



Suzanne Fortier
President
Natural Sciences and
Engineering Research Council
of Canada

R&D PARTNERSHIPS HELP BUSINESSES SUCCEED

that must be available at the right time. Companies of all sizes are recognizing this and turning to collaborative research activities undertaken together with higher education institutions, research hospitals, and government labs to meet their innovation goals.

At the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada (NSERC), we are committed to helping connect Canadian businesses with the research talent in our post-secondary institutions. Every year, we fund more than 12,000 professors and 30,000 students in Canadian universities, as well as expert

researchers and students at over 70 colleges, to tackle research challenges in the natural sciences and engineering. This represents a considerable reach, and a powerful pool of talented people with new ideas and expertise to bring to the business community. Today, NSERC invests one-third of our \$1.1 billion budget every year in connecting businesses to academic institutions to accelerate the delivery of the ideas, solutions, and people businesses need for their continued success.

To further facilitate research and development (R&D) collaborations between academics and busi-

nesses, NSERC has focussed on understanding the needs of business and responding to them. In 2009, NSERC launched a new Strategy for Partnerships and Innovation, introducing new flexible granting options to bring companies and researchers together. For example, to help kick-start new relationships, we have a six-month, \$25,000 Engage grant that lets researchers work directly with companies to solve an important R&D challenge. NSERC provides a funding decision in “business” time – within six weeks.

In talking to industry and academic researchers, another key chal-

lenge mentioned was how to find the right partner and how to start a research relationship that is productive and will generate results. In response, NSERC re-oriented our regional offices to help connect more businesses with researchers. The offices offer targeted networking events at which researchers, with the expertise and desire to form a partnership, can meet with interested companies.

This new approach is not only building new research relationships, but is garnering concrete results for businesses. The results speak for themselves. Today, NSERC works

with over 2,400 companies. Since 2009, NSERC has facilitated over 1,700 new business-academic relationships. Of the industrial partners who have participated in a research project through NSERC for the first time, 94 percent reported that they are applying, or intend to apply, the knowledge gained from the relationship. Seventy-five percent said the project contributed to new business opportunities and two-thirds plan to work with the same researcher again.

Innovation is a national priority, and it will shape our future. NSERC’s goal is to help more Canadian businesses see their names in the top 100 “Innovation Leaders.” Our strong suite of funding options helps any business leverage the incredible expertise of Canada’s research community to meet their corporate R&D needs. In the global innovation race, working together will benefit all Canadians.