Strategic Plan 2024–2027

Evidence for Democracy

EMPOWERING EVIDENCE IN CANADIAN POLICY-MAKING

Message from the Executive Director

I am thrilled to share with you Evidence for Democracy's Strategic Plan for 2024-2027. This plan is not just a document; it is a testament to our dedication and passion for ensuring that scientific evidence remains a cornerstone of Canadian policy-making.

Over the next three years, we will embark on an exciting journey to enhance the impact of science on public policy. One of our most significant commitments is to more clearly connect our research at E4D with policy outcomes. To do this, we have big plans to nurture and expand our Network of Experts, providing opportunities for researchers to actively engage in policy discussions. This will allow us to play an active role in leveraging evidence in conversations surrounding misinformation and raise public awareness about science and research. By connecting this directly to public outreach campaigns, we will ensure that our work always resonates with and engages citizens from coast to coast. We know that these advocacy levers are essential to fostering political demand for policy outcomes.

This strategic plan is a call to action for all of us. It is a roadmap that allows us to actively engage with our community and convene a space for all to take an active role in creating a society that values knowledge, transparency, and accountability.

I am deeply grateful for the support of our board, team, partners, and supporters. Together, we have a unique opportunity to foster change in the science policy space in Canada. Let's continue to work towards a vision where evidence-informed policy is the norm and science is a trusted guide for decision-making.

With gratitude and determination,

Sarah Laframboise
Executive Director, Evidence for Democracy

Message from the Board of Directors

On behalf of the Board of Directors, we are proud to present our Strategic Plan for 2024-2027. This plan represents a bold vision for the future of Evidence for Democracy (E4D) and reflects our unwavering commitment to championing evidence-informed decision-making in Canada.

In these times of rapid change and increasing complexity, the need for reliable, science-based information in public policy has never been greater. Our new strategic plan outlines a clear path forward, emphasizing the critical role that scientists and researchers play in shaping policies that impact all Canadians.

We believe that through empowering the scientific community, taking an active role in championing evidence surrounding misinformation, and fostering public demand for science, E4D can drive meaningful change and enhance the transparency and accountability of our governance systems. Our goals are ambitious, but they are grounded in the belief that a society that values and integrates scientific evidence into decision-making processes is better equipped to address the challenges of today and tomorrow.

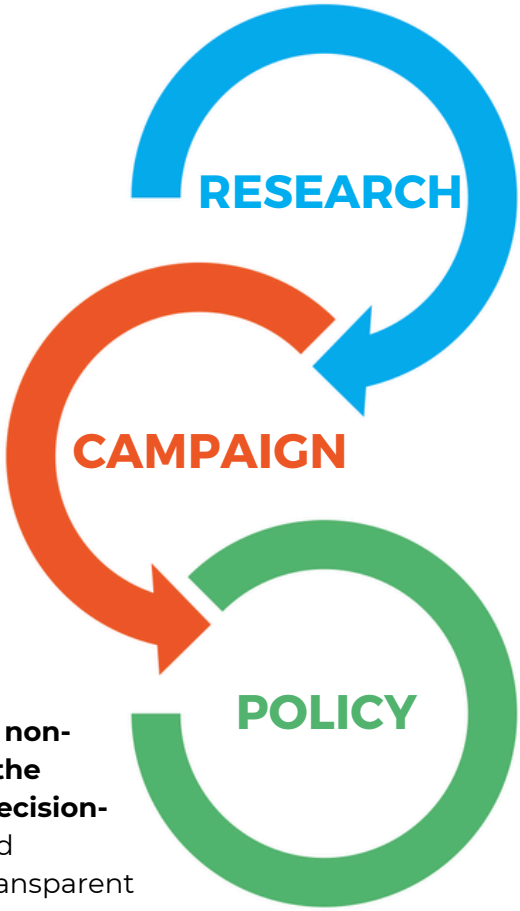
We extend our deepest gratitude to our supporters, partners, and dedicated team for their ongoing commitment to E4D's mission. Together, we will continue to advocate for a Canada where science and evidence are at the heart of policy and democracy.

Sincerely,

Wendy Palen
Chair of the Board of Directors, Evidence for Democracy

INTRODUCTION

The mission that sparked E4D began in 2012 when thousands of Canadians, concerned about the diminishing role of science and evidence in the federal government, came together in the nationwide Death of Evidence rally. Scientists and their supporters marched to Parliament Hill to stand up for what was missing: evidence-informed policy, transparency, and scientific integrity.



Mission

Evidence for Democracy (E4D) is Canada's leading non-partisan, not-for-profit organization championing the integration of scientific evidence in government decision-making. Through original research, skills training, and advocacy campaigns, we foster public demand for transparent and evidence-informed policies that benefit society. By equipping the scientific community with tools and knowledge, we empower researchers to take an active role in democracy alongside us as we bridge the gap between science and policy.

Vision

- A national culture that values science and evidence, and the important role they play in building a thriving society for everyone in Canada.
- A healthy democracy where citizens are informed and engaged, and all levels of government are both transparent and accountable.
- Researchers play an essential role in shaping policies that impact all Canadians, with their voices being actively sought out by policymakers.
- Working together to transform how science, society, and policy interact to strengthen decision-making that reflects the best available scientific consensus, and provides solutions to humanity's greatest challenges.

Theory of Change

We believe that all Canadians benefit when governments make decisions informed by the best available evidence. We leverage research on which to base issue based-campaigns that will drive policy outcomes.

By mobilizing and training the science community, we advocate to the government and foster public demand for evidence-informed policy and decision-making.

LOOKING BACK TO LOOK FORWARD:

E4D has always held a unique stronghold in the science advocacy space. In 2012, our mission was founded on the curtails of thousands of scientists and supporters who rallied behind a need for science and evidence in the federal government.

In the years that followed, we have continued to raise a voice surrounding evidence-informed policy, transparency and scientific integrity. It is these themes that have driven the work of E4D, resulting in over 15 original research reports, countless campaigns, rallies, media engagement and training opportunities for scientists.

What have we learned?

In 2019, we published a report investigating investigating how MPs utilized and perceived the use of science and evidence in policy and decision making in Canada. Our results showed overwhelmingly that **while MPs value evidence and research**, they required **improved direct access to science, research and experts.** Additionally, they recommended pursuing solutions such as creating catalogs and databases of researchers across Canada, and encouraged scientists to form direct relationships with their MPs.

Following this work, we turned to analyzing the level of transparency of evidence usage in policy-making across the Federal and Provincial governments in Canada. Overwhelmingly, governments scored low on the transparency of evidence usage meaning that it is difficult for someone outside of the government to find the evidence behind policies. In our consultations with the public service, there were doubts about whether the public had an interest in seeing this evidence. So, we asked the public through a Leger poll: **Do you want to see the evidence used in government decision-making?** 81% of Canadians felt that this was a fundamental value of the policy-making process, and that in showing key evidence used in a decision-making process, citizens would be able to better understand and evaluate this decision!

While we have shown there is a clear need to increase transparency around government decision-making, this research has also shown us that we need more evidence at the table during this process. Which brought us back to the ever-increasing gap between scientists and the policy-making process. This is where E4D steps in. **We want to better mobilize Canadian researchers to answer some of the biggest challenges facing Canada today - putting science at the forefront of decision making.**

WHAT WE HEARD FROM OUR COMMUNITY SURVEY:

In Spring 2024, we conducted a community survey as part of our strategic planning process to gather valuable feedback from our supporters and stakeholders.

Access our full community survey report HERE.

Key Takeaways:

1 Demographic Insights:

The survey indicated that a majority of survey respondents were aged 65 and above and primarily located in Ontario. Additionally, participants showed a strong educational background, with 46.10% holding doctoral or professional degrees.

2 Donor Satisfaction:

The majority of respondents expressed satisfaction with their experience as E4D donors, rating it an average of 3.97 out of 5. However, some suggested areas for improvement, including communication clarity and quantity.

3 Communication Effectiveness:

While many respondents felt well-informed about the impact of their contributions, there were suggestions to diversify communication channels and tailor messaging to reach different demographic groups effectively.

4 Engagement and Outreach:

Feedback highlighted opportunities for E4D to broaden its engagement efforts, particularly with policymakers and the public. Targeted outreach to specific regions, such as British Columbia, and language groups, such as French speakers, could enhance E4D's reach.

5 Challenges and Constraints:

Some respondents cited personal constraints, such as financial limitations, as reasons for reduced engagement or support. Additionally, concerns were raised about political interference in science and the erosion of academic freedom.

6 Gratitude and Encouragement:

Despite challenges, there was a strong sense of gratitude and encouragement among respondents for E4D's mission and efforts. Many expressed appreciation for the organization's work and offered words of encouragement to continue advocating for evidence-based policies.

Our community survey reveals a strong desire for E4D to enhance public engagement in science communication and strengthen government oversight for scientific integrity. Respondents also seek increased interaction between scientists and policymakers, more research on the use of credible scientific information, and greater transparency in decision-making. These insights highlight the community's wish for E4D to amplify its efforts in promoting transparency, scientific integrity, and evidence-informed policy solutions. While the community valued our tools and resources, they were under-utilized, indicated improved accessibility and connection of our work to the bigger picture and policy context.

Overall, the survey results provided valuable insight to inform E4D's strategic planning, communication efforts, and engagement initiatives. By addressing the feedback and suggestions provided by participants, E4D can continue to strengthen its impact and influence in promoting evidence-informed policies and decision-making across Canada.

INTRODUCING OUR REVIVED MODEL OF CHANGE:

Our new model of change at E4D is designed to ensure that our efforts are both **strategic** and **responsive**, enabling us to **address the most pressing issues at the intersection of science and policy.**

RESEARCH

Policy Engagement Committee

Subject Matter Topic
Under the themes of *Science for Policy* **or** *Policy for Science.*

Community Leaders

Network of Experts (NOE)

Convene experts

Public Consultations

Draft a "What Does the Evidence Say" report with policy recommendations

CAMPAIGN

Government Budget Consultations

Present to Government Committee(s)

Public Launch and/or Event

"Lobby Day"

Policymakers/ Government

Broader Public Campaign
Partner with media and the public to create demand for change.

Public

POLICY OUTCOME

Ex. funding, policy, bills, awareness, etc.

MODEL OF CHANGE - EXPLAINED:

Policy Engagement Committee

To ensure we focus on the most relevant and impactful issues, we will be selecting **1-3 key topics each year through** our newly established **Policy Engagement Committee**. This diverse committee includes not-for-profit leaders, academics, community leaders, and E4D staff, ensuring a wide range of perspectives. While we will choose our main topics annually, we understand the need to remain nimble. Therefore, we will keep reserve capacity to address emerging issues promptly, ensuring we can adapt to new challenges as they arise. These topics will fall under two primary areas:

- **Science for Policy:** Here, we focus on using scientific evidence to shape policy, especially in combating misinformation among Canadian policymakers and the public.
- **Policy for Science:** This includes regulations, funding, and capacity building in science, as well as our ongoing work on transparency, scientific integrity, and the roles of key scientific advisory positions.

Collaborative Report Creation

Once a topic is chosen, we will bring together our **Network of Experts (NOE)** and **key community leaders** to collaboratively draft a **"What Does the Evidence Say" report**. These reports will be non-partisan and will offer clear policy recommendations, considering the merits of alternative options and acknowledging any gaps or contradictions in the evidence. Public and community consultation will be a core component of this process, ensuring diverse voices are heard and incorporated.

Advocacy and Mobilization

To bring our reports to life and drive real change, we will employ a mix of advocacy strategies tailored to each topic. The advocacy methods we choose will depend on the topic, the available policy windows, and whether the issue is at the federal, provincial, or municipal level. This will include:

- **Direct Political Engagement:** Activities like lobby days, parliamentary receptions, government budget submissions, and presentations to government committees.
- **Public Campaigns: Initiatives:** Such as open letters, petitions, rallies, social media campaigns, and media outreach.

Tangible Policy Outcomes

At the heart of this new approach is our commitment to achieving **tangible and clearly defined policy outcomes**. Whether it's securing **funding allocations, influencing new policies, passing bills, or raising awareness,** every research and campaign effort will be tightly linked to these goals.

E4D'S GOALS FOR 2024-2027:

1 Empower the Scientific Community to Engage in the Policymaking Process

Why?

- There is a **gap between scientists and policymakers**, and an increasing need for more connections between these communities. This is a two-way relationship, policymakers have an ever increasing need for reliable, unbiased information, while scientists require an audience and connection to translate their research into real world impact.
- In light of many of today's grand challenges, there is a **strong desire for more evidence and science to be available** for integration into policy and at the table for decision-making.
- Scientists and researchers have a desire to learn more about the policy landscape in Canada, and **need more access to training and resources** to engage in this process.

What E4D Will Do:

- **Create a Science Advocacy Hub:** We're building a vibrant online community where scientists can share their advocacy experiences and learn from one another through newsletters and our "Roots of Change" blog.
- **Expand Our Network of Experts (NOE):** We're revitalizing our network to connect more experts with opportunities to influence policy, ensuring their knowledge reaches those who shape our laws.
- **Train Future Leaders:** Our Science to Policy Accelerator (S2PA) program will offer workshops, training, and online courses to equip the next generation of researchers with the skills they need to effectively communicate and advocate for science.
- **Strengthen Partnerships:** We're deepening our connections with key stakeholders and partners to amplify our collective impact.

E4D'S GOALS FOR 2024-2027:

2 Champion Campaigns Surrounding Misinformation and Disinformation Amongst Policymakers

Why?

- **Misinformation and disinformation pose significant threats to informed policymaking and public trust in science.** By addressing these issues, we can ensure that policies are informed by the best available information and that the public remains well-informed.
- This is essential for maintaining the **integrity of the scientific process and protecting democratic processes** from the harmful effects of false information.

What E4D Will Do:

- **Raise Awareness:** Highlight how misinformation affects our politics and decisions, ensuring Canadians understand its dangers.
- **Expert-Led Reports:** By bringing together leading experts, we'll produce in-depth reports on pressing issues, providing clear, evidence-based perspectives.
- **Engage Policymakers:** E4D will host events to facilitate direct conversations between experts and policymakers, fostering a better understanding of science-based evidence in policy.

E4D'S GOALS FOR 2024-2027:

3 Foster Public Demand for Science and Evidence

Why?

- Public demand for science and evidence ensures that decision-makers are **held accountable** and that policies reflect the **best available knowledg**e.
- Educating and engaging the public builds a more informed society **that values and supports scientific inquiry.** This, in turn, promotes a culture of evidence-informed decision-making at all levels of government and society.
- **Public demand provides a lever for generating political demand and will**. In election times, this demand will also ensure that science and evidence are integrated into election platform design, and become an essential factor in the democratic process, government design and more.

What E4D Will Do:

- **Public Awareness Campaigns:** Every initiative we undertake will include efforts to inform and engage the public, highlighting the importance of science in daily life and policy.
- **Build Trust:** Through transparent communication and consistent outreach, we'll strengthen the public's trust in E4D's mission and work.
- **Public Involvement**: We'll invite the public to participate in our research projects and consultations, ensuring their voices are heard and valued.
- **Educational Outreach:** We will continue to build the EvidenceMattersToMe.ca platform, educational materials, and media collaborations will help debunk false claims and promote accurate science reporting.
- **Social Media Engagement:** We'll leverage social media to connect with a broader audience, share our campaigns, and inspire public participation.

Evidence for Democracy

Visit www.evidencefordemocracy.ca

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