



**PARTICIPANTS’
PACKAGE:
Advocacy Training
Workshop**

Thursday, March 14th, 2024

events@canadianbrain.ca



Thursday, March 14th, 2024
11:00AM – 12:30PM PT / 2:00PM – 3:30PM ET

[Via Zoom](#)

Meeting ID: 861 7437 5276

Passcode: 553770

CANADIAN BRAIN RESEARCH STRATEGY ADVOCACY TRAINING WORKSHOP

The Canadian Brain Research Strategy ([CBRS](#)) is a pan-Canadian effort to develop a national research strategy for brain and mental health. This mission unites 40 heads of neuroscience and mental health institutes, along with almost 50 organizations in our diverse coalition of health charities, research funding agencies, private and non-profit organizations, industry, patient advocates, and Indigenous partners.

Through a consensus-building process, CBRS has developed a unifying framework that aligns and coordinates research efforts across the country. We are advocating for the Government of Canada to make research on the brain and mental health a national priority with targeted policies and investment towards a Canadian Brain Research Initiative.

WORKSHOP OBJECTIVES

Participants will:

1. **Gain insights** into the government decision making process and how to engage with government stakeholders.
2. **Develop essential skills** to effectively communicate the significance of their work in brain research, fostering support for the creation of a Canadian Brain Research Initiative.
3. **Access materials and resources** for streamlined advocacy
4. **Explore and utilize a letter template** for immediate use and future collaborative advocacy efforts.

Background and Resources

- [Globe & Mail feature on CBRS in their Brain Awareness Week Report](#)
- [CBRS Submission to Department of Finance Canada for Budget 2024](#)
- Appendix 1: Two-pager – What is the CBRS?
- Appendix 2: Template letter

Additional Resources

- [CBRS Panel Presentation @ Canadian Science Policy Conference 2023](#)
- [CBRS Policy Briefs to government](#) (7 examples)
- [Evidence for Democracy Training and Resources](#)
 - [An Essential Guide to Science Advocacy](#)
- [Science Communication: Communicate With Intent Worksheet](#) (Laurentian University)

WORKSHOP AGENDA

Agenda Topic	
Welcome – <i>Jennie Z. Young</i>	5 min
Land acknowledgement and opening remarks	
Overview of CBRS and the National Strategy – <i>Jennie Z. Young</i>	15 min
We'll delve into key components and priorities of our national research strategy for brain and mental health, and hear progress in coordinating efforts in government outreach and shaping policy towards a Canadian Brain Research Initiative.	
Effective Science Advocacy – <i>Ujwal Ganguly</i>	15 min
We'll gain insights into the government decision-making process, and be empowered to navigate and effectively engage with governmental officials.	
Science Communication Skills – <i>Lindsay Borthwick</i>	10 min
We'll learn strategies to effectively communicate the significance of brain research with government officials.	
Practical Skills Session – <i>Lindsay Borthwick, Tim Longbeed</i>	40 min
We'll break into two groups for hands-on learning to explore and utilize a letter template, guided by seasoned science communicators.	
Closing Remarks – <i>Jennie Z. Young</i>	5 min
Summary and next steps	

WORKSHOP CONTRIBUTORS

Jennie Z. Young, PhD, Executive Director, Canadian Brain Research Strategy (CBRS)

Dr. Young leads a pan-Canadian effort to develop a national research strategy for brain and mental health. Dr. Young holds a PhD in Neuroscience from the University of Alberta, Canada. They then spent 14 years at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), and served as scientific chief-of-staff to Nobel Laureate Susumu Tonegawa and to Picower Institute Director Li-Huei Tsai.

Their work has spanned the fields of learning and memory and Alzheimer's disease, with resultant publications in leading peer-reviewed journals, including *Nature*, *Science*, *Cell*, *Nature Neuroscience*, *Nature Biomedical Engineering*, and *Neuron*. Dr. Young's return to Canada was spurred by their deep passion for the exceptional calibre and collaborative nature of neuroscience and mental health research in Canada.

Lindsay Borthwick, Principal and Founder, LABmedia

Lindsay Borthwick is principal and founder of LABmedia, a science communication consultancy based in Toronto.

Lindsay has more than two decades of experience as a journalist specializing in science and technology. She has worked for national magazines, philanthropic organizations, and tech clients in the U.S. and

Canada, producing content about everything from Alzheimer's to artificial intelligence, and synthetic biology to science policy.

Lindsay has graduate degrees in neuroscience (McGill University) and journalism (Toronto Metropolitan University).

Tim Lougheed, Freelance Writer and Editor

A full time freelance writer and editor since 1991, Tim Lougheed has written hundreds of articles for specialized and general publications in Canada as well as internationally. He also edited Canadian Chemical News, a magazine published by the Chemical Institute of Canada, served as Executive Director of the World Federation of Science Journalists, and was managing editor of the business publication Research Money.

He is the past president of the Science Writers and Communicators of Canada, a national organization with more than 500 members across the country. His career began as a reporter with the Windsor Star and the Sault Star, then as a science writer for Queen's University. He has studied science, history of science, and journalism, earning degrees from the University of Western Ontario, University of Toronto, and Queen's University.

Ujwal Ganguly, Senior Consultant, Temple Scott Associates Inc.

As part of TSA's strategic government relations practice in Toronto, Ujwal works with a variety of clients including in the financial services sector, industry associations, and the not-for-profit space. He assist clients achieve their government relations goals, and his services include strategic communications advice, legislative monitoring and analysis, background and caucus briefings, and media tracking.

Prior to joining TSA in 2018, Ujwal served as a political assistant to a Cabinet Minister in Ontario. He has an Honours BA in International Relations from the University of Toronto, a Certificate in Public Policy from the London School of Economics and Political Science, and is currently in the process of completing a Graduate Diploma from Osgoode Hall in Canadian Law.



WHAT IS THE CANADIAN BRAIN RESEARCH STRATEGY?

The Canadian Brain Research Strategy (**CBRS**) is a pan-Canadian effort to develop a national research strategy for brain and mental health. At the core of CBRS is the conviction that we need to foster better neurological and mental well-being for all Canadians. We achieve this by leveraging our strengths to drive progress by investing in a Canadian Brain Research Initiative.

BACKGROUND

Understanding the human brain is one of the greatest and most pressing scientific challenges of our time. Our brains shape our memories, passions, and societies. Accordingly, when our brains are challenged – by neurological disorder, brain injury, mental illness, and/or addiction – the implications extend past individual health and well-being to impact global development and productivity.

Canada can harness its world-class expertise in brain research to lead a coordinated effort to optimize brain health across the lifespan. The CBRS has engaged a broad coalition of stakeholders (see details in figure below), including current and future research leaders, private and non-profit organizations, health charities, research funding agencies, industry, patients, and Indigenous partners. Through a consensus-building process, CBRS has developed a unifying framework that aligns and coordinates research efforts across the country towards a shared and pressing objective to understand the human brain for real-world impact. By implementing a national brain research initiative, Canada can optimize brain health for the benefit of all Canadians and the world.



A National Research Strategy for Brain and Mental Health Brought to You by



WHAT WE RECOMMEND

That the Government of Canada make research on the brain and mental health a national priority with targeted policies and investment in a Canadian Brain Research Initiative. The coalition convened by the CBRS believes that the time for a national initiative is now. There is a need for a coordinated approach to brain research and health, and the talent and infrastructure to support it. We have the network, partnerships, vision, and strategic plan in place. We now need the funding to catalyze this network into concerted, bold, and concrete action.

WHY IS A CANADIAN BRAIN RESEARCH INITIATIVE SO IMPORTANT NOW TO TRANSFORM THE LIVES OF CANADIANS?

- As of 2019, more than 7.5 million Canadians – 1 in 5 people – reported living with a brain condition. Research remains our beacon of hope, as the only path to prevention, treatments and cures is to gain new knowledge on the brain.
- We are verging on a new era of therapeutic breakthroughs in brain health that promise to reshape the future of millions of people worldwide. Canada must play an active role for our nation to realize the health, social, and economic benefits for our own diverse population.
- Sustained investment in a brain research ecosystem yields significant impact on economic prosperity, societal well-being, and healthcare sustainability by driving innovation and generating solutions that extend well beyond the realm of public health.

WHY IS A CANADIAN BRAIN RESEARCH INITIATIVE CRITICAL FOR BRAIN SCIENCE?

- Canada is a world leader in neuroscience and mental health research and we need a brain research initiative of our own to be able to keep up with, connect to, and draw on global efforts.
- Navigating the intricate complexities of the brain demands a comprehensive approach to brain research and health that extends across the entire lifespan and recognizes the interconnectedness of brain conditions.
- Establishing a coordinated, transdisciplinary brain research ecosystem is essential for effective understanding and intervention, while ensuring that the resulting innovations and treatments are accessible to the Canadian public.

HOW IS A CANADIAN BRAIN RESEARCH INITIATIVE AN OPPORTUNITY FOR CANADA TO LEAD?

- National-level resources to coordinate the brain research ecosystem will position Canada internationally to better develop, attract, and retain Highly Qualified Personnel. This will in turn create a critical mass of brain science talent for a spectrum of Canadian academic, industry, and other sectors to succeed.
- Brain conditions have global significance as they currently constitute the majority of disabilities in Canada and worldwide, and this will only increase with aging populations.
- Having a coordinated effort from the Government elevates the importance of this issue within the international research community, and communicates its significance to future researchers.
- "Brain Health" is a fundamental human right that should align with Canada's international commitments as well as with Federal laws and policies.

CONTACT

Jennie Z. Young, Ph.D., Executive Director – Canadian Brain Research Strategy

jennie.young@canadianbrain.ca

Write to your local Member of Parliament

- As part of our advocacy for a dedicated Canada Brain Research Initiative by the federal government, we invite you to contact your local MPs to highlight the importance of Canadian government's support of brain research.
- The objective of your letter should be to show the importance that funding from the federal government will have for brain research in Canada, its socio-economic and health impacts on society, and to encourage the government to fund dedicated brain research, and create a Canadian brain Research Initiative.
- A list of all MPs can be found in the folder that will be shared with you. You can also find your MP using your postal code in the search bar [here](#).
- If you write to your MP, make sure to mention you are a constituent – MPs pay more attention to message from their riding.
- On the next page, we have included a short template for a letter that can be used and personalized.
- If you send your letter by email, please bcc CBRS director@canadianbrain.ca so we can coordinate and keep track. The format for MP's addresses is:
firstname.lastname@parl.gc.ca

or by regular mail (no postage required)

Name of the MP/Minister
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON
K1A 0A6

Subject: Making Brain Research a National Priority

Dear MP [insert last name],

My name is **(Full name)** and I do research on **(short description, no jargon)** at **(organization)** in **(riding or city name)**. As a constituent and a scientist, I am writing to draw your attention for the vital need for making brain and mental health research a national priority with targeted investments in a dedicated Canadian Brain Research Initiative.

[If you have been in touch with your MP before, you may make a reference to that here AND/OR thank them if your organization has received any government assistance]

[Describe your research in very simple and plain language in a short paragraph]

Canada is a world leader in the fields of neuroscience and mental health research, and we need to protect its competitive advantage with a national brain research initiative to ensure we can continue being a leading contributor to global efforts. Brain research funding directly employs tens of thousands of highly qualified staff and students in good jobs and provides students with a reliable path to join the skilled workforce of Canada.

[In an anecdotal style, state the impacts you have seen as a result of your research OR how you have connected with patients/families in your research]

[Describe how research funding from the federal government towards a Canadian Brain Research Initiative can transform your work. You may also want to restate the impact of your work at present, and how it can be amplified]

Unfortunately, for the vast majority of brain disorders, including mental illness, there are limited treatment options, and for many – no cures. Research is the only hope. The only path to prevention, treatments and cures is to gain knowledge through research. I encourage you to support the creation of a dedicated Canada Brain Research Initiative, as it would be an investment in Canada's future.

Yours sincerely,

(your full name) (your title, institution)

(your physical address – to prove constituency)

(your email address and phone number)