

# RESEARCH: Investing in the People and Ideas of the Future



**Janet Walden**  
Chief Operating Officer,  
Natural Sciences and Engineering  
Research Council of Canada

Companies repeatedly tell us that finding the right people with the right skill set is their main innovation-related challenge; a challenge that is increasing as the competition for highly educated and skilled talent becomes fiercer

and this talent pool becomes more mobile and responsive to the best opportunities.

Looking forward, how do we continue to attract and retain the talent we need to prosper? The Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada (NSERC) is in the business of helping to build a research environment in Canada that promotes excellence and high levels of productivity in research and training.

Top researchers attract and train top students, and a strong research environment attracts and supports these top researchers and their students. NSERC is the leading provider of federal funding for discovery research in Canada: and discovery research and training

are the foundation for innovation. Through our flagship Discovery Grants program, the Government of Canada provides multi-year funding to approximately 9,700 science and engineering researchers annually. This is the Council's single-largest area of investment because it plays such a critical role in ensuring Canada has the talent and creativity to feed our innovation requirements into the future.

NSERC has an active Strategy for Partnerships and Innovation to build on our foundation of excellent discovery research, and increase the value of our discovery investments by better linking the knowledge and expertise in our post-secondary institutions

with private sector know-how and needs. NSERC's partnership initiatives enable relationship-building across sectors that accelerates the flow of ideas into commercial opportunities. These relationships extend the resources of both business and academia, but most importantly, they provide students, our next generation of science and engineering professionals, with the technical and entrepreneurial skills they need to realize their full potential and rapidly enter the workforce.

We are seeing real results. In just over three years, NSERC has grown from working with 1,500 companies to more than 2,700. This is in keeping with the Top 100 Corporate R&D Spenders list,

which shows a strong increase in corporate R&D across Canada this year. And, 80% of companies who worked with a researcher on a collaborative project told us they developed new products and services, improved their process or even increased their competitiveness as a result of the work.

To meet the diverse innovation needs of businesses of all sizes, NSERC also enables applied R&D projects with Canada's colleges. Through more than 400 grants, NSERC has helped more than 60 colleges and cégeps from across the country partner with businesses from industrial sectors across the Canadian economy, many of whom are small and medium sized enter-

prises. These grants translate into hundreds of students gaining new skills and new insights into career opportunities.

Innovation is not a straight line. The roles played by discovery research through to development form an integrated continuum, building on and reinforcing one another. Within this continuum, training our top talent is a priority. By continuing to invest in the full spectrum of research, the Government of Canada is laying the foundation for future growth. Ensuring we have a vibrant research community by focussing on generating top research talent with the best skills, today and in the future, will position Canada for success.