

# Spur Innovation, Embrace Diversity, Eliminate Redundancies



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Recently, there has been renewed discussion about the complexity and well-being of the research and innovation ecosystem in Canada. Fresh thinking about discovery and innovation, and how players across the system can work together play an important role in this dialogue.

We need to abandon the concept of an innovation pipeline, a linear process where discovery and innovation are separate pursuits. Today's research and innovation ecosystem is much more collaborative and non-linear than ever before. A more productive way to view the relationship

between discovery and innovation is as a single loop with numerous entry points and feedback mechanisms. Information flow is bi-directional. Many different players are involved, but they act in an integrated and purposeful way.

We must also find better ways to optimize this model in a way that raises the level of play for researchers and industry. The current system fails to encourage diversity and equality of opportunity across business sectors, academic institutions, gender and culture. With diversity, we are more likely to be bold – even audacious – in discovery research, creating opportunities that those with a more homogenous perspective will miss. The current system also fails to coordinate and leverage the resources, expertise and best practices that could help Canadian businesses improve their innovation performance.

Full mobilization requires an attitude shift, one that is honest about redundancies, that eliminates them, and that embraces the diversity of expertise to deliver innovation. This attitude is client-centric and, when it comes to industry partners,

it presents an uncluttered interface focused on answering a single question: What do you want to do? As NSERC moves ahead with its new strategic plan – NSERC 2020 – we have made it a priority to foster such a system.

NSERC invests heavily so that Canadian researchers can develop world-leading discoveries and ideas; however this investment must be scaled to be competitive internationally. We have programs to facilitate close connections and partnerships with business to ensure that discovery research is constantly mixing with and enriched by industry and market perspectives. With this as a foundation, and a clear line of sight into the research and innovation landscape – universities, polytechnics, colleges, companies and industry associations – NSERC is working to pursue a more formal convener role to foster diversity and bring all players together.

If we continue to push the frontiers of discovery research with increased capacity and if we embrace innovation with an informed perspective, I am confident we will have a highly efficient research and innovation ecosystem in Canada.