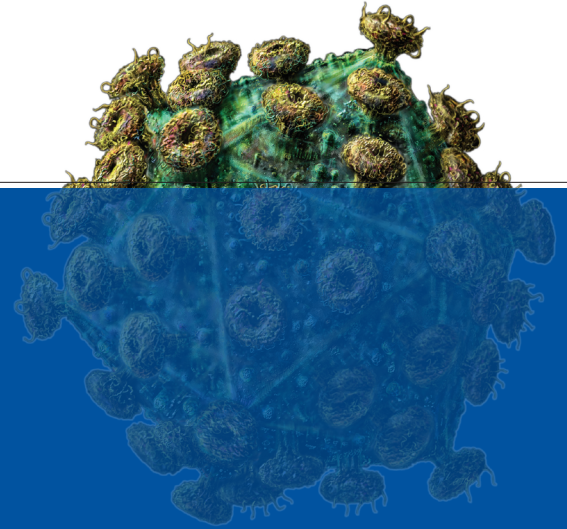




Canadian Association for
HIV Research

Strategic Plan 2014-2019





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Where are we now?

What is CAHR?

Founded in 1991, the Canadian Association for HIV Research (CAHR) represents and brings together more than 2000 HIV researchers and stakeholders across Canada. Best known for organizing the *Annual Canadian Conference on HIV/AIDS Research*, CAHR promotes excellence in HIV research in a variety of additional ways, including support of training, and development of key resources to help Canadian researchers respond more effectively to the HIV/AIDS challenge. CAHR uniquely represents the full diversity of our research community, active in all disciplines, themes, sectors and regions of Canada.

CAHR membership is open to all who are involved in or interested in HIV research in Canada, and includes researchers and trainees in academia, community, industry and government; as well as policy makers, service providers, community members and other stakeholders from across those sectors.

What does CAHR do?

Whether through educational workshop series, funding opportunities for young researchers, developing policy/ research papers, or its annual research conference, CAHR works to provide value to its membership.

All its activities target CAHR's core tracks, that is:

1. Clinical Sciences
2. Social Sciences
3. Basic Sciences
4. Epidemiology and Public Health Sciences

ANNUAL CONFERENCE

Every year, the *Canadian Conference on HIV/AIDS Research* is the place to be for researchers, frontline public health and community-based workers, people living with HIV and AIDS and others interested in the field of HIV research. Now in its 25th year, Conference participants continue to evaluate the Conference very highly, and over 75% intend to return next year. CAHR provides a retrospective of major sessions on its website, and an overview of the event is published as a supplement in the *Canadian Journal of Infectious Diseases & Medical Microbiology*.

AWARDS AND RECOGNITION

Each year, a Canadian leader is selected to open the Annual Conference with the **Mark Wainberg Lecture**. Initiated in 2001 to honor Mark Wainberg - the “voice fighting AIDS publicly since the earliest days” – the award recognizes those who exemplify the same traits of excellence, perseverance, and commitment to finding innovative and ground breaking ways to address the epidemic.



The final act of the Annual Conference is the presentation of the annual **Red Ribbon Award**, also established in 2001, to recognize outstanding service to the cause of research in a way that has increased our understanding of the treatment and prevention of HIV/AIDS, while enhancing the quality of life of those living with this disease.

PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOPS AND RESOURCES

CAHR fosters the development of HIV/AIDS research careers through a growing series of workshops which focus on all four CAHR “tracks”. The heart of these activities has been CAHR **New Researcher Workshop**, building on the CIHR model and addressing the specific needs of up and coming HIV/AIDS researchers. Participants have a unique opportunity to connect with their peers, as well as spend much of the meeting getting to know a range of mentors and leading scientists. Practical skills development includes grant and paper writing, mock peer review, communicating with the media, and effective presentation techniques. Responding to both demand and evaluation results, CAHR worked with partners, including the Canadian HIV Vaccine Initiative Research and Development Alliance Coordinating Office (ACO) in 2013, to double workshop availability, now twice a year.



CAHR is also expanding its range of workshops and resources responding to other needs expressed by its members. For example, in 2013 it held a series of **Community-Based Research (CBR) Workshops** intended to enable AIDS service organizations to develop the skills necessary for community-based research. In partnership with the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) and the Ontario HIV Treatment Network (OHTN), CAHR supported the development of an **online CBR learning practicum** which builds skills and is conducive for training in remote locations. CAHR also provides links to key CBR resources on its website.



CAHR held the first ever **mid-career researcher workshop**. CAHR is also addressing other needs and opportunities: for example, practical skills in data collection in the field, from ethics requirements to obtaining robust data under challenging circumstances.

TRAINING AWARDS

To promote education and development of new researchers, CAHR provides salary awards to young research trainees. These awards aim to recognize and fund academic researchers early in their career, as well as provide a reliable supply of highly-skilled and qualified researchers.

In conjunction with partners including the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) and individual pharmaceutical companies, CAHR has been providing four Masters awards and four Doctoral awards annually, one in each of its research tracks: Basic Science; Clinical Science; Social Science; and Epidemiology/Public Health.



MEMBER RESOURCES

CAHR is developing a growing range of tools and resources for its members, including **quarterly e-bulletins**, key information and links on its **website**, and expanded communication via social media, including Twitter, Facebook and a YouTube channel.

In partnership with CIHR and the Canadian HIV Vaccine Initiative Research and Development Alliance Coordinating Office (ACO), CAHR has developed an **online inventory of funded Canadian HIV research**. This searchable database includes currently funded and historical research, publications, presentations, trademarks and patents.

CAHR also undertakes policy analysis and development to address critical needs of the research community. For example, in 2013 it brought together a wide range of Canadian HIV/AIDS research funders to support a “funding landscape” study, with the goal to identify research training outcomes and the best ways to support the development of Canada’s HIV/AIDS research capacity in the future. In 2008, CAHR produced an **ethics guideline** for Canadians conducting research in developing countries.

Situation Analysis

KEY SUCCESSES AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

Although a long-established organization, CAHR has recently significantly expanded its impacts, breadth, and scope of activities. CAHR now has dedicated full-time staff, and has invested heavily in formalizing and strengthening its governance and accountability structures, policies, and operating procedures. It has deepened key partnerships and continues to strengthen and formalize a range of collaborations. CAHR now welcomes and supports the full range of research interests across its four tracks and in all regions, large and small, across Canada, and has particularly increased participation of community-based researchers. Finally, CAHR is built on solid financial footing, with predictable and growing revenues and a substantial expanding reserve which can support future, larger investments.

Among its activities, CAHR’s annual conference is a “can’t miss event” for HIV stakeholders, and a focal point for many related events. Bringing together the full breadth of Canada’s research stakeholders, the event provides a prominent platform for HIV/AIDS research and issues in Canada, and gives Canada greater visibility and clout on the global scene. For participants, it is a unique networking opportunity, and is especially valued for the way it supports smaller-group brainstorming and problem-solving.

Evaluations of CAHR’s workshops are consistently high, demand continues to grow, and interest in expanding topics as well as types of participants is strong. Combined with the successful expansion of the “New Researcher Workshop” model to include community-based research and mid-career researchers, CAHR fills a major gap unaddressed by other funders. In addition, by working with partners, CAHR has now been able to expand its training support to eight new awards per year.



CAHR STRENGTHS

- 2,000 CAHR members, pool of “graduate” trainees
- Strengthened governance, operations, finances
- Action-oriented, independent, engaged Council
- National, active in all regions and disciplines
- Growing reserve fund (~\$1.5M)
- Seminal annual conference, expanding set of workshops and training awards
- Good partnerships and relationships

CAHR WEAKNESSES

- Lack of visibility
- Limited member engagement, ownership
- Low diversity of funding sources; sustainability
- Balancing depth vs. relevance to all four tracks
- Will need strong, transparent decision-making processes to invest within specific tracks
- High Council workload
- Limited francophone Quebec involvement

THREATS ACROSS THE HIV ENVIRONMENT

- Sustainability of research funding and partner \$
- Changing type/ focus/ eligibility of funding
- Reducing funding for ASOs, services
- Duplication/ fragmentation with other funders,
- Shrinking perception of urgency/ relevance of HIV research - transition to chronic disease

OPPORTUNITIES WITHIN THE HIV ENVIRONMENT

- Networking - researchers and stakeholders
- Training new researchers
- Professional development, job access/NI transition
- Convening to address shared issues
- Knowledge translation and exchange (KTE)
- Facilitating global role and impact
- Promoting Canadian research and funding



Where do we want to go?

Vision

CAHR's effective research training and knowledge sharing improves Canada's HIV/AIDS outcomes

Mission

CAHR responds to the needs which the Canadian HIV/AIDS research community identify as essential to success in training, research, and improving the health of Canadians.

CAHR's mission is to:

1. Promote excellence in HIV research
2. Foster collaboration and cooperation among HIV research communities, including basic science, clinical science, epidemiology & public health and social science
3. Promote education and the development of new researchers
4. Provide a unified voice for Canadian HIV researchers and engage diverse stakeholders (community, industry, government, NGOs etc.) in ongoing dialogue and knowledge exchange to ensure that HIV research remains responsive to their needs

OBJECTIVES FOR 2014 - 2019

What will CAHR achieve by 2019?

1. CAHR will become a member-driven organization
2. CAHR trainees will have a demonstrable competitive advantage.
3. Research challenges and professional development needs will be addressed rapidly and effectively through CAHR fora
4. CAHR will continue to demonstrate strong organizational capacity, governance, financial soundness and partnerships



How will we get there?

CAHR has undergone rapid change and expansion over the last several years. This plan therefore anticipates that year one - 2014 - will primarily be a year of consolidation and assessment of ongoing activities, to optimize effectiveness and identify key lessons learned to apply to future endeavors. In 2014, CAHR will focus on planning for the development of new/ expanded activities, particularly in identifying resource requirements, establishing key partnerships and agreements, and exploring additional funding sources. The new activities proposed in this plan will be incorporated in CAHR's workplan from 2015 – 2019, slowly but steadily as the required resources and capacity are secured.

CAHR will become a member-driven organization

By 2019, CAHR will:

- Increase members' "ownership" of CAHR
- Define and demonstrate the benefits of membership
- Engage its membership in ongoing discussion about needs and priorities
- Set CAHR priorities using transparent and responsive mechanisms
- Increase awareness and use of CAHR activities and resources
- Engage members in CAHR work

CAHR has rapidly expanded its scope and activities in the last few years, but member awareness of its new breadth has not yet caught up. CAHR's enhanced resources and activities are intended to serve the needs of its membership: in order to do so effectively, CAHR requires new mechanisms to identify, prioritize and respond to its members' needs. By 2019, membership in CAHR will be actively sought, not merely acquired as a side-effect of conference registration, and a growing portion of CAHR members will be able to state what they are contributing to CAHR, how they have shaped CAHR priorities, and the benefits they receive as members.

Activities could include:

- Annual survey of members (at conference, multi-modal – paper/ web/ in person) to identify priorities, get feedback
- Create local ambassadors: Council & others to hold informal get-togethers to update and ask "what would you like CAHR to do?"
- Ongoing capture of input via web, local meetings, at all events
- Engage members via activity planning and sub-committees, etc
- Brief, focused surveys within newsblasts
- Link each participant into planning of next activity; invite small and large contributions
- Profile members' activities and opportunities in newsletters, on web



Measures of success could include:

- Growing portion of community participates in local meetings, web input and surveys, etc
- Growing satisfaction with CAHR relevance and responsiveness – via annual survey
- Increased feedback on (next) 2019 plan compared to (current) 2014 plan
- Increase in AGM participation
- Growing portion of community involved in sub-committees, planning groups, etc

CAHR trainees will have a demonstrable competitive advantage over other trainees

By 2019, CAHR training supports will:

- Provide trainees with an integrated package of evidence-based supports
- Help trainees exchange ideas and experience on an ongoing basis
- Help trainees connect with leading researchers and future mentors
- Help trainees identify and assess career options and training paths
- Help trainees connect with potential future employers
- Provide trainees with access to key professional development events

Research and experience in Canada and the US links best training outcomes to experience of a broad range of research environments, mentors, disciplines, sectors, technologies, practical professional skills and knowledge exchange with peers and research leaders. By 2019, CAHR awards will not only open doors for top trainees, but provide key resources that increase their ability to obtain, and succeed in, the research career they are being trained for.

Activities could include:

- Provide awardees with visit grants for 3-6 month placement in new track, country or sector (e.g. community, industry, policy)
- Negotiate academic credit for expanded training activities when feasible
- Diversify/ expand scope and funding partners for CAHR awards

At annual conference/ workshops:

- Require awardee participation
- Create awardee Conference sub-committee to plan trainee activities, advise broadly
- Incorporate awardee events - poster/ presentations, meet mentors, etc.
- Develop career fair; include employers (industry/ policy/ community) at events



Networking and resources

- Create a network for CAHR trainees and provide platform for ongoing e-conversation
- Provide them with a space on CAHR website
- Provide career info/ opportunities on web
- Negotiate access for awardees to other existing resources (CTN, CHVI ACO, UWW...)

For mentors

- Bring mentors together to identify and address shared challenges, including how to prepare trainees for non-academic careers
- Engage “graduates” with trainees/ activities

Facilitating transition

- Create PDF-focused workshops
- Provide access to relevant CAHR events
- Work with partners (e.g. CHVI-ACO, CANFAR) to increase success of transition of PDF to NI
- For long term, assess mentoring chair and other support models

Measures of success could include:

- Satisfaction and views via pre/post survey
- Increased interactions with peers, mentors
- More retained in CAHR, post-award
- Increased relevance/ value of training, job success (trainee and employer surveys)
- Increased success at obtaining research jobs
- Reduced attrition of new investigators
- Increased employer involvement in training strategies and supports

Shared research challenges and professional development needs will be addressed more quickly and effectively through CAHR fora

By 2019, CAHR will regularly convene researchers and stakeholders to:

- Brainstorm, solve shared problems and build collaborations
- Increase competitiveness by connecting researchers and international leaders to address leading-edge research issues
- Strengthen KT by helping researchers acquire the skills needed to fulfill their KT responsibilities to funders
- Strengthen global impact by helping researchers learn to successfully access and work with global research opportunities
- Improve health by connecting research, policy and practice expertise around pressing health service and policy questions
- Brainstorm to seek solutions to shared research funding issues



CAHR plays a unique role as convener of the Canadian HIV/AIDS research community. By 2019, CAHR will be a go-to place to address key challenges and opportunities: whether Canadian researchers need to learn from international experts, collectively tackle complex research questions, address research barriers, or share evidence and develop best practice with policy and practice leaders, CAHR will be the trusted convener who brings the right people together in small and highly-productive workshops.

Activities could include:

- Expanded series of workshops responding to members' needs and priorities
- Expanded professional development opportunities, building on assessment of the mid-career workshop
- Opportunities to be explored might include:
 - Methods training, led by international experts: e. g. POR, big data, lab techniques, CBR
 - How to seminars: e.g., build joint projects; do interventions research; access global funds and teams; do KT
 - Mentoring: skills and creating tools
- Provide credit (e.g. CME) where possible
- Provide researchers with one-stop shop of key organizations, journals, news, funding
- Connect people through online inventory of Canadian research

Measures of success could include:

- Increasing responsiveness to member needs
- Increased demand/ participation of targeted researchers/ stakeholders
- High satisfaction, relevance, and value: researchers self-assess as more competitive
- Members value more/ new interactions
- Increased participation of “graduates” in planning and developing subsequent events
- Increased support from other organizations
- External demand for CAHR to convene events to address pressing questions

CAHR will continue to demonstrate strengthened organizational capacity, governance, financial soundness and partnerships

By 2019, CAHR will:

- Diversify its funding sources and co-funding partners
- Participate in key HIV/AIDS funding fora, strategy and decision-making
- Strengthen and expand its partnerships
- Increase coordination and synergy with other funders
- Advocate for strong HIV/AIDS research funding
- Demonstrate research successes and benefits for the community and Canada



CAHR has substantially enhanced its organizational strengths, expanding staff, policy, governance and accountability structures, and internal and activity-based SOPs, as well as key partnerships. CAHR has significantly increased its revenue and financial reserve, creating capacity to make much larger investments in the future. By 2019, CAHR will be well-recognized by its community for its good corporate practice, transparent and responsive decision-making, and financial sustainability. CAHR's strong partnerships and integrated approaches with other funders will maximize the impacts of its investments, and ensure that CAHR trainees have the best possible access to all available research resources and supports.

Activities could include:

- Develop transparent decision-making processes which effectively incorporate member input
- Seek long-term conference/ workshop support from wider range of sponsors
- Continue to expand and formalize partnerships, including with communities beyond HIV/AIDS
- Seek new award co-funders
- Negotiate access for CAHR trainees to other funders' resources/ events
- Coordinate strategy and planning with other funders; exchange board seats
- Link research community into CIHR and other key strategic planning discussions
- Support CIHR efforts in global fora, and fill gaps when appropriate
- Get active at others' meetings – e.g. booth, sponsor sessions, joint awards
- Monitor Council workload and expand pool of contributors through engagement of membership
- Annually review CAHR finances and outcomes, revise workplan annually
- Prepare and support Council members and others in role as CAHR ambassadors
- Develop activities to promote nominations for CAHR Council membership

Measures of success could include:

- Increased member support/ confidence in CAHR decision-making and investment choices
- Increased Council confidence in its ability to make decisions to invest differently in different tracks
- Increased diversity and sustainability of funding sources
- Sustainable funding for training supports
- Increased focus and effectiveness of CAHR strategy
- HIV more visible/ relevant in other sectors
- Increased support/ satisfaction of Council
- Increased member voice and input in key strategic and funding discussions
- CAHR council positions valued and desired leadership roles within HIV Research Community