



Council of Canadian Academies  
Conseil des académies canadiennes

# News Release

The Council of Canadian Academies Releases an Expert Panel Report  
*Informing Research Choices: Indicators and Judgment*

## For Immediate Release

**Ottawa (July 5th, 2012)** – An international expert panel has assessed that decisions regarding science funding and performance can't be determined by metrics alone. A combination of performance indicators and expert judgment are the best formula for determining how to allocate science funding.

The Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada (NSERC) spends approximately one billion dollars a year on scientific research. Over one-third of that goes directly to support discovery research through its flagship Discovery Grants Program (DGP). However, concerns exist that funding decisions are made based on historical funding patterns and that this is not the best way to determine future funding decisions.

As NSERC strives to be at the leading edge for research funding practices, it asked the Council of Canadian Academies to assemble an expert panel that would look at global practices that inform funding allocation, as well as to assemble a library of indicators that can be used when assessing funding decisions. The Council's expert panel conducted an in-depth assessment and came to a number of evidence-based conclusions.

The panel Chair, Dr. Rita Colwell commented, "the most significant finding of this panel is that quantitative indicators are best interpreted by experts with a deep and nuanced understanding of the research funding contexts in question, and the scientific issues, problems, questions and opportunities at stake." She also added, "Discovery research in the natural sciences and engineering is a key driver in the creation of many public goods, contributing to economic strength, social stability, and national security. It is therefore important that countries such as Canada have a complete understanding of how best to determine allocations of its science funding."

The Expert Panel's report, *Informing Research Choices: Indicators and Judgment* is an evidence-based, independent assessment. Other panel findings discussed within the report include: a determination that many science indicators and assessment approaches are sufficiently robust; international best practices offer limited insight into science indicator use and assessment strategies; and mapping research funding allocation directly to quantitative indicators is far too simplistic, and is not a realistic strategy for Canada. The Panel also outlines four key principles for the use of indicators that can guide research funders and decision-makers when considering future funding decisions.

"I am confident that the Panel's work has been comprehensive and the evidence provided within this report will be of significant value and insight to research funders and decision makers." said Elizabeth Dowdeswell, President and CEO of the Council of Canadian Academies. She also noted, "This report is

the first in a new of series of Council assessments that are examining the science and technology environment in Canada.”

For more information, or to download a free copy of the report, please visit  
<http://www.scienceadvice.ca/en/assessments/completed/science-performance.aspx>

#### **About the Council of Canadian Academies**

The Council of Canadian Academies is an independent, not-for-profit organization that began operation in 2005. The Council supports evidence-based, expert assessments to inform public policy development in Canada. Assessments are conducted by independent, multidisciplinary panels of experts from across Canada and abroad. The Council’s blue-ribbon panels serve free of charge and many are Fellows of the Council’s Member Academies: the Royal Society of Canada; the Canadian Academy of Engineering; and the Canadian Academy of Health Sciences. The Council’s vision is to be Canada’s trusted voice for science in the public interest. For more information visit [www.scienceadvice.ca](http://www.scienceadvice.ca).

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