



CANADIAN ASSOCIATION OF SCIENCE CENTRES
ASSOCIATION CANADIENNE DES CENTRES DE SCIENCES

2025-2026 **Impact Report**



Canadian Association of Science Centres

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Words from the Organization

As we reflect on the 2025–2026 year, we are proud to share a period of meaningful progress, resilience, and renewed momentum for the Canadian Association of Science Centres (CASC). Across the country, our members have continued to inspire curiosity, foster innovation, and strengthen connections between science and society at a time when these efforts have never been more important.

This year, CASC deepened its commitment to supporting a strong, collaborative national network of STEM learning leaders. Through expanded programming, strategic partnerships, and sector advocacy, we have worked to amplify the collective impact of our members while championing the vital role informal science learning plays in Canada’s future. From advancing equity, diversity, and inclusion initiatives to tackling misinformation head-on, our community continues to lead with purpose and creativity.

We have also seen encouraging growth in engagement, both within our membership and with the broader public. Together, we have reached new audiences, strengthened professional development opportunities, and created platforms for knowledge-sharing that empower institutions of all sizes. These efforts reflect the dedication and ingenuity of our members, whose work continues to shape a more informed, curious, and connected society.

This report highlights the achievements made possible through your collaboration and commitment. It also underscores the importance of continued investment in science engagement as we navigate complex global challenges and opportunities.

On behalf of the Board of Directors and the CASC team, we extend our sincere gratitude to our members, partners, funders, staff and supporters. Your passion and leadership drive this network forward, and we are excited for what lies ahead.

Together, we are building a stronger, more inclusive future for science engagement in Canada.

“Together, we are building a stronger, more inclusive future for science engagement in Canada.”



Dr. Marianne Mader
CEO, CASC



Jennifer Punch
Chair, CASC Board of Directors
COO, Discovery Centre

Who We Are

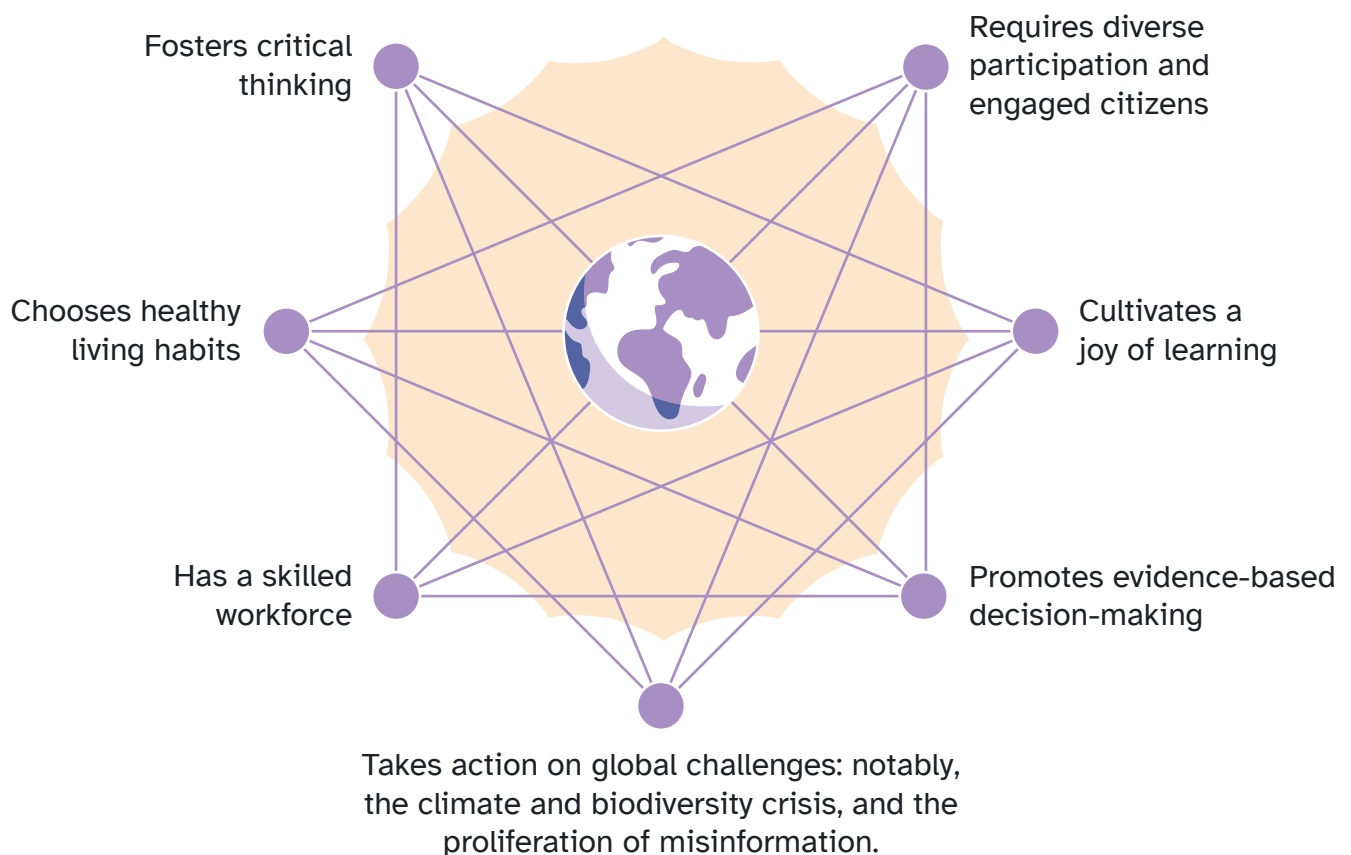
Mission:

CASC connects a national science engagement community that cultivates a joy of learning by making STEM (science, technology, engineering, math) approachable, accessible, and relevant.

Vision:

Canada has a thriving science and innovation culture of engaged citizens.

A thriving science and innovation culture across Canada



Core Values

Core values are the deeply ingrained principles that guide all of CASC's actions to achieve a thriving science and innovation culture of engaged citizens across Canada. Our core values are visible in every aspect of the organization - from operations, programs, and communications to internal policies and processes. CASC's values serve as our cultural cornerstones. They are never compromised, either for convenience or short-term economic gain.

COLLECTIVE IMPACT

We are a national network that brings diverse people and organizations together in a structured and collaborative way to achieve social change.

TRUST

We actively work to build and maintain trust by being honest, credible, transparent, authentic, reliable, and accountable.

SHARED UNDERSTANDING

We are curious and listen deeply, with compassion and humility, to understand and meet the needs of our members, partners, audiences, and staff.

DIVERSE and INCLUSIVE

We bring together people with a wide range of backgrounds, opinions, ideas, and skills, from a variety of types of organizations. We cultivate a culture of inclusion where people feel respected and valued for who they are as an individual or group and for their contributions.

EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

We strive to communicate clearly and are always learning, using approachable, relevant, and accessible strategies in all our communications, and support the advancement of science communication.

ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY

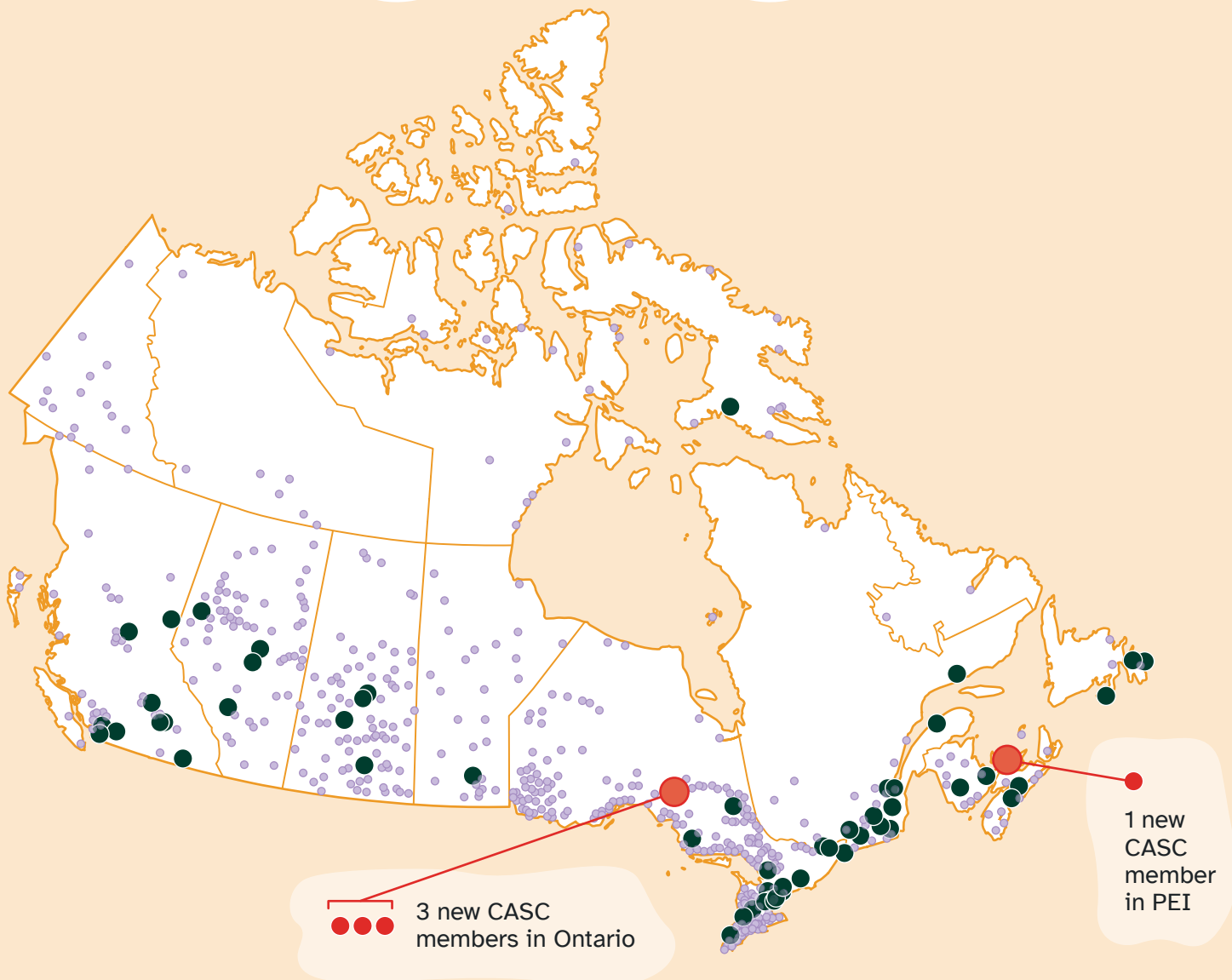
We will continue to envision and implement sustainable environmental practices across CASC operations and support leading the CASC network towards a greener future.

Map of CASC members and reach

● New CASC Member in 2025/26

● CASC Member

● Reach through youth and family programming



CASC Team

The CASC team has grown to a staff of 19, situated from coast to coast across Nova Scotia, Quebec, Ontario, Saskatchewan, Alberta, and British Columbia.



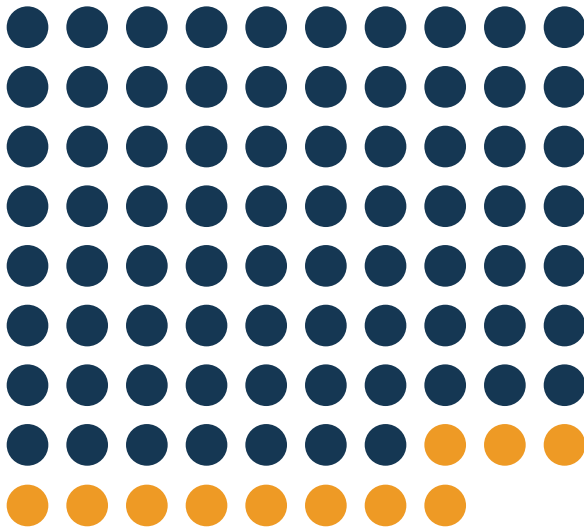
Impact in 2025-2026

Community Building

Membership Growth

In 2025-2026, the CASC network grew by 4 new members:

88 CASC members total



77

STEM Engagement and
Industry Members

11

Individual members, including
honorary life members



Over 10,000,000

people reached collectively across
the network, each year

Membership Growth

The work of our members:

- Supports the joy of lifelong STEM learning (i.e., cultivates the joy of learning science throughout their lives)
- Connects science and society
- Breaks down barriers for structurally marginalized groups
- Collaborates to tackle global and local challenges
- Actively addresses Truth & Reconciliation recommendations



Annual Conference

The 2025 CASC Conference took place from Tuesday, June 10 - Thursday, June 12, 2025. The Conference took place in Canada's most easterly province, in St. John's, Newfoundland and was generously hosted by the Johnson Geo Centre.

The first day of the conference was grounded in place with on-the-land learning in St. John's. We partnered with local organizations and social enterprises to provide a unique opportunity that allowed conference attendees to experience the wisdom of local communities and cultures.

Following the on-the-land learning experience, conference attendees gathered at the Sheraton Hotel Newfoundland for two days of immersive professional development and celebrations.



168

attendees

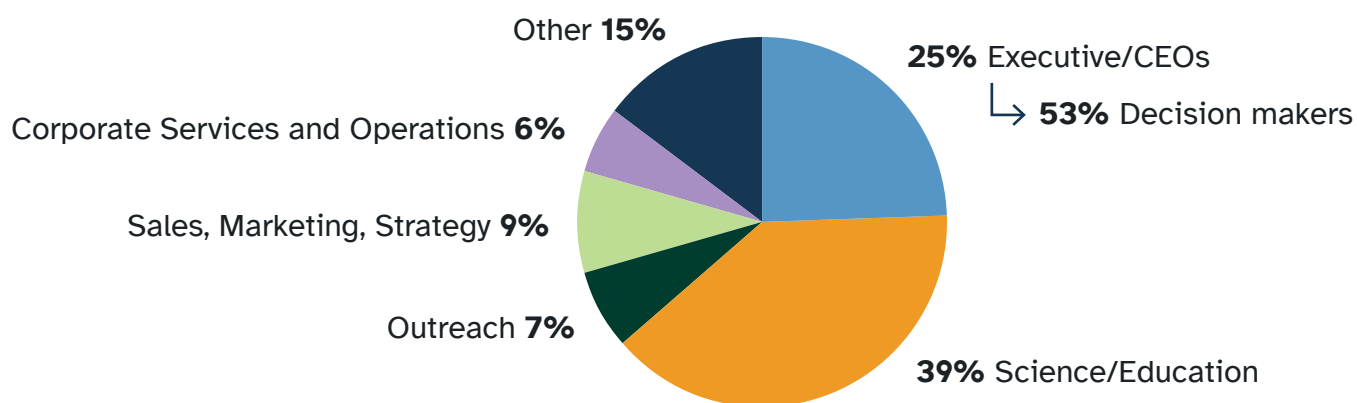


59

speakers and presenters



Attendee breakdown:



Over 60%

of attendees found the conference *greatly* relevant to their work

Over 95%

of attendees would attend the conference again

Communities of Practice

The intent of a community of practice is to build out a shared body of knowledge through regular interactions. A community of practice is a group of people who share a common concern, a set of problems, or an interest in a topic and who come together to fulfill both individual and group goals. Communities of practice often focus on sharing best practices and resources, and creating new knowledge to advance a domain of professional practice. Interaction on an ongoing basis is an important part of this. Many communities of practice rely on Community building activities including face-to-face and online meetings, webinars, discussion forums, and group activities.

17 Total CoP meetings in 2025-2026

9

Educators and Programmers

4

Science Connection

4

Indigenous Practitioners

Professional Development

STEM Equity in Action

In 2025, CASC partnered with Visions of Science to introduce the STEM Equity in Action program. This live, cohort-based series was created in direct response to a needs assessment that identified a clear call for practical tools, shared language, and deeper reflection around STEM equity.

This program kicked off with a pilot version in October 2025. 20 CASC Members were invited to experience and feedback on live, facilitated modules led by trained facilitators through Visions of Science.

The pilot version of the program consisted of five live one-hour sessions, as well as a learning management system for asynchronous learning. Each module was designed to balance reflection, analysis, and application—supporting real shifts in how STEM equity is understood and practiced within your organization.

Participants worked with real-world Tools including actionable worksheets and templates that built toward a final organizational toolkit that can be used ongoing in their organization.

Pilot participants were also required to contribute to ongoing evaluation of the pilot program, to help inform the final version which will be introduced to the CASC network and beyond in Fall 2026.



Niigani Miinigowiziiwin Accelerator Program

In 2025, CASC launched The Niiganii Miinigowiziiwin (We Give These Gifts to the Future) Accelerator Program, a transformative, collective learning journey to support CASC Members as they grow relationships with local Indigenous communities and engage more deeply with Indigenous Knowledge Systems.

Following an application process, 15 CASC Member organizations were invited to participate in this first of its kind program. Each successful organization consists of a cohort of staff from across each organization. The total number of individuals participating in the program is 65.

This first-of-its-kind program is facilitated by CASC's Systems Changer in Residence and world-renowned Indigenous Systems Scholar Dr. Melanie Goodchild, Vice President of Indigenous Knowledge, Scholarship and Research at Shingwauk Kinoomaage Gamig and Founder of the Shingwauk Indigenous Knowledge Systems Lab, in partnership with the globally-recognized Presencing Institute and systems change leaders at Wolf Willow Institute. Upon completion of the Accelerator Program, participants will be granted a micro credential from Shingwauk Kinoomaage Gamig.

The accelerator program kicked off with an online gathering in February 2025. The program will continue for three years until 2029. The cohort will meet in person at the 2026 CASC Conference in April 2026.



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TRC Reflection Series

2025 marked the 10-year anniversary of the release of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action. To commemorate this anniversary and to continue to reinforce our commitment to advancing Truth and Reconciliation across our sector, CASC hosted **TRC Calls to Action: 10 Years Later**, a series of virtual morning gatherings designed to hold space for thoughtful engagement with the ongoing work of reconciliation.

Facilitated by Amanda Fruci (CASC Director of Membership and Communications) and Merrill Matthews (CASC Membership Engagement Lead), each gathering was shaped by a different reflection question related to the Calls to Action. CASC members came together to reflect on progress made, and consider the work that still lies ahead—both individually and collectively.

Gatherings were held at both 9 am ET and 9 am PT on Monday, September 29 (What are the Calls to Action), Monday, December 8 (Where are we at with the Calls to Action) and Monday, March 2 (What is our role in implementing the Calls to Action). The final gathering of this series will take place on Friday, June 19 where we'll discuss where we go from here.

This offering was been developed in collaboration with Samantha David, Director, TREDIA Relationships and Initiatives at Ingenium.



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Public Engagement

Youth & Family Engagement

In 2023, CASC was awarded multi-year funding by Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada (ISED) through the Strategic Science Fund (SSF). A portion of this allocation has been designated for the Action to Impact flow-through funding program. Action to Impact funding supports collaborative projects between CASC members and equity deserving community organizations addressing Climate Action and Science or Health Misinformation.

Funded projects develop programming for families and youth and aim to increase knowledge, understanding, and motivation to take positive action, support the development of future skills, and foster youth interest in pursuing STEM careers.

The overall goals of the flow-through funding are to make STEM approachable, relevant, and accessible as part of CASC's strategic objectives.



In 2025, CASC provided over **\$650,000** in funding to support **20** climate based projects across Canada.

Online public engagement: ScienceUpFirst initiative

ScienceUpFirst is a national initiative operated by CASC that works with a collective of independent scientists, researchers, healthcare experts and science communicators working to stop the spread of misinformation. We share the best available science online in creative ways to stop the spread of misinformation, as well as we work with partners and collaborators across Canada to foster an ecosystem that bridges science, research, and society.



46 million+

impressions (number of times content was displayed) since launch in 2021



14,000

pieces of content across all platforms since launch in 2021



1.4 million+

engagements since launch in 2021



50+ collaborators including CASC members, national organizations, community organizations, science communicators, researchers and experts.



4 connections to the research ecosystem. ScienceUpFirst supports research programs and research grants at UofA, UBC, SFU, and Royal Roads University.

ScienceUpFirst continues to solidify existing partnerships and build new ones to ensure Canadians have the resources they need to navigate a complex information landscape.

Online public engagement: ScienceUpFirst initiative

Campaigns Overview

This year, ScienceUpFirst deepened its commitment to vaccine confidence by working alongside equity-deserving communities supported by the Government of Canada. We partnered with 12 content creators across Canada to produce accessible, culturally relevant vaccine education across social media platforms. Content covered Flu, COVID-19, HPV vaccines as well as vaccines that are especially important during pregnancy. All content, as well as additional vaccine resources, can be found on our Science Champions page. Additionally, in response to the rise in measles cases in 2025, we launched a dedicated Measles Resource Page, an evidence-based hub featuring FAQs, myth-busting content, and videos from six parliamentarians.

We completed the first year of the Working Together Against Sexual and Reproductive Health Misinformation project, a partnership with the Canadian Association of Science Centres, the Partnership for Women's Health Research, and Ganawishkadawe – The Centre for Wise Practices in Indigenous Health, with support from the Government of Canada. The project focused on reducing barriers to accurate health information for Indigenous, racialized, and 2SLGBTQIA+ communities, producing social media posts, short videos, and expert interviews shared through our platforms and partner networks. The second year of the project is set to bring even more content plus multiple in-person engagements.

In September 2025, ScienceUpFirst helped bring together over 20 organizations from Canada's biomedical, clinical, research, and health care communities — including the CMA and 13 provincial medical associations — to endorse a joint statement on the importance of science and the harms of health misinformation. The #ScienceMatters statement received widespread attention, including coverage by CBC and The National, and sparked significant public engagement online.

Across all of this work, ScienceUpFirst continued producing content to counter misinformation on vaccines, women's health, 2SLGBTQIA+ health, and nutrition; while also creating resources to strengthen critical thinking and tools to spot and stop the spread of misinformation. ScienceUpFirst continues to solidify existing partnerships and build new ones to ensure Canadians have the resources they need to navigate a complex information landscape.

Science Literacy Week

Science Literacy Week (SLW) made its debut under CASC's leadership in 2025. This national celebration, originally an NSERC initiative, showcases the diversity of Canadian science and its relevance to our daily lives. Built on the foundation established by NSERC, SLW is an ecosystem building initiative, providing infrastructure, amplification, and coordination to enable a national celebration of science rooted in community engagement.

The 2025 SLW theme was "From Sea to Space." It saw significant participation, with over 275 organizations hosting more than 125 events and engaging over 60,000 individuals across Canada.

The upcoming SLW will be held from October 4–11, 2026, and its theme will align with the CASC 2026 conference theme: Curiosity Unleashed.



275+

organizations participating
across Canada



125+

events occurring
across Canada



60,000+

individuals engaged
across Canada

Science Culture Leadership

Ecosystem Approach

Aligned with our 2024-2026 Strategic Plan, CASC has applied an ecosystem approach to work towards our vision of a thriving science and innovation culture across Canada. An ecosystem mindset means shifting from isolated programs and organizations to a connected, adaptive, and collaborative system that collectively advances public engagement with science across the country. It also requires us to recognize the informal STEM learning sector's role in the broader science and innovation ecosystem and our relationship with different sectors and actors such as researchers, formal education, health professionals, policy-makers, industry, communities, and other civic society networks.

In 2025/26, CASC's role as a relationship and knowledge broker has created opportunities for cross-sectoral collaboration, resource sharing, and co-creation of programs across regions and communities through our communities of practice, co-created professional development programs, flow-through funding programs built as collaborative opportunities for CASC members and community groups, and coalition building to address misinformation.

In 2025/26 alone, CASC has partnered with over 70 organizations to achieve the impact reported in this report. A key philosophy in the design of our programs is to build capacity and legacy not just for our association but also for our collaborators, with the intent of increasing collective resilience and impact.

Our impact emerges from relationships, not just individual outputs. For example, at a local scale, a science centre's outreach program is stronger when aligned with school curricula, local community groups, and national funding strategies. At a national level, CASC's programs are stronger when aligned and co-created with science and innovation culture, partner networks and organizations, for example CASC's Niiganii Miinigowiziiwin (We Give These Gifts to the Future) Accelerator Program which is co-created with CASC's Systems Changer in Residence and world-renowned Indigenous Systems Scholar Dr. Melanie Goodchild, Shingwauk Kinoomaage Gamig, the Presencing Institute, and Wolf Willow Institute. Another example is the successful Science Matters campaign in partnership with CASC's ScienceUpFirst initiative, over 8 national health organizations, such as the Canadian Medical Association, and 13 provincial medical associations, which endorsed a joint statement on the importance of science and the harms of health misinformation.

“An ecosystem mindset means shifting from isolated programs and organizations to a connected, adaptive, and collaborative system that collectively advances public engagement with science across the country.”

Influence and Thought Leadership

Throughout 2025/26 CASC has represented and built awareness of our network and collective impact at over 15 external events, including sector leadership on national and international working groups, as invited panelists at national conferences, and delivery of sessions and workshops addressing public trust and tackling misinformation.

Some highlights include:



Invited Canadian Expert

G7 Science Communication Working Group - presented about an Ecosystem approach to Science Culture



Member and Community of Practice Lead

Canadian Network for Environmental Education and Communication – EECOM



Invited Panelist on two Canadian Science Policy Conference sessions

- “Towards a (New) Science Culture Framework in Canada”
- “Why No One Believes the Science: Public Trust, Misinformation and Science Literacy in a Polarized World”



Invited Speaker

“Evidence, Trust, and the Future of Science” at the Celebrating the Success of Women in STEM Symposium: Breaking Barriers, Building our Future



Panel Organizer

“A Network Approach to Advancing Science Culture”, ASTC Conference



Invited Contributor

ASTC Global Trends Webinar: Misinformation, Polarization, and Distrust

Research Task Force

The CASC Research Task Force was established in 2025 to evaluate and highlight the social and economic contributions of the informal STEM learning sector. Its overarching goal is to leverage collective impact to strengthen the sector's ecosystem and build a more compelling case for funding and long-term resiliency. Collective impact is an approach where organizations commit to a common agenda, shared measurements, and mutually beneficial activities, all with the support of a backbone organization that facilitates continuous communication. As a national association, CASC serves as a backbone support and facilitator. Central to this work is a shift away from a scarcity mindset, which often focuses on competing for limited resources, towards an abundance mindset that emphasizes shared access, stability, and network strength. Through sector-wide participation and knowledge sharing, this collaboration aims to shape the future of the informal STEM learning sector in Canada and reinforce its value in Canadian society.

During its initial research stage, the task force focused on defining key foundational elements to guide its objectives and future initiatives. As part of its early work, the task force conducted an external scan of publicly available information from CASC members, including an analysis of existing vision, mission, and values statements as well as key performance indicators (KPIs) in public reporting. The purpose of this preliminary report, entitled “An External Scan of Informal Science Learning Sector, its Focus Areas and Measurement”, is to determine whether CASC members share common values, definitions, and measurements to identify synergies within the network, but also to shed light on any gaps that might be uncovered. Moving forward, the Task Force will explore whether themes could serve as a framework for alignment and assess if the network is collectively focused on future development.

“Collective impact is an approach where organizations commit to a common agenda, shared measurements, and mutually beneficial activities, all with the support of a backbone organization that facilitates continuous communication. As a national association, CASC serves as a backbone support and facilitator.”

Financial Overview

In 2025-2026, CASC's budget was **\$3.97 million**

Budget sources



- 32%** Strategic Initiative: ScienceUpFirst
- 26%** Strategic Initiative: GenAction
- 16%** Member Services and Administration
- 26%** Diversity, Inclusion, Equity, and Accessibility investments (not included above)

Sponsors and Supporters

2025 CASC Conference

Conference Host



In collaboration

Immersive



Key Speaker

Food & Beverage



Supporters



ASTC Dinner Sponsorship



ScienceUpFirst funders

Founders



Partner



Funders



Innovation, Science and
Economic Development Canada

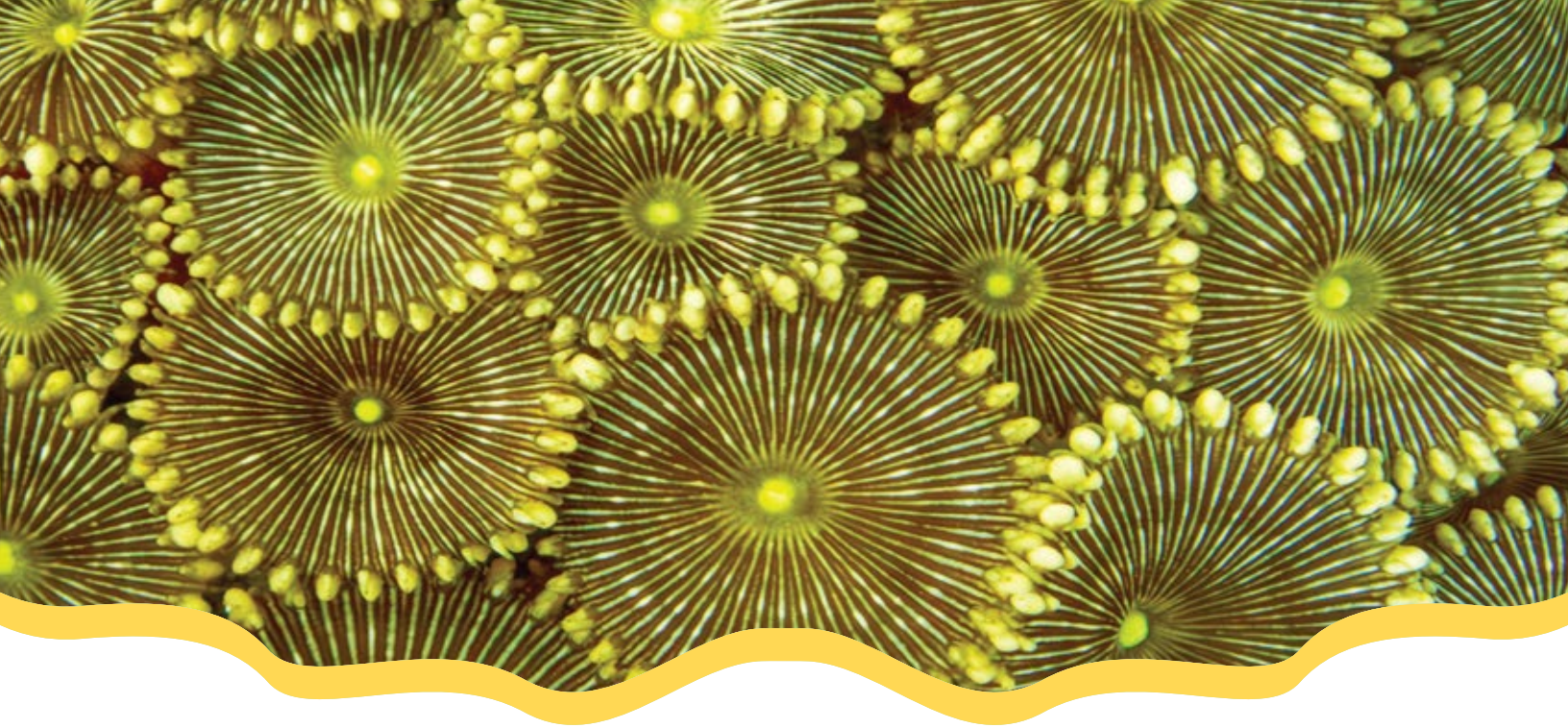
Innovation, Sciences et
Développement économique Canada



Canadian Institutes
of Health Research Instituts de recherche
en santé du Canada



Public Health
Agency of Canada Agence de la santé
publique du Canada



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