

Advisory Committee on the Discovery Program Budget Allocation

Terms of Reference and Membership

Overview

NSERC is reviewing its approach to allocating funding for discovery research across the natural sciences and engineering disciplines. By periodically examining the allocation of funds among disciplines and across program elements, NSERC aims to ensure that its programs remain responsive to changes in the research landscape, both in Canada and globally, and that funds are used optimally.

An international Advisory Committee will provide advice and recommendations to NSERC on the principles by which new discovery research funding should be allocated. Building upon guidance received from the Council of Canadian Academies in 2012 ([*Informing Research Choices: Indicators and Judgment*](#)), the Committee will examine research trends and indicators of research capacity, research quality, and the impact of research training. NSERC will assemble the data and produce reports, and discipline communities will have an opportunity to provide context for interpretation of the trends and indicators.

Membership

Advisory Committee members were selected for their broad perspective and significant experience with strategic planning, disciplinary reviews, research assessment, and integrated approaches to research. They are not participating as subject matter experts to represent or advocate for specific disciplines. Rather, they will apply their broad knowledge and expertise to provide advice on behalf of the Canadian natural sciences and engineering research community as a whole.

Committee Members

Dr. Mary Anne White (Chair)	Dalhousie University
Dr. Rita Colwell	University of Maryland
Dr. Charmaine Dean	Western University
Dr. Donald Dingwell	Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München
Dr. Alexandra Medina-Borja	National Science Foundation
Dr. Dwayne Miller	Max Planck Institute for the Structure and Dynamics of Matter
Dr. Maurice Moloney	University of Saskatchewan
Prof. Denis Thérien	Canadian Institute for Advanced Research; McGill University
Professor Sir William Wakeham	Royal Academy of Engineering, UK

Mandate

The Committee will advise NSERC on the principles to be used in guiding allocation decisions, with a focus on future increases in discovery research funding. The Committee will validate and interpret metrics and trends, and will consider how the allocation of funding could evolve over the next five years. Questions to be considered include:

- Which areas of research demonstrate the highest levels of research quality (areas of existing strength)?
- Which areas of research demonstrate potential strength or can be considered areas of emerging opportunity?
- How are trends in discipline dynamics and the evolving research landscape affecting access to funding? Do any of the metrics and trends provide a compelling case for adjusting NSERC's approach to funding allocations?
- How should factors such as the cost of research and the availability of funding from diverse sources be accounted for in the allocation of funding?
- Are there anomalies in the funding levels to disciplines that can be attributed to the current methodology or trends in applicant numbers? How should any anomalies be addressed?
- Is the Discovery Grants Program well aligned with complementary funding envelopes, such as the Discovery Accelerator Supplements, the Discovery Development Grants, and the envelopes for Sub-Atomic Physics and Mathematics & Statistics?
- Can discovery research investment mechanisms be enhanced to maximize support for bold, high-impact and interdisciplinary research?

The results of the review will be made public. NSERC will implement any changes to budget allocations based on the advice of the Advisory Committee and in consultation with the Standing Committee on Grants and Scholarships (COGS).

Last updated: April 2016