cross-sectoral research programs; and

- The expanded responsibility of the Network's central staff team for managing a national Canada Foundation for Innovation Major Scientific Initiative (MSI) and partnering on the implementation of a national high performance computing platform.

In this context, the next five years will be a period of continued growth and evolution for the CRDCN in three fundamental ways:

1) as a **physical network** by implementing its national high performance computing platform and expanding access to new communities;

2) as a **community network** by increasing engagement of researchers in its collaborative programs, its training initiatives and its communities of practice; and

3) as an **institutional network** by further strengthening relationships with the senior leadership of its partner institutions, Statistics Canada and organizations in the Canadian research data ecosystem.

This new plan confirms the commitment of the CRDCN Board, Academic Council and central management team to make the best use of the valuable public assets entrusted to them, to play a leadership role in the provision, analysis and mobilization of research data and to support the development of the next generation of highly qualified quantitative social scientists, health researchers and data scientists in Canada. Working together with our partners, we look forward to fulfilling the vision of CRDCN's founders and pursuing the exciting new opportunities that lie ahead.

Andrew Bjerring
Chair, CRDCN Board

Ted McDonald,
Chair, CRDCN Academic Council

S. Martin Taylor
Executive Director, CRDCN

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The Planning Process

CRDCN's new strategic plan was developed through an extensive consultation process extending over 18 months. An ad hoc committee of the CRDCN Board, including the Chair and Vice-Chair and the Chair of the Academic Council, met with central staff in the fall of 2017 to review the parameters of the planning process including the rationale and the scope, key stakeholders to be consulted, critical steps and timing of the planning process and key questions to frame and focus the plan. The process was shared with both the Academic Council and the Board, prior to the CRDCN Board's initial strategic planning session in Ottawa in December 2017. At the April 2018 Academic Council meeting, Academic Directors were consulted on what success might look like in five years for both their local research data sites and for the national Network. They also identified local challenges to be addressed and local opportunities to be seized.

With the support of the Board and the Academic Council, a National Engagement Strategy (NES) was conducted in 2018 to improve communications with and among institutional stakeholders, understand better the local needs and aspirations, and ensure appropriate levels of support for, and engagement with, Academic Directors. From May through December 2018, CRDCN staff in collaboration with Statistics Canada staff and, on occasion, one or more Board member, held day-long meetings on more than 20 of the 30 campuses that house a facility across the country. These meetings included opportunities to solicit input from a wide array of institutional stakeholders including emerging and established CRDCN researchers, Academic Directors, senior university administrators, and staff in the research and finance offices. As part of this process, CRDCN staff also completed 90 minute interviews with all 32 Academic Directors, to inform our planning efforts. The NES provided critical input to the development of the 2019-2024 Strategic Plan, raised the profile of the Network among institutional stakeholders, and will serve to lay the groundwork for the successful implementation and fulfilment of the plan.
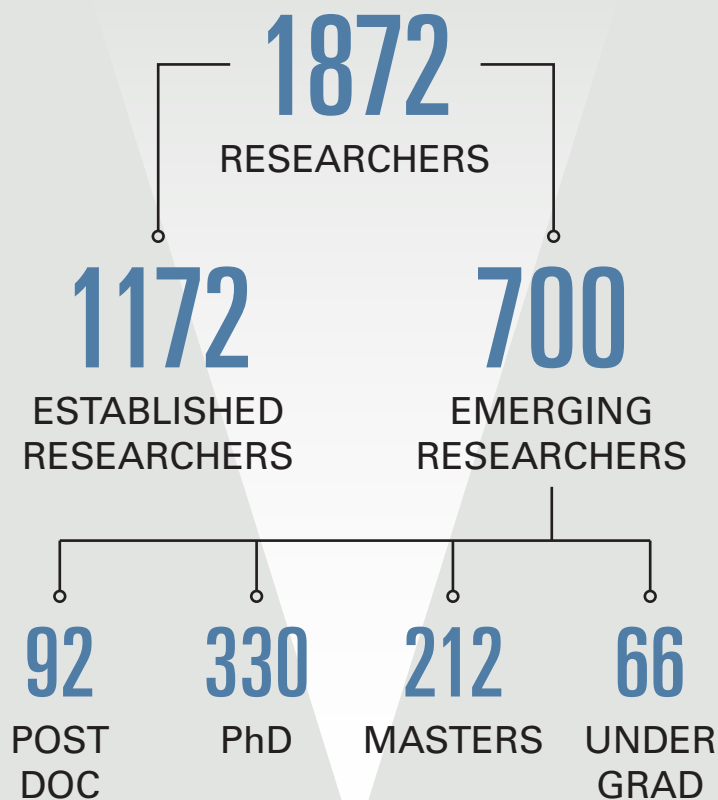
Conversations with Statistics Canada staff at all levels were another crucial input to the process, particularly given the fundamental implications of Statistics Canada's modernization initiative for this ongoing partnership. CRDCN's Board Chair and central staff met with senior colleagues at Statistics Canada for two "deep dives" to test key assumptions that would inform the development of the plan and provided annual updates on the strategic planning process to Statistics Canada regional managers and analysts during their Ottawa gatherings. CRDCN staff also held bilateral meetings with many regional and local Statistics Canada colleagues during site visits as part of the National Engagement Strategy. CRDCN central staff also leveraged meetings during the course of regular business with McMaster as the host institution, with end users involved in our collaborative research programs and national conference, and with fellow MSIs and fellow research data organizations, as well as with our funders to better understand how their own priorities were evolving and how best to align our plans.

CRDCN Board members received detailed presentations on the NES findings at their June and December 2018 Board meetings and spent a full day in December 2018 providing input to staff to inform the drafting of the 2019-2024 Strategic Plan. The draft plan was reviewed by members of the ad hoc Strategic Planning Committee, by Statistics Canada and by the host institution prior to being brought to the Board for approval in principle at its March 2019 meeting. The Academic Council was invited to ratify the plan at its April 2019 meeting in Ottawa, after which final approval of the plan was sought from the Executive Committee of the Board, prior to its submission as part of CRDCN's 2018-19 annual report to our key federal funders, SSHRC, CIHR and CFI, and as a critical input to the Network's CFI mid-term review.
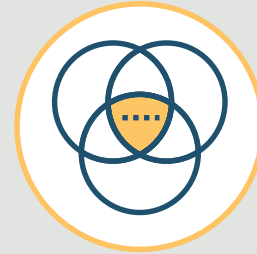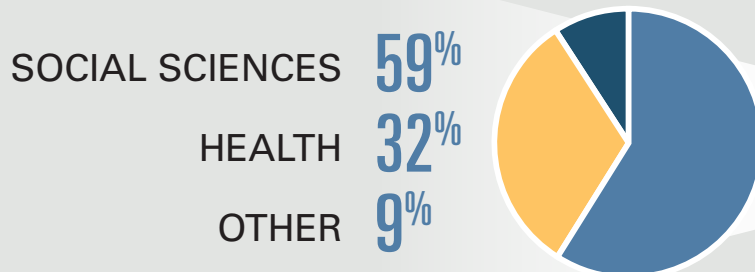
CRDCN: A Snapshot

RESEARCH COMMUNITY

1872
RESEARCHERS

1172
ESTABLISHED RESEARCHERS

700
EMERGING RESEARCHERS

92
POST DOC

330
PhD

212
MASTERS

66
UNDER GRAD

RESEARCH DISCIPLINES

SOCIAL SCIENCES **59%**

HEALTH **32%**

OTHER **9%**

CONTRIBUTIONS

Over the lifetime of the Network

944 ○ Graduates

4876 ○ Publications

2392 ○ Peer-reviewed articles

302 ○ Books and book chapters

541 ○ Reports to policy groups

DATA

575
DATA SETS

Vision, Mission and Value Proposition

VISION

To be Canada's national platform for leading edge research and training in the quantitative social and population health sciences, creating social, economic, health and environmental benefits for Canadians

MISSION

Enable quantitative researchers to address vital questions

Train the next generation of highly qualified personnel in social and population health sciences

Contribute to evidence-based policy and decision-making by facilitating access to relevant, timely and well-documented data supported by state of the art computing facilities

VALUE PROPOSITION

The CRDCN works in close partnership with each of its primary stakeholders to advance their respective missions, goals and priorities:

Working with researchers and students • To enable advanced quantitative research and training of the highest standard

Working with partner institutions • To advance their research and academic priorities and their knowledge mobilization initiatives

Working with Statistics Canada • To promote the use and application of its rich and growing repository of microdata

Working with end-users in the public, private and non-profit sectors • To produce strong and policy-relevant research evidence

Working with funding agencies • To meet their objectives of investing optimally in research and training initiatives for the benefit of Canada

Principles

In fulfilling its mission, the CRDCN is committed to the following principles:

EXCELLENCE:

The Network will enable research, training, knowledge mobilization and governance
of the highest international standard.

ACCESSIBILITY:

The Network will facilitate emerging and established researchers' reliable and
timely access to data, services and facilities.

CONFIDENTIALITY:

The Network will respect the confidentiality and security of all data and information made
available to CRDCN researchers, staff and volunteers.

COLLABORATION:

The Network will collaborate effectively with Statistics Canada and with partners in the public,
non-profit and private sectors to maximize the relevance and application of its research.

INNOVATION:

The Network will initiate and catalyze new approaches to data acquisition, data access and data use,
including through the creation of innovative programs of collaborative research.

SUSTAINABILITY:

The Network will pursue its mission in a manner that enables it to maintain and attract the resources
required to sustain and grow the capacity and performance of the Network.

ACCOUNTABILITY:

The Network will govern and manage its operations with integrity to ensure strong stewardship
of resources entrusted to the CRDCN and to maximize the cost-effectiveness and benefits
of the investments made by all of its partners.

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Strategic Objectives

As a national research platform, the Network's strategic objectives are ultimately designed to advance its mission in two complementary ways:

- to equip quantitative social science and health researchers to perform high quality research that advances the frontiers of knowledge; and
- to produce vital evidence that informs the development of public policy and decision-making.

In all respects, the work over the next five years will benefit from the increased analytical capacity afforded by the implementation of the Network's new high performance computing platform.

As the centrepiece of this plan its four strategic objectives capture:

- the core mandate of the Network, to train and enable researchers to access and analyse Canada's rich sources of microdata to advance research **(Objective 1)**;
- the proactive role of the Network as a nexus connecting researchers to one another and with end-users to promote the development of collaborative programs which inform priority areas of evidence based policy development **(Objective 2)**;
- the responsibility to ensure that the Network is governed and managed in ways that optimize its effectiveness as a national research platform **(Objective 3)**; and, stemming from the previous three objectives,
- the importance of demonstrating the impact of the research enabled by the Network and of playing a leadership role in Canada's research data ecosystem **(Objective 4)**.

Objective 1: FACILITATE DATA ACCESS AND TRAINING

1

Since 2000, the CRDCN has enabled world-class research and is recognized nationally and internationally as a leading network for advanced statistical analysis in the social and health sciences. The Network is currently the nexus for more than 1800 research trainees and established researchers who analyse the rich and growing suite of Statistics Canada microdata files to advance the frontiers of research and inform critical policy issues in Canada and beyond. Over the next five years, the Network will build on this record of success by providing researchers with easier and more seamless access to an expanding and increasingly diverse array of data sets. This will include both more administrative data files from federal, provincial and private sector sources and more integrated datasets.

In this new world where there will be more linked, longitudinal, administrative data and big data, the Network will have an increasingly important national role as catalyst of innovative research methodologies and as a platform for experimentation with new techniques and new approaches to data analysis. This expansion will occur in parallel with a major increase in analytical capacity as the Network implements its high performance computing platform in partnership with Compute Canada, Statistics Canada and funding partners. As such, the Network is also poised to be on the frontiers of the development of new data building and data collection platforms.

These developments will position the Network to substantially grow its base of researchers and its research outputs. This growth will be further enabled by the implementation of Statistics Canada's modernization initiative which includes introducing remote access to data while ensuring that security and confidentiality requirements are safeguarded. The Network is committed to leveraging the new possibilities that both its high performance computing platform and Statistics Canada's modernization initiative afford to expand access, including to under-served communities.

Coupled with this expansion in data access is the priority of ensuring that training is in place to equip the current and next generation of researchers with the technical and analytical skills required to take maximum advantage of the Network's enhanced capacity and be market-ready for new job opportunities. This involves harnessing current best practices across the Network, creating new training modules as necessary, and using efficient and widely accessible delivery models. The Network will seek to create communities of practice to harness the skills and knowledge of established CRDCN researchers, curate new data sets, enhance documentation, develop discipline-specific research aids, and support the mentorship of the next generation of HQP through course offerings and by other means.

The Network will also endeavour to make its services as easily and as directly accessible as possible to engage a diverse range of researchers and policy experts where they live and work. In so doing, the Network will engage a broader community of stakeholders across disciplines, sectors, geography and gender, being especially mindful of the opportunities emerging through developments in the data sciences. Current course offerings could be broadened to include data science, privacy and ethics, engagement with Indigenous data and data matching, among other possibilities. By 2024, the Network seeks to be a highly skilled and innovative facilitator of, and a sophisticated and integrated platform for, data access and training.

Objective 1: FACILITATE DATA ACCESS AND TRAINING

To achieve this objective, CRDCN will:	Measures of success by 2024:
Facilitate access to new data including administrative and integrated data, enabling leading-edge self-directed and policy-oriented research	Add at least 125 new data files
Catalyze new means of access including high performance computing and remote access	Implement fully the Network's high performance computing platform
Expand data access to the Network across the country	Expand data access to three communities that do not currently have access to a local facility
Train the next generation of highly qualified personnel using best practices in program delivery	Increase the number of research trainees using Network sites by 20% (based on the 2018 baseline)
Reduce the barriers to using the data through better documentation and the creation of communities of practice	Create five communities of practice

2 Objective 2: CONNECT RESEARCHERS AND END USERS

CRDCN is steadfastly committed to promoting and supporting the application of the new knowledge emanating from its research. Over the next five years, the Network will seize the opportunity created by the growing interest in evidence informed decision-making and co-creation of policy solutions, to broker connections between CRDCN researchers and partners across all sectors. The Network will facilitate greater frequency and efficacy of these partnerships, through the pursuit of joint data acquisition strategies, collaborative programs of research, and innovative means of mobilizing knowledge across sectors and disciplines.

The Network's collaborative research programs will focus primarily on four strategic areas: income and employment; immigration and settlement; education and social development; and population health and health services. The Network will address strategic foci which cross-cut the four areas. Examples include: productivity of the Canadian economy; economic, social and health inequalities; health and well-being of Indigenous communities; and issues of gender and the family.

The research programs will involve teams of researchers and end-users providing the combination of interdisciplinary and sectoral expertise required to address the complexity of policy relevant research issues. The teams will have expertise in knowing how best to manage, mine and analyse the data to maximize their value both to advance research and inform policy development. The studies will be designed, conducted and applied so as to contribute both to the scientific body of knowledge and to domestic and global policy contexts. As feasible and appropriate, one or more of these teams will seek to pilot an initiative that would include international researchers and/or end users.

The Network will develop and implement a knowledge mobilization strategy informed by best practice in Canada and internationally. This will underpin expansion of the Network's programs to engage a broader set of end-user organizations in the non-profit and private sectors and municipal and regional governments, while continuing to build upon the strong partnerships already established with federal and provincial government departments and ministries. The Network will also seek to expand the inventory of services that it offers to end users, including exploring the feasibility of offering a data valet service and piloting new tools to facilitate collaboration across local sites and among researchers and end users. The aim will be to increase the relevance and impact of the Network's programs while also making available new data sources that will broaden and enrich the scope of the research. This will in turn create exciting opportunities for a new cadre of researchers to become active participants in the Network.

A deliberate effort will be made to engage graduate students and other early career researchers, thereby enabling them to gain policy related experience to inform their subsequent research and enhance their career opportunities. This experience will come in the form of direct engagement with partner organizations, support to participate in CRDCN sponsored events, and competitions to encourage innovation among the next generation of data scientists, such as the CRDCN National Policy Challenge.

CRDCN's ability to achieve these aims will depend, in part, on the willingness of provincial and federal governments as well as other data providers to share their data and on Statistics Canada's ability to link data from across the spectrum. This opportunity presents one of the most exciting developments in many years for the pursuit of policy relevant research in Canada. By 2024, the Network seeks to be recognized nationally as a go-to organization that is uniquely positioned to broker relationships among researchers, policy-makers and other end-users for the use of microdata to address issues of major importance to Canadians.

Objective 2: CONNECT RESEARCHERS AND END USERS

To achieve this objective, CRDCN will:	Measures of success by 2024:
Broker data acquisition partnerships with federal and provincial government departments and/or other data providers	Sign five new partnership agreements with federal and provincial government departments and/or other data providers to make new or integrated data available
Create programs of collaborative research and catalyze interdisciplinary research teams	Catalyze five CRDCN facilitated programs of collaborative research with associated research teams, including at least one that involves international researchers, if feasible
Generate opportunities for research trainees to develop policy-relevant skills and gain experience working with government and other partners	Offer ten research trainees CRDCN enabled stipends to pursue policy relevant research in collaboration with federal or government departments or other partners
Adopt best practices to mobilize the research results for the benefit of Canadians	Organize ten regional or national events including five national CRDCN annual conferences to mobilize CRDCN research across sectors

3 Objective 3: OPTIMIZE NETWORK PERFORMANCE

The Network places high priority on optimizing the effectiveness and efficiency of its operations and performance. In April 2017, the Network evolved its governance structure and established a Board of Directors comprised of senior leaders from the academic, government, non-profit, and private sectors. The Board is supported in its governance role by four standing committees: an Executive Committee, a Governance and Human Resources Committee, a Finance Committee and a Joint Operations Committee. The Network also created a new Academic Council that regroups Academic Directors of the research data sites across the country, provides a forum for peer-to-peer networking and mentorship, and serves as a principal advisory body to the Board.

The Board and the Academic Council will continue to evolve over the coming five years to meet the emerging needs of the Network and to ensure the sound and effective function of these governing and advisory bodies. They will continue to provide a critical combination of due diligence and wise counsel to guide the strategic plans and operational performance of the Network and to support the Executive Director (ED) and the senior management team in the exercise of their roles and responsibilities. The Board and Academic Council will also look to further codify and routinely assess the policies and procedures which govern their roles, responsibilities and interactions.

The Network plans to expand its central management team commensurate with the enlarged scope and requirements of its mandate as a national research platform and major science initiative. Subject to budget, the initial intent is to strengthen the central staff team in both finance and operations and communications. Both of these areas are seen by the Board and the ED as necessary strategic investments to increase management capacity and enhance network performance. Moreover, the Network will implement its ED and Research Program Director succession plans when needed to ensure seamless transitions in these two critical senior management roles.

In consultation with the Board and Academic Council, the Network will also undertake a comprehensive review of its financial arrangements to ensure the most effective use of the investments made by its principal funding agencies and partner institutions. This review will include discussions with Statistics Canada regarding the financial sustainability of the current cost recovery model and will take account of the effects of implementing the Network's high performance computing platform.It will include an assessment of the current distributive funding allocation model to partner institutions and the deployment of funds between local facilities and the national office. A primary objective of the review will be to stabilize costs, while facilitating growth, and to identify feasible opportunities to generate revenue that will expand the range of services provided by the Network.

Closely linked to Objective 1, the Network will work in partnership with Statistics Canada to identify and test new models and means of expediting and expanding on-site and remote data access for its user communities. This initiative will be undertaken in concert with Statistics Canada's modernization initiative and the opportunities created by the Network's high performance computing platform. It will give due consideration to risk sharing between Statistics Canada and the Network's partner institutions.

Also in partnership with Statistics Canada, the Network will assess the human capital, competencies and resources required to optimize Network performance in the local facilities over the next five years. This will determine the most effective, feasible and efficient sharing of responsibilities between Statistics Canada and university personnel, and, in so doing, ensure that local capacity is commensurate with projected growth in service demand. In parallel, the Network's central staff will work with partner institutions to strengthen the roles of and support for the Academic Directors.

In sum, this objective commits the Network to a comprehensive review of key aspects of its financial, human resource and operational functions as key to achieving optimal performance over the next five years.

Objective 3: OPTIMIZE NETWORK PERFORMANCE

To achieve this objective, CRDCN will:	Measures of success by 2024:
Facilitate alignment between CRDCN objectives and Statistics Canada's modernization initiative	Become an essential partner for the implementation of one or more elements of Statistics Canada's modernization initiative
In consultation with Statistics Canada, leverage human resources to fully exploit the scientific and technical capacities of the Network	Align CRDCN and Statistics Canada human resources plans for optimal deployment of CRDCN central staff, Academic Directors and Statistics Canada staff
Secure federal, provincial and institutional financial resources to sustain the Network's operations	Secure funding to sustain the Network's operations for 2021-22 through 2025-26, including revised cost and revenue-sharing arrangements
Adopt and implement best practices in governance and management	Maintain and enhance recognition by core funders of CRDCN as a leader in MSI governance and management practices

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Objective 4: HEIGHTEN THE NETWORK'S IMPACT AND PROFILE

CRDCN combines curatorial leadership of a distributed national research facility and an increasingly centralized data infrastructure platform with cross-sectoral and cross-disciplinary facilitation of researcher and end user engagement. In seeking to enhance its impact, the Network must maintain a balance between self-directed and policy-oriented research and between fulfilling the aspirations of the research community and reaching out to end users to ensure that their policy needs are met. Through it all, the Network must protect the integrity and the rigour of the research as the Network's foundational asset.

Despite its significant accomplishments over the last two decades, knowledge of the Network and its impact has been primarily limited to those researchers, partners and end users who are directly engaged in its operations and activities. Moreover, the nature of most CRDCN researchers' engagement has been transactional, as individual users of a local research data site rather than as contributors to a national Network. Over the next five years, there is a significant opportunity to strengthen the bonds of engagement among CRDCN researchers, both locally and nationally, to enhance the Network's overall impact. The Network is committed to deeper, broader and more sustained engagement with the community of researchers who leverage the Network's data offerings and related services to pursue their research and make contributions to Canada and the world.

CRDCN will increase researchers' direct involvement in the Network by engaging them more intentionally in national offerings, such as: the CRDCN's National Conference which will evolve to be a high profile national event; and the programs of collaborative research which will increase available research funding and facilitate enhanced participation across geography, sectors and disciplines. The Network will also work closely with Academic Directors to create local communities of practice and learning from which a sense of being part of a national Network can flourish. These efforts, together with the nurturing of the first five-year cohort of Emerging Scholars grantees, will lay the foundation for CRDCN research champions across the country.

In parallel with these efforts to raise CRDCN's profile among the primary users of its services, the Network will strengthen its presence among both beneficiaries of its services and a wide array of potential partners. The Network will enhance its website and other communication mechanisms, create and implement an external stakeholders' communication plan, and more strategically and intentionally engage in the Canadian and international research ecosystem. Where feasible and appropriate, the Network will seek to have its voice heard in public debates about such issues as data gaps, data security, data sharing and data governance. The Network will also seek to sustain and enhance its connections with senior academic leaders to further align its research agenda and knowledge mobilization efforts with those of partner institutions.

CRDCN's Board will guide and support central management staff's efforts to meet and exceed targets set as part of the organization's key performance indicators, expand the mechanisms to track the Network's outcomes, and reduce reputational and other risks which could undermine the Network's overall success. By 2024, the Network will be the go-to organization for both the research community and end users, have effective mechanisms in place to sustain their engagement, and be well positioned to track and enhance its impact.

Objective 4: HEIGHTEN THE NETWORK'S IMPACT AND PROFILE

To achieve this objective, CRDCN will:	Measures of success by 2024:
Enable nationally and internationally recognized social science and health research	Increase the number of CRDCN enabled research publications cited in high impact national and international journals by 10% over the 2018 baseline
Create a culture of engagement among CRDCN researchers both locally and nationally	Engage more than 1000 CRDCN researchers in at least one local research data site or CRDCN sponsored event
Facilitate alignment between CRDCN objectives and those of partner institutions	Achieve recognition and promotion of the CRDCN by partner institutions and provincial governments
Raise the profile of CRDCN in the national and international research ecosystem	Strengthen relationships between CRDCN and 10 strategically aligned national or international organizations
Strengthen communications with internal and external stakeholders	Implement well-functioning integrated internal and external communications including a restructured website

Key Outcomes Sought

As part of the strategic plan consultations, stakeholders were asked what would signal the Network's success in 2024. The aspirations expressed were suitably ambitious, yet attainable. They guided the Board, Academic Council and central staff in determining the plan's strategic objectives and measures of success. Together, they offer a compelling vision of the future state of the Network while recognizing that its outcomes and impact ultimately depend, at least in part, on external factors and drivers of change within Canada's research data ecosystem as a whole.

WHEN THE NETWORK HAS FULLY ADDRESSED ITS STRATEGIC OBJECTIVES:

- ⭐ CRDCN enabled research will be recognized nationally and internationally
- ⭐ CRDCN supported early career researchers will be recognized as rising stars in social science and health research in Canada and internationally
- ⭐ CRDCN research trainees will have developed the quantitative skills and have acquired the policy-relevant experience to contribute effectively to all sectors of society
- ⭐ CRDCN researchers will be well-connected and well-positioned to learn from and support one another in their research and policy engagement
- ⭐ CRDCN will be a go-to-organization to connect the research, data and policy communities in Canada
- ⭐ CRDCN will be a well-established catalyst of collaborative programs of research on issues of vital importance to Canadians
- ⭐ CRDCN will be recognized as a critical element of data infrastructure by federal and provincial governments and other end users
- ⭐ CRDCN will have secured the resources required to maintain and enhance its facilities and services as a national Network
- ⭐ CRDCN will be recognized nationally for the quality of its Board, its Academic Council and its central management team
- ⭐ CRDCN will be a flagship example of the value of investing in social science and health research in Canada

2019 2024

Implementing The Plan

The successful implementation of the 2019-2024 Strategic Plan hinges on a strong alignment of CRDCN human and financial resources together with those of our partner institutions and Statistics Canada with the four strategic objectives that are detailed in the plan. As with all organizations that seek to move in new directions, CRDCN will need to make choices in balancing its current commitments while making room for new initiatives. CRDCN will also need to determine the limits of its current funding levels to pursue new opportunities as they emerge.

In keeping with the emphasis in this plan on the Network as a physical network, a community network and an institutional network, CRDCN will leverage the strengths of its newly implemented high performance computing platform, its emerging programs of collaborative research and enhanced training offerings, and its strengthened ties to Academic Directors and the senior administration of partner institutions. CRDCN will also continue to nurture the vital relationships with Statistics Canada, with its core federal and provincial funding partners, and with McMaster University as the host institution for the Network. Indeed, nurturing relationships with all key stakeholders will be central to CRDCN's ongoing success and will necessitate sustained and well-executed internal and external communications.

To these ends, over the last two years under the direction of its Board, CRDCN has implemented governance and management processes to ensure alignment of its strategic objectives and operational plans and priorities. Each year, the Board approves the Executive Director's annual strategic objectives at the same time as it evaluates the past year's achievements. The Executive Director then ensures alignment of these Board informed objectives with the annual operating plans, which in turn are well aligned with the expectations and key performance indicators of our federal funding agencies. The Board and Academic Council are regularly invited to monitor progress, alongside central staff, and to identify risks to be mitigated, course corrections that are needed, and the means to pursue new opportunities as they arise. These processes create a virtuous circle of planning and execution such that the 2019-2024 Strategic Plan will be a living document over the five-year term.

Thanks to the steadfast commitment of Statistics Canada, core federal and provincial funders, partner institutions and Academic Directors, the Network has achieved a great deal on multiple fronts over the past 18 years.

Fuelled by this new Strategic Plan, CRDCN is now poised to heighten its profile in the national and international research landscape and become a showcase for successful multi-sector collaboration as the Network continues to facilitate robust and relevant research and public policy development in the social and health sciences.

CRDCN'S Core Partners

FEDERAL PARTNERS

Canada Foundation for Innovation (CFI)
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