



CANFASD STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

April 2024 to March 2027

CANADA FASD RESEARCH NETWORK

Who is CanFASD?

The Canada Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Research Network (CanFASD) is a collaborative, interdisciplinary research network, working across professions and disciplines across the nation. It is Canada's comprehensive national Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder (FASD) research network focused on ensuring that research information is translated and disseminated to support those with FASD, their families and communities as well as practitioners, governments, and all other stakeholders.

What does CanFASD do?

CanFASD works to create and sustain an effective research environment by connecting researchers, graduate students, practitioners, family members, care givers and policy makers from communities and institutions across Canada, and internationally. CanFASD researchers are currently leading 75 major projects related to FASD prevention, intervention and diagnostics.

How does CanFASD do its work?

CanFASD creates, nurtures, and sustains a collaborative environment and unique partnerships to be able to bring together many scientific, government and community viewpoints to address FASD, with a focus on ensuring that research knowledge is translated to community, practice and policy action. It works through cross-jurisdictional Research Leads and their respective networks that are focused on the areas of diagnosis, intervention and prevention, child welfare, justice and knowledge mobilization.

The National FASD Database is a key asset of CanFASD and facilitates research across all areas for generation of new knowledge, incorporation of results into practice and providing evidence essential for policy decisions.

Mandate Areas

The work, effort, and resource investments of CanFASD fall under the following five organization mandate areas:

- 1. Building a Network** - foster and support a collaborative research environment focused on FASD.
- 2. Prevention** – facilitating and supporting research that works to support the prevention of FASD.
- 3. Intervention** – facilitating and supporting research that works to inform and evaluate FASD interventions, with special emphasis on high-risk populations including child welfare and justice populations.
- 4. Diagnosis** – facilitating and supporting research that works to increase the accuracy and incidence of FASD diagnosis.
- 5. Mobilizing Knowledge** – facilitating and supporting mechanisms to ensure that accurate and relevant information on FASD is available to those that need it.

Vision

All Canadians are engaged and united with awareness, evidence and knowledge and are effectively addressing the complexities of FASD.

Mission

CanFASD supports Canada's families, caregivers, individuals with FASD, practitioners and leadership across all sectors and at all levels, in addressing the extraordinary complexities of FASD.

The Network does this through facilitating and sustaining a national research collaborative that is focused on the domains of FASD prevention, intervention and diagnosis and by disseminating research based knowledge about FASD to those who need it.



Values

Undertake, coordinate and facilitate research that is meaningful and applicable to families, governments, service providers and stakeholders.

CanFASD works collaboratively with partners and stakeholders.

To use appropriate language when communicating about FASD, recognizing the sensitivities and complexities of FASD.

CanFASD recognizes and values the critical importance that research contributes to informing policy and program development and delivery.

CanFASD engages Canada's diverse cultural and vulnerable groups as partners in working to achieve the Vision and Goals of the Network. CanFASD strives to uphold the principles of equity, diversity and inclusion (EDI) in all of the work it undertakes.

- Equity involves creating equal opportunity for all and eliminating barriers like discrimination and bias;
- Diversity recognizes and celebrates differences, including individual, social, cultural and political differences; and
- Inclusion represents the meaningful action that connects the concepts of equity and diversity.

Purpose of the Strategic Priorities Plan

CanFASD has been developed and operates under an overall organization purpose and mandates. The CanFASD board has articulated the vision that will result from the work undertaken by the organization and a mission that describes how CanFASD, as a whole, will work to achieve the vision.

The Strategic Priorities Plan works within the organization vision, mission and mandate areas and provides direction from the Board of Directors as to the areas of priority, within a defined period of time, which will help to focus strategies and resources toward achieving the organization's goals. These priorities do not replace or supersede the ongoing operational work of CanFASD, but rather identify more immediate priorities where, in the view of the Board of Directors, focus and effort is required to achieve results that most effectively contribute to reaching the overall organization goals and vision.

The Strategic Priorities Plan works to ensure alignment of strategies, resources and activities with the current priority issues and opportunities currently facing the organization. The Plan also ensures a positive level of engagement and accountability between the Board, the CanFASD Research Leads, Administration and CanFASD as a whole.

The Board of Directors carefully considered the results of the 2020 to 2023 CanFASD Strategic Plan, the changes in the FASD environment in each region and nationally, and internationally. Priority strategies and directions were identified for 2024 to 2027. The priorities address key issues and/or opportunities that the Board determined to have the potential to create positive results in working to attain the goals and outcomes of the organization within the five mandate areas.

It bears noting that the strategic priorities listed in the 2024 to 2027 plan are not intended to represent or describe the entire scope of work of CanFASD. The strategic priorities are those areas that, in the view of the Board, require specific attention and/or resource investments over the period of the plan to create the positive results anticipated.

CanFASD Goals

1. To be the centre of expertise on FASD in Canada; recognized as the source of accurate, research-based information and knowledge that can address relevant questions about the prevention, diagnosis and intervention of FASD and can disseminate research and evidence-based knowledge about the prevention, prevalence, surveillance, diagnosis and treatment of FASD.
2. To inform and influence policy, practice and decision making at the local, regional, provincial, national, and international levels.
3. To develop, foster and leverage relationships, research programs, and initiatives across the spectrum of FASD activity.
4. To facilitate and enhance linkages across jurisdictions, communities, cultures and disciplines related to FASD.
5. To build research capacity and knowledge across and within all communities so that important questions are being identified and addressed.
6. To ensure that the voices of individuals and families living with FASD are incorporated into research projects at all stages.
7. To contribute to improved support for people affected by FASD.

CanFASD Outcomes

Systems that are engaged with FASD are stimulated to respond and take action to address issues relating to FASD within their respective mandate and scope;

Research and outcome-based information and knowledge on FASD is accessible and available in formats that are meaningful and useable by those who need it;

Evidence-based information about FASD is available to, and used by, policy decision makers at all levels;

There is a measureable statistical reduction in the incidence and prevalence of FASD over time; and

CanFASD supports the creation of new information about FASD and the translation of that information to knowledge that influences practice and policy.

Strategic Priority Goals

2024-2027

1 Increase and broaden the membership of CanFASD.

Opportunity

Based on the 2020 to 2023 strategic plan the organization took steps to begin to identify and implement additional levels of opportunities to participate with CanFASD as members. These efforts have been largely successful within the scope and scale that they have been considered. The Board supports continuing to investigate additional opportunities for individuals and organizations to participate and contribute as members of CanFASD.

Broadening the membership by identifying additional ways and means for organizations and individuals to be part of the membership of the Network will work to increase the involvement of all regions of Canada as members of CanFASD which will enable the Network to take advantage of a pan-Canadian capacity for research, information, knowledge, and systems of dissemination. Broader involvement will also assist in connecting more effectively with service and support sectors such as the disability networks and education institutions that were identified in the recent environment scan.

This priority generally works to achieve the CanFASD vision of our vision of “all Canadians”.

2 Diversify funding sources and increase funding levels to the network.

Opportunity

Provide additional stability by expanding the revenue streams to the organization. This will enable the Network to decrease operational risk, increase the ability to invest in broader areas relating to FASD and engage and influence an additional range of stakeholders and potential partners.

Under the Direction of the previous strategic plan, CanFASD undertook a comprehensive review of its role relating to fundraising and economic growth. The Board made the decision that a core business of CanFASD was funding development. Actions were developed including developing building case statements for funding, board member contributions, considering various “giving” programs and reviewing the resources required to undertake a range of fund development activities.

Continued Board strategic direction is required on the need for organization culture and capacity development to support the direction related to economic development.

This Priority provides an opportunity to address the public and private balance of funding and support to the Network with a focus on effectiveness and sustainability.

3

Provide continued leadership to have the proposed National Framework for FASD approved and implemented.

Opportunity

CanFASD achieved a significant milestone in having Bill S-253; An Act respecting a National Framework for Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder entered for First Reading on October 19, 2022.

Effort is required to continue to lead and support the initiative as it makes its way through the various stages of approval. Once approved CanFASD will require significant effort to be applied to work with the federal government on the substance of the plan and its implementation.

This priority will also provide an opportunity for pan-Canadian leadership in relation to the issues and opportunities presented by the mandate and capacity of the Network.

4

Increase knowledge and awareness of FASD and FASD Prevention in Canada's workforce and improve employment success of persons with FASD.

Opportunity

To increase the level of awareness, training and education of the Canadian workforce who may recruit, support and work with individuals with FASD, their families, caregivers, agencies and organizations.

To develop research, knowledge and training resources that help to support persons with FASD to be successful in the workforce

The CanFASD training modules have been highly successful in increasing content knowledge of FASD in several employment sectors. While many of these resources are now core programs and services of the Network, additional opportunities exist to look more comprehensively at strategies that support the recruitment, employment support and retention of persons with FASD.

5

Influence government and non-government policy.

Opportunity

To increase understanding and delineate the role that research plays in informing FASD policy and practice.

To increase opportunities for CanFASD research and knowledge translation to influence positive policy change with respect to FASD supports, services, practice and funding.

Build the capacity for early identification of FASD policy initiatives, analysis of potential negative impacts on FASD programs and services and effective policy engagement strategies and opportunities.

6

Increase the capacity of CanFASD to support reconciliation and work as an effective ally of Indigenous led research and FASD initiatives.

Opportunity

CanFASD has developed an analysis and responses to the related sections of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) calls to action and an inventory of the actions taken across the relevant sectors - Intersection of the TRC Calls to Action and Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder. The principles of the TRC will continue to provide a critical foundation in guiding the work of the Network.

The environment scan identified the need for continued focus on improving meaningful engagement with Indigenous leaders, peoples, communities, and research bodies and to learn from them the ways to appropriately and respectfully undertake research, share evidence and create positive change with respect to FASD in their communities.

There is also opportunity to work with Indigenous researchers interested in the area of FASD, and support their work in Indigenous led research projects, to further data and knowledge leading to better outcomes for those with FASD, their families, caregivers and communities.

7

Facilitate and support a positive and effective environment for FASD research capacity in Canada.

Opportunity

CanFASD works collaboratively with partners and stakeholders to undertake, coordinate, and facilitate research that is meaningful and applicable to Individuals, families, communities, governments, service providers and stakeholders.

The research environment is facing challenges with institutional support, with finding and retaining research staff and participants, and accessing project and other funding from government and funding agencies.

Support to the CanFASD Research Leads is a core organizational mandate area for the Network.

8

Increase the capacity of CanFASD to operate in both official languages.

Opportunity

CanFASD has started working toward a transition to both official languages primarily through translation of major reports from English to French and French to English and by offering some of the online courses in French.

Continue to work toward being truly pan Canadian through increasing CanFASD capacity to work in both official languages with communities across Canada.

9

Increase working relationships with FASD related professional regulatory bodies.***Opportunity***

Influencing professional regulatory bodies (i.e. professional associations, colleges, societies, board) to recognize FASD knowledge as a required competency for their members will help to provide for sector professional development training and ultimately influence curriculum changes at post-secondary institutions, continuing medical education and professional development.

The opportunity is to significantly increase the numbers of related professionals and practitioners who receive training in and are competent in knowledge relating to FASD. As a result, access to services and appropriate care and management will be improved, and stigma will be reduced as a barrier.

10

Increase CanFASD awareness and ability to effectively engage other vulnerable and equity seeking cultures in Canada with respect to FASD research and intervention.***Opportunity***

Canada has diverse cultures which, in turn, have varying perspectives concerning understanding and engaging in FASD research, intervention and support. Many cultural groups are seeking equity in support for members of their communities.

CanFASD is positioned to lead identification and development of effective research practices and protocols as well as to create targeted strategies for information dissemination.





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