



NDRIO

New Digital
Research Infrastructure
Organization

NOIRN

Nouvelle organisation
d'infrastructure de
recherche numérique

Final Researcher Council Governance Model

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[EngageDRI.ca](https://engageDRI.ca)

I. Introduction

The New Digital Research Infrastructure Organization (NDRIO) is a national not-for-profit membership-based organization helping to advance the establishment of a researcher-focused, accountable, agile, strategic and sustainable Digital Research Infrastructure (DRI) ecosystem for Canadian researchers.

Established in 2019, NDRIO works with other DRI ecosystem partners and stakeholders across the country to help provide Canadian scholars and scientists with the digital tools, support, services and infrastructure they need to conduct leading-edge research, innovation and advancement across all disciplines.

NDRIO's mandate is critical to all of Canada's academic researchers, our country's ability to remain globally competitive, and our collective ability to benefit society as a whole.

The Government of Canada, through Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada (ISED), has set aside up to \$375M over five years to establish NDRIO. This is part of the federal government's broader five-year commitment of \$572.5M to develop a national Digital Research Infrastructure Strategy.

The Researcher Council is a critical component of NDRIO's commitment to establish a culture of service to, and engagement with, researchers as it designs a new service model for the delivery of Digital Research Infrastructure across Canada.

NDRIO will coordinate and fund activities in advanced research computing (ARC), data management (DM) and research software (RS), working collaboratively with all stakeholders across Canada.

Membership is not required to access the programs of NDRIO, which will be made available to eligible researchers and research institutions across Canada. NDRIO's By-Laws provide Primary Members (Voting) with the opportunity to nominate candidates to the Researcher Council, with overall membership approved by the NDRIO Board of Directors.

In June 2020, NDRIO announced the creation of an interim Researcher Advisory Group to lead the next steps in the formation of a permanent Researcher Council by the September 2020 NDRIO (11593765 Canada Association) Annual General Meeting. The Researcher Advisory Group consulted with NDRIO members, Canada's academic researchers, and others in the DRI community to:

- Develop and propose the governance model for a permanent Researcher Council;
- Launch the Researcher Council recruitment process;

- Assess and recommend candidates for the inaugural Researcher Council to the Board for final approval, and;
- Initiate the Researcher Needs Assessment process.

The Researcher Advisory Group developed the Researcher Council Governance Model Consultation Paper to solicit input of the researcher community. The [Researcher Council Governance Model Consultation Paper](#) was posted for stakeholder input from June 30 to July 10, 2020. As part of the consultation, the Researcher Advisory Group held two webinars: an English webinar held on July 7, 2020 and a French webinar held on July 9, 2020.

Over 110 stakeholders attended the webinars, of whom 80 participants attended the English webinar and 30 participants attended the French webinar. In addition, 25 stakeholders provided written submissions. Consultation participants were located across Canada and represented a diversity of research disciplines and a wide range of institutions.

This document includes key findings of the consultations and the Final Researcher Governance Model, which is based on the consultation feedback.

II. Consultation Findings

Overall, stakeholders were supportive of the Researcher Council governance model as set out in the consultation paper. Most of the feedback focused on providing more detail on how the Researcher Council will operate and connect with the Board of Directors, NDRIO management and the researcher community.

What We Heard About the Role of Researcher Council

Stakeholders proposed that the Researcher Council advise the NDRIO Board on Canada's strategic digital research orientation. Stakeholders also wanted to better understand the link between the Researcher Council's role of assessing research needs and how NDRIO undertakes DRI funding allocations.

A key message was the need for the Researcher Council to build strong connections with the research community in order to fulfil its mandate. Some practical approaches to building a strong research network were proposed as follows:

- form a network of contacts at each institution;
- hold virtual meetings to help members of the research community understand NDRIO's offerings;

- hold outreach webinars to promote the network, collect information about the community's needs, and present reports and accomplishments that respond to the needs of researchers;
- Survey researchers on an annual basis.

What We Heard About the Governance and Operations of the Researcher Council

Stakeholders provided comments about the need to establish mechanisms that would provide for a strong relationship between the Researcher Council and the NDRIO Board of Directors, including holding joint Board/Council meetings. Stakeholders also felt that the linkage between the Researcher Council and the NDRIO Board could be strengthened by having the Researcher Chair sit on the NDRIO Board as a full member with voting privileges.

Feedback indicated that accountability and transparency should be an important element of the operations of the Researcher Council. To that end, it was recommended that the Researcher Council publish an annual report that reflects the work of the Researcher Council including researcher needs as articulated by the Council, recommendations and implementation of recommendations.

Several stakeholders highlighted that the success of the Researcher Council will depend on the support that it receives from a dedicated management team. The establishment of targeted expert working groups to address specific specialized technical issues was seen as an important support for the Researcher Council.

NDRIO Primary Member (Voting) institutions have the opportunity to nominate candidates to the Researcher Council, subject to approval by the Board, per the NDRIO By-Laws. In addition to nominations as above, an open call for applications was also launched in summer 2020. Respondents to the consultation found the two-tiered recruitment process confusing and requested that future recruitment only take place through an open call to ensure a diversity of researcher representation on the Researcher Council.

It was suggested that staggered terms of up to three years was appropriate, but that Researcher Council members should be limited to two terms to maintain an ongoing fresh perspective.

What We Heard About the Size and Composition of the Researcher Council

Stakeholders requested clarification on eligibility of Researcher Council membership, including the role of the private sector, large sciences organizations, and non-faculty technical staff.

There was significant stakeholder support for a diversity of researcher representation on the Researcher Council to ensure a true representation by region, institution, language, career stage and EDI considerations. It was suggested that Council members should also have DRI expertise in the three DRI domains of ARC, RS and DM.

A 20-to-25-member Researcher Council was felt to be an appropriate size to fulfil the mandate. It was also recognized that the Council will have the support of technical and expert working groups.

III. Final Researcher Council Governance Model

This governance model for the Researcher Council is finalized based on the consultation feedback.

Role of the Researcher Council

The Researcher Council will make recommendations to the NDRIO Board of Directors on researcher Digital Research Infrastructure needs and work with NDRIO management at the operational level to develop a researcher needs assessment. The researcher needs assessment will ensure that researcher needs inform strategic plans, activities and work planning. The researcher needs assessment will not only indicate researcher needs, but will also provide the current and future context for those identified needs.

Members of the Researcher Council will represent the interests of *all* researchers, not just the individual disciplines. The Researcher Council is a critical component of NDRIO's commitment to involve the research community as it designs a new service delivery model supporting Canada's new Digital Research Infrastructure (DRI) Strategy.

The Researcher Council will help assess the DRI landscape, summarize the research community's DRI needs, and assist in NDRIO developing a strategic vision for the community. The Researcher Council will not make operational funding decisions on the allocation of DRI services and infrastructure.

Specifically, the Researcher Council will:

- Ensure that a diversity of researcher voices is represented to the NDRIO Board, providing strategic advice to the Board on researcher needs.
- Work with NDRIO management at the operational level to develop a researcher needs assessment to ensure that researchers' priority needs inform strategic plans, activities and work planning. The researcher needs assessment will not only indicate researcher needs, but also provide the current and future context along with foresight for those identified needs.

- Develop processes to engage researchers across disciplines to identify, synthesize and validate current and future priorities. Identification of needs includes prioritization of those needs in situations of limited resources. The Researcher Council will undertake research community outreach activities to better understand national DRI needs.
- Establish a culture of service to, and engagement with, researchers.

The Council will make recommendations on the types of expertise required that can be drawn from a variety of sources including members, stakeholders, NDRIO staff and experts. The Researcher Council will work closely with staff to ensure that its recommendations are viable and reflective of the diverse needs of the research community.

The Researcher Council will serve as an ambassador for NDRIO by undertaking outreach activities with the research community to communicate NDRIO offerings, meet with researchers to ascertain researcher needs and articulate the work of the Researcher Council.

To that end, the Researcher Council will publish an annual report for the research community on its activities to ensure transparency and accountability. The report will, among other things, indicate the outreach efforts undertaken by the Researcher Council to better understand the range of researcher needs, the feedback from the researcher community and the impact of this feedback on the Researcher Council recommendations to NDRIO's Board of Directors.

The Researcher Council recognizes the importance of nurturing young researchers and students. NDRIO will investigate opportunities to promote and encourage young researchers and students in the work of the Researcher Council.

Governance and Operations of the Researcher Council

The Researcher Council will elect a Chair from within its membership who has been approved by the Board. To strengthen the linkage between the Researcher Council and the NDRIO Board, the inaugural Researcher Council will work with NDRIO to explore options including the option of the Chair as a voting member of the Board.

To help deliver on its mandate, the Researcher Council will be well supported by dedicated resources, including the NDRIO management team and staff, sector experts, specialized sub-committees and working groups that will be established as necessary. This will equip the Researcher Council with the support and expertise that it needs to help translate researcher needs into programs, services and infrastructure.

Researcher Council members will serve terms of up to three years with a maximum of two terms. To ensure continuity of Council membership, terms will be staggered and determined by the Chair. The Researcher Council will operate with a consensus approach to synthesize researcher needs. Special care will be taken to ensure that it represents the diversity of the Canadian researchers.

Eligibility for DRI services and programs is available to researchers at publicly funded academic research institutions across Canada. These DRI programs are funded through the Government of Canada's national DRI Strategy and are focused on academic research.

All members of the Researcher Council will sign a code of conduct and adhere to strict confidentiality guidelines.

Composition, Size and Recruitment for the Researcher Council

The Researcher Council will be composed of 15-to-25 members to ensure efficient operations and to reflect the diversity of representation of researchers across Canada.

The NDRIO Board is responsible for recruitment of the Researcher Council.

All qualified candidates will be considered for the Researcher Council. Candidates can apply directly through an open call application process or may be nominated by NDRIO's Primary Members. This will ensure a diverse pool of candidates for Researcher Council vacancies. Vacancies will be posted on the NDRIO website and selection will follow a comprehensive and transparent process.

Researcher Council members have Digital Research Infrastructure experience and can address and negotiate competing DRI interests, demonstrate strategic thinking and vision, and communicate effectively with the research community as well as other stakeholders.

Researcher Council members are faculty researchers from post-secondary institutions, research hospitals and/or affiliated institutes that are eligible for Tri-Council grants. Non-faculty professionals, including technical staff, may participate in expert working groups that will support the work of the Researcher Council.

The Researcher Council will represent the diversity of the national research enterprise including research discipline, institution, geographic and linguistic diversity, and diversity between established and emerging researchers. NDRIO is committed to the principles of Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI).

The Researcher Council does not include representation from large science and other DRI organizations.

These organizations have an active role in helping to shape the Researcher Council findings and recommendations. The Researcher Council may seek to establish specialized committees and/or working groups with expertise from these organizations to provide expert advice on specific technical areas.