CCAC Strategic Plan **2026-2031**

Building a Strong Future for Ethical Animal Care and Use in Canadian Science



CCAC
CCPA

Acknowledgements

The Canadian Council on Animal Care (CCAC) would like to take this opportunity to thank all stakeholders that provided feedback for the *CCAC Strategic Plan 2026-2031* throughout the consultation process. We are also grateful to our funders, the Canadian Institutes of Health Research and the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada, our member organizations, and our program participants for their continued support.



A list of all CCAC-certified institutions can be found on the CCAC website.

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Animal Health Canada
Association of Canadian Faculties of Dentistry
Association of Faculties of Medicine of Canada
Canadian Association for Laboratory Animal Medicine
Canadian Association for Laboratory Animal Science
Canadian Bioethics Society
Canadian Cancer Society
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Health Canada
Heart and Stroke Foundation of Canada
Humane Canada
Innovative Medicines Canada
National Research Council Canada
Universities Canada

GRANTING AGENCIES

Canadian Institutes of Health Research
Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada

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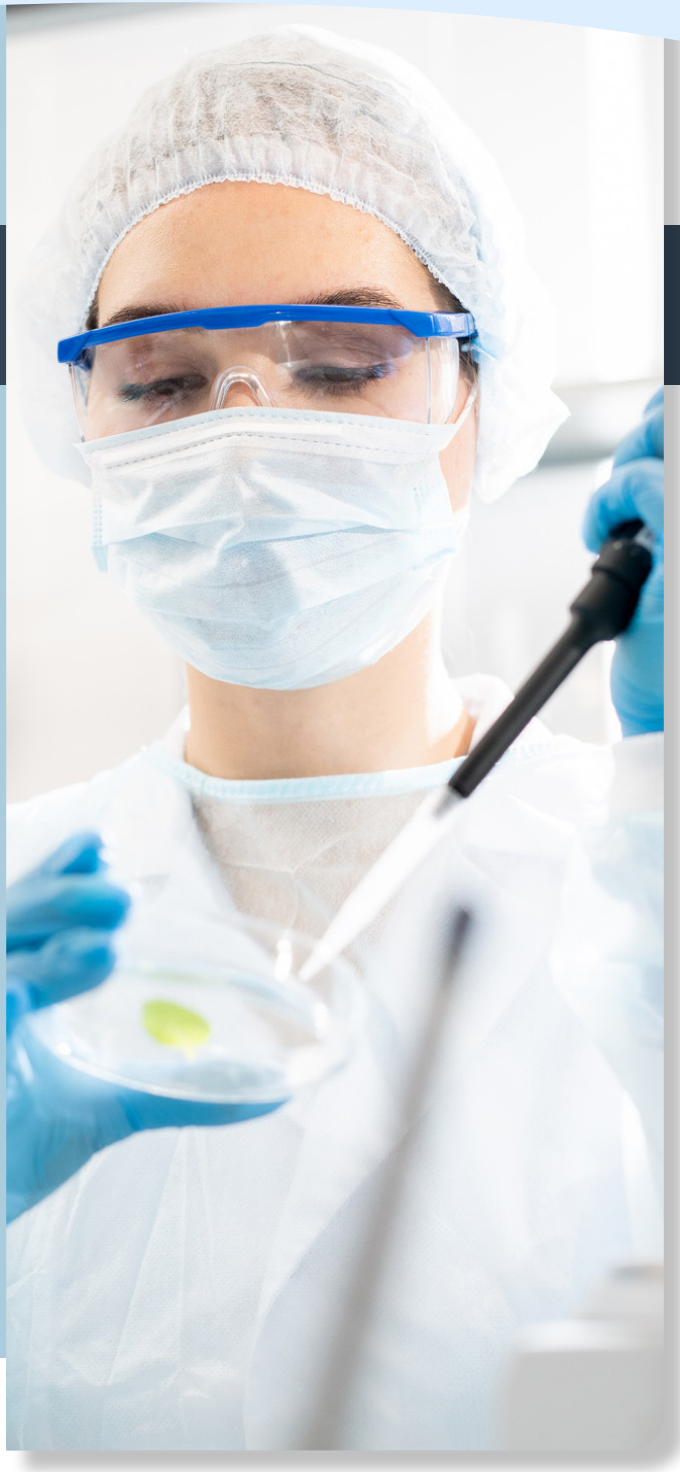
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Message from the Chair

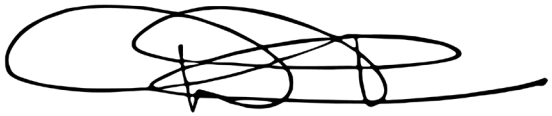
As chair of the Canadian Council on Animal Care (CCAC) Board of Directors, I am pleased to present our 2026-2031 strategic plan, developed with the perspectives and priorities of our stakeholders through town hall discussions, collaborative dialogue, comprehensive surveys, and with the feedback of our standing committee members and staff.

Over the next five years, our strategic goals will ensure the welfare of animals used in science continues to be a priority in all scientific activities. They will also help us improve our services to Canada's animal-based scientific community, secure the CCAC's long-term financial sustainability, and modernize our systems and practices to remain relevant and responsive in an evolving scientific environment.

Our most recent national public opinion poll confirms that Canadians continue to expect us to uphold high standards of animal care and ensure science is conducted ethically and responsibly. Together with our volunteers, certified institutions, and government partners, we are committed to not only meeting but surpassing those expectations.

As Canada's national oversight system for the use of animals in science, the CCAC's role is essential and unique. Guided by the strength and dedication of our community, we will continue to meet this responsibility with integrity and an unwavering focus on animal welfare.





Dr. Denna M. Benn
Chair, CCAC Board of Directors

Vision, Mission, and Mandate

In 2025, the CCAC revised its vision, mission, and mandate to better reflect the values of Canadians and the growing public expectation for robust ethical standards, transparency, accountability, and respect for animal welfare in science. These updates reinforce the CCAC's commitment to leading a national culture of animal care, where the ethical use of animals in research, teaching, and testing is held to the highest standard.

VISION

For Canada to be an international leader in the ethical standards for the care and use of animals in science.

MISSION

The CCAC fosters a culture of care, compassion, and respect by ensuring that animals in science are only used when necessary and in alignment with evidence-based ethical standards that maximize animal welfare and promote public trust.

MANDATE

Acting in the interest of Canadians and on behalf of the Government of Canada, the CCAC advances practices for the ethical care and use of animals in science by:

- developing evidence-based and welfare-centred national standards for the use of animals in science
- assessing and certifying institutional animal care and use programs for compliance with the CCAC's standards
- empowering and supporting program participants through training, networking, and the sharing of best practices for implementing and upholding the CCAC's standards
- engaging and collaborating with members of the animal care and use community to optimize the quality and impact of the CCAC program
- building public trust through transparency and increased awareness of Canada's ethical oversight system

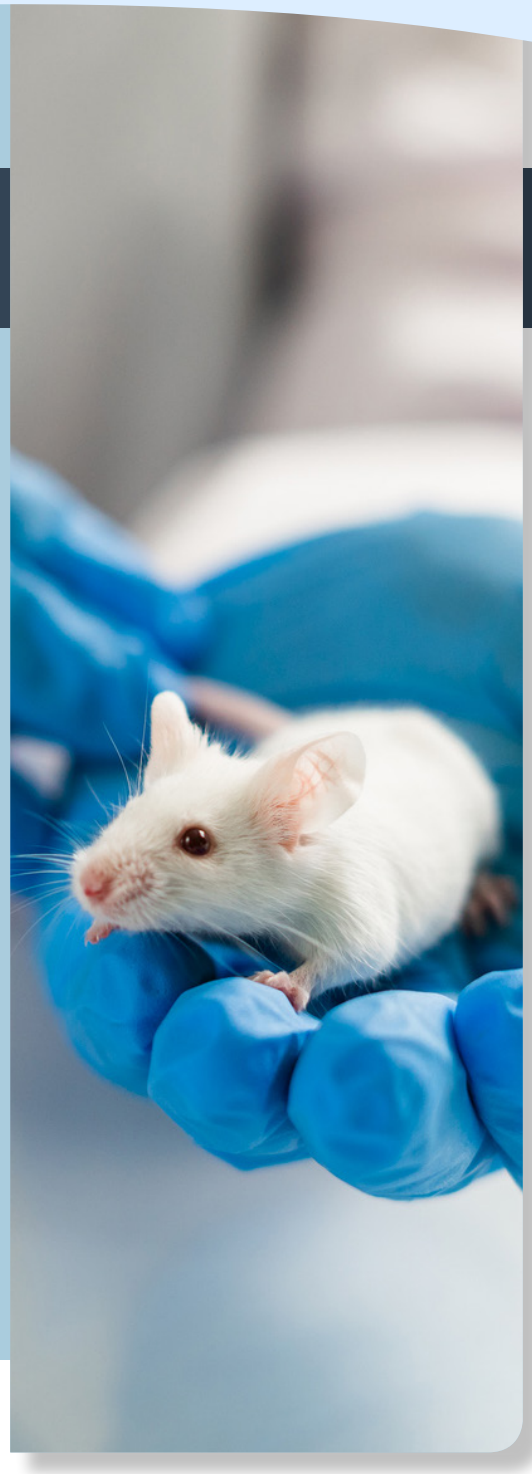
Introduction

The CCAC is a unique and Canadian solution for ensuring the ethical care and use of animals in science. In the absence of a national regulatory framework, the CCAC's independent oversight system provides the strongest mechanism for upholding consistent national standards and ensuring public accountability in animal-based science across Canada.

The CCAC model is the only system in the world that integrates guidelines development, assessment, certification, and training within a single structure. It upholds both national and international expectations for ethical animal care, setting high standards that are essential for responsible science. Strong animal welfare practices are crucial for reliable, reproducible science, and this model helps Canada's scientific community remain ethical, credible, and well positioned to access international collaborations and opportunities.

As a vital part of Canada's scientific ecosystem, the CCAC also fulfills the federal government's public trust obligations regarding the use of animals in science. This responsibility is achieved through accountability and transparency and with the support of more than 2,000 volunteers serving on more than 200 local animal care committees and other subcommittees and task forces. Together with the CCAC Secretariat, these volunteers are wholly committed to the ethical care and welfare of animals in science and work diligently to deliver the CCAC program in institutions across Canada.

The 2026-2031 strategic plan focuses on three key goals: strengthening organizational resilience, optimizing program delivery, and enriching the CCAC's support to program participants. Activities will be aimed at securing long-term federal government funding to ensure financial stability, modernizing program delivery, and continuing to proactively engage program participants.



2026–2031 Strategic Goals

Building a Strong Future for Ethical Animal Care in Canadian Science

To continue meeting the highest standards of animal welfare in a rapidly changing scientific and social landscape, the CCAC has identified three strategic goals that will guide its work in the coming years. Together, these priorities reinforce the organization's foundation, modernize program delivery, and enhance support for institutions. This will ensure that Canada's national oversight system remains effective, forward-looking, and responsive to the needs of both science and Canadian society.



GOAL ONE

Strengthen organizational resilience



GOAL TWO

Optimize delivery of the CCAC program



GOAL THREE

Enrich support to program participants

GOAL ONE

Strengthen Organizational Resilience

Improve the CCAC's long-term resilience by securing sustainable federal funding, reinforcing government and stakeholder engagement, and clearly demonstrating the CCAC's essential role as the national oversight system for the care and use of animals in Canadian science.

KEY OBJECTIVES

- Establish long-term financial sustainability to support the CCAC program, ensuring it is resourced to deliver fully on its mandate
- Collaborate with federal partners to shift the CCAC's funding mechanism to a policy-driven, arm's-length, and transparent model
- Communicate the CCAC's unique role in delivering a national oversight system for the care and use of animals and its impact on Canadian science and innovation
- Demonstrate the value of the CCAC and engage its community in promoting the mandate

IMPLEMENTATION

Advocate for Independent Oversight, Integrity, and Sustainability

The CCAC will advance its advocacy efforts with the Government of Canada to ensure the oversight of animal-based science remains a national priority. Through active engagement and evidence-based recommendations, it will advance policies that uphold animal welfare, reinforce public trust, safeguard scientific integrity, enhance Canada's international reputation, and support the CCAC's long-term sustainability.

Build Stronger Partnerships for Ethical Science

The CCAC will bolster its stakeholder relations through dialogue, shared initiatives and strategic partnerships. Maintaining a strong collaboration will help enhance Canada's ethical oversight of animal-based science, advancing animal welfare for the benefit of the public and the scientific community.

Engage Canadians in Ethical Science

The CCAC will deepen its connection with Canadians through an increased social media presence, broader community representation, and proactive public outreach. We will share advancements in the Three Rs, and help the public understand and value the work we do on their behalf. By promoting transparency and engagement, we will build lasting trust and demonstrate the critical role of independent oversight in ethical animal-based science.

GOAL TWO

Optimize Delivery of the CCAC Program

Modernize the CCAC's program delivery and increase capacity by integrating appropriate technology, including artificial intelligence (AI), and investing in a responsive, efficient system that supports institutions and focuses on the highest standards of animal welfare.

KEY OBJECTIVES

- Redesign program features to improve delivery and consistency, align with institutional needs, and prioritize the welfare of animals
- Expand internal capacity to support program delivery and meet strategic objectives
- Establish a risk-based model to guide program changes
- Engage the community in Three Rs partnerships to maximize the quality and benefits of the CCAC program

IMPLEMENTATION

Enhance Efficiency and Oversight with Innovation

The CCAC will modernize its core functions by overhauling the assessment and certification process with clearer requirements, refined site visits, AI tools, and a risk-based approach to streamline workflows, reduce workloads, and focus on high-value activities. In parallel, it will adopt a portfolio approach to guidelines and policies, simplifying development, updating terminology, and keeping content clear, relevant, and practical.

Integrate Data Management and a Risk-Based Approach

The CCAC will improve its oversight system by developing a national data collection framework to inform priorities, assessments, standards, and communications. This framework will support the creation of a risk-based model, including institutional risk profiles, and enable the CCAC to leverage data to guide standards development and program priorities. In doing so, the CCAC will increase accountability, allocate resources more effectively, and ensure a more responsive, evidence-driven approach to ethical animal care in science.

Grow Research Capacity

The CCAC will leverage its post-doctoral fellow program by aligning research projects with the organization's objectives. Fellows will advance CCAC objectives, providing research support that informs standards development, program improvements, Three Rs practices, and evidence-based decision-making. This program will expand the CCAC's research capacity while engaging the next generation of experts in ethical animal-based science.

GOAL THREE

Enrich Support to Program Participants

Foster sustained engagement with program participants to expand services that support program delivery, reinforce the national culture grounded in animal welfare and ethical science, and meet the evolving needs of the CCAC community.

KEY OBJECTIVES

- Increase support to certified institutions through training activities
- Actively engage program participants to enhance an animal-centred culture
- Expand opportunities for stakeholder collaboration and feedback
- Evaluate and integrate appropriate technology, including artificial intelligence (AI), to increase insight into the CCAC program's impact on certified institutions and animal welfare

IMPLEMENTATION

Enhance In-Person Training Initiatives

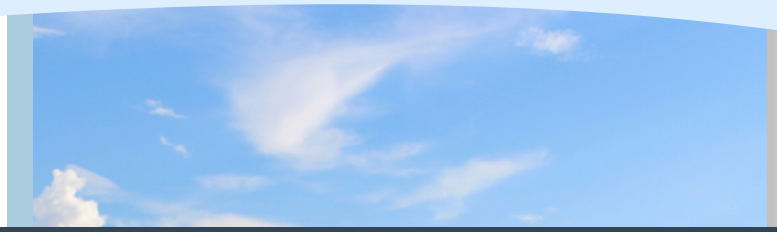
The CCAC will refine in-person training initiatives to provide more engaging and impactful learning experiences. Its signature event, the national workshop, will be expanded with additional learning opportunities and interactive components to enrich participant experience. Other learning opportunities will be introduced to facilitate direct engagement with program participants and experts.

Expand Online Learning

The CCAC will increase its virtual training opportunities, making them more accessible and flexible by offering recorded and on-demand webinars.

Cultivate Connection and Collaboration

Program participants are vital to maintaining Canada's leadership in ethical animal care and use. The CCAC will increase engagement by highlighting excellence, expanding feedback opportunities, providing new materials and videos, and hosting regular virtual meetings to support volunteers and foster a more connected, informed, and valued community.



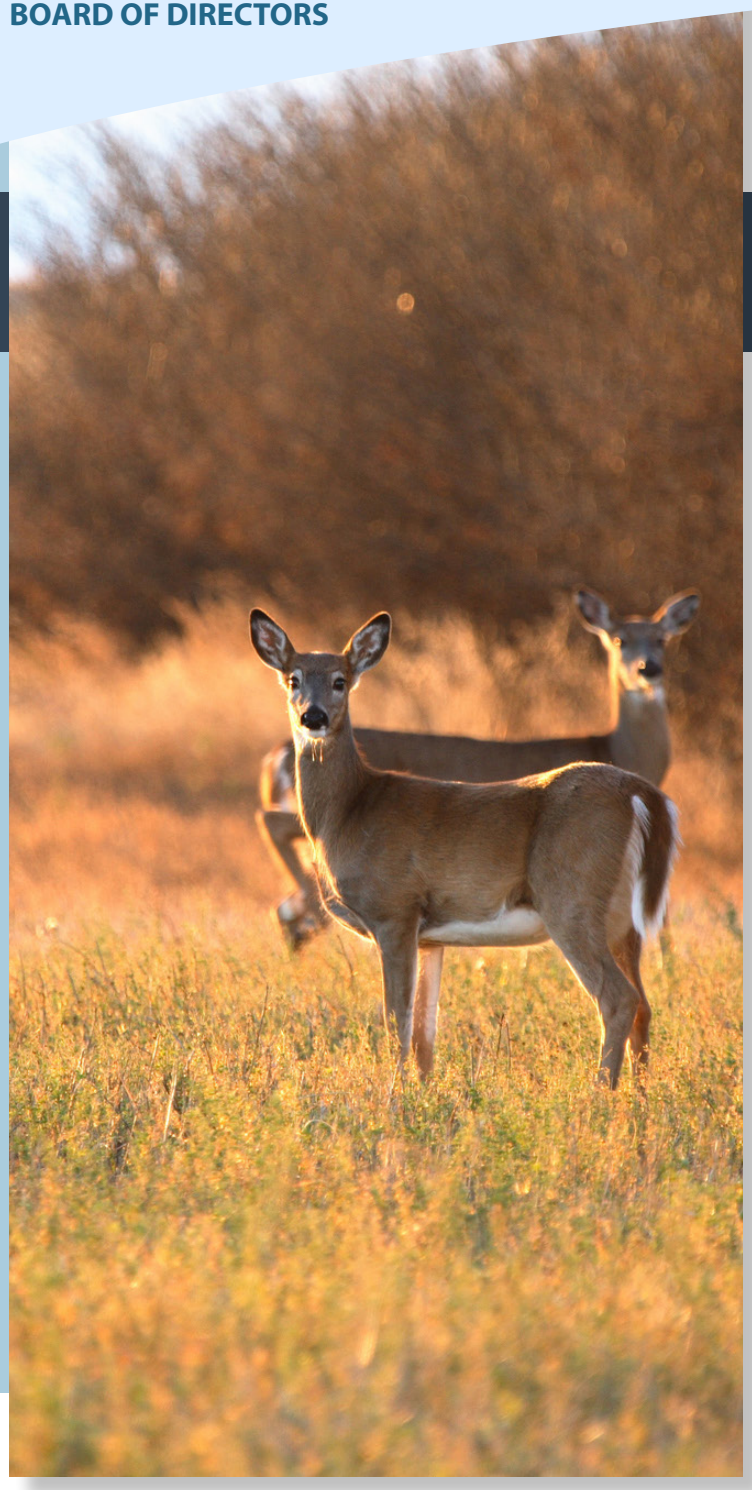
Conclusion

For nearly sixty years, with the valuable collaboration of its staff, and of scientists, animal health experts, and community members, the CCAC has successfully delivered a community-driven Canadian oversight system that safeguards the welfare of animals used in science. Although this system remains strong, increasing demand in scientific research and challenges resulting from a fundamental change in the global economic landscape require a targeted strategy to guide us in securing the resources we need to continue meeting the expectations of Canadians and the scientific community.

The *CCAC Strategic Plan 2026-2031* will solidify our leadership role and ensure our long-term resilience by securing sustained federal funding and optimizing the delivery of our program. It will also align our priorities and activities with the federal government's broader objectives for innovation and continued scientific excellence based on Canada's strong culture of animal welfare and ethical science.

Canada's scientific community is vibrant and committed to making animal welfare a priority in all scientific endeavours conducted in institutions across the country, and we will proudly continue to work closely and collaboratively with all our stakeholders to deliver our mandate and fulfill our shared mission.





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