The Task Force on Knowledge System Resilience | Terms of Reference

Healthy societies are built in part on resilient knowledge systems, encompassing the people, institutions, processes, and practices that build up our store of shared knowledge, creating the basis for open debate and societal progress. Knowledge can be scientific, humanistic and artistic, flowing from and exchanged amongst universities, government, industry, arts organizations, civil society, and international bodies, both public and private.

Resilient knowledge systems are, in turn, built on values and institutions that support freedom of expression, academic freedom, freedom of the press, the rule of law, privacy and data security, the ethical use of knowledge, and human rights. They are stronger and more durable when grounded in environmental, social and economic sustainability. In the particular case of knowledge systems, sustainability also requires effective methods of data preservation. Therefore, resilient knowledge systems require robust public support.

Today, the resilience of knowledge systems is being undermined in Canada and around the globe. Abrupt and profound geopolitical, societal and economic changes are undermining core values, disabling once-central institutions, politicising research, calling into question the very idea of a fact, challenging claims of expertise, and restricting access to funding for knowledge creation. These developments pose grave threats to our collective capacity to ensure equity and maximize the public good across all spheres of human activity.

In collaboration with the G-7 Academies of Science and other institutions dedicated to supporting resilient knowledge systems within Canada and around the world, the RSC is acting at this critical juncture to create a multidisciplinary and international task force to address four questions:

a) How can we better understand the forces driving contemporary threats to independent, evidence-based and equity promoting knowledge systems, and effectively mitigate those threats while also seeking out new opportunities to advance innovation in knowledge systems?

b) How can public policymakers, institutions and researchers collaborate to renew, rebuild and strengthen public support for our knowledge systems?

c) How can we better engage and support artists, scientists and scholars at all career stages to sustain the momentum of their work at this moment of threat and potential opportunity?

d) How can public policymakers and institutions accelerate robust and equitable knowledge production, enhance nimbleness and improve mechanisms of dissemination to amplify and better measure impact within and far beyond academic settings?

The RSC Task Force on Knowledge System Resilience will work regionally, nationally and with global partners to generate research-informed insights aimed at a variety of audiences including policymakers, media of all types, societal influencers, and the wider public. Over the next year, it will commission and publicly share working papers, reports, policy briefs and data sets, deploying a variety of communications vehicles. An interim symposium will be planned for the spring of 2026 to highlight work-to-date and connect with the meeting of the G-7 Academies. The Task Force will produce a summary report by the spring of 2027.

Members

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