



Government
of Canada

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Canada

Strategic Science Fund: **2024/25 Annual Report** **Ovarian Cancer Canada**

Approved by Board of Directors August 21, 2025



A. Objectives Advanced and Progress Towards Achieving Expected Results

Ovarian Cancer Canada (OCC) activities funded by SSF aim to advance two federal objectives:

- 1) Increasing the quality of internationally competitive and leading-edge research in areas critical to the health, economic and social, well-being of Canadians; *and*
- 2) Accelerating the exchange of research results and the translation of this knowledge into action in Canada and abroad.

We have made significant progress in both areas in 2024/25. End-users (e.g., ovarian cancer patients, healthcare providers) and key partners (e.g., collaborators, funding partners) played central roles throughout; this is described more in Section B (Activities Undertaken). Key performance indicators related to each objective are summarized and discussed below.

Objective 1: Support leading-edge ovarian cancer (OC) research and build national capacity.

The vast majority (88%) of 2024/25 SSF funds were allocated directly to research, including research projects and pan-Canadian scientific resources. A total of 16 new research projects were funded in 2024/25 (**Table 1**), including 12 (75%) co-funded with partner organizations such as Cancer Research Society (CRS), Ovarian Cancer Relief Foundation and Canadian Cancer Society (CCS). New research projects are being led by scientists represented by 5 Canadian provinces and at different stages of their career (including 7 early career researchers). Twenty-five highly qualified personnel - including research technicians, grad students, post-doctoral fellows, project managers, research coordinators and data technicians - are also being partially or fully funded through SSF-funded research projects.

A diverse portfolio of research projects is being funded, including representation of different types of OC, types of research, and steps along the OC care continuum (**Figure 1**). Of note, two early-phase clinical trials focused on testing novel methods for early detection of ovarian cancer were funded (news link – [EN](#); [FR](#)). While currently pilot projects expected to enrol a small number of patients, these projects could hold immense promise for future patients if found to be successful. Examples of pan-Canadian scientific resources supported in 2024/25 include well-established biorepositories in ON, QC and BC (typical annual activities shown in **Figure 2**), and the development of a national registry of mucinous and clear cell OC in partnership with the Society of Gynecologic Oncology of Canada (GOC). These resources will provide the raw materials to drive translational OC research progress in Canada and beyond, for years to come.

Objective 2: Expand the exchange of ovarian cancer research results and knowledge. While only 4% of 2024/25 SSF funds were directly allocated to this objective, we were able to provide many opportunities for knowledge exchange among medical and scientific trainees, healthcare providers, researchers, patient partners and OCC's national community of patients and donors. Some examples that illustrate our reach include:

- ✓ **110** participants in 8 distinct training opportunities
- ✓ **600** participants in 16 distinct learning opportunities, spanning 42 hours
- ✓ **6** funding partners, including 4 new to OCC
- ✓ **10** academic institutions as Ultimate Recipients, including 4 new to OCC
- ✓ **96** research engagements involving OCC's national Patient Partners in Research (PPiR) team
- ✓ **8 (50%)** of newly funded research projects with end-user partners integrated from the start
- ✓ **11** research projects anticipated to result in improved products, services and/or processes (e.g., sharable research models, commercially available early detection test/s, educational videos, predictive biomarkers for treatment, digital apps and online tools)

- ✓ 5 new scientific publications of OCC-funded projects
- ✓ A combined 864 live attendees and views of educational webinars on immune oncology, genetic testing, risk-reducing surgery and equity issues relevant for OC patients

Table 1. New research projects funded in 2024/25*

Lead scientist (province)	Project title	Funding partner
Atalay, Nurgul (QC)**	Unveiling the roles of Poly (ADP-Ribose) Glycohydrolase in DNA repair and Cancer (link)	CRS
Bombard, Yvonne (ON)	Adapting the Genetics Adviser digital app to support cascade testing (link)	AstraZeneca
Brodeur, Melica (QC)**	Identifying biomarkers of immune-therapy response in ovarian clear cell carcinoma (link)	OCC x CRS – Bridging the Gap competition (link)
Carey, Mark (BC)	Patient-derived xenograft models of rare estrogen receptor-positive ovarian cancers (link)	
Cook, David (ON)**	Molecular and Functional Characterization of a Patient-Derived Organoid Platform for Ovarian Cancer (link)	
Cooper, Tyler (ON)**	Proteomic Transformations of Epithelial Ovarian Cancer (link)	CRS
Dawson, Lesa (BC)	Assessing the experience of women at high risk for ovarian cancer who have received peri-operative care for risk-reducing surgery at a specialized centre (link)	AstraZeneca
Hanley, Gillian (BC)	Improving access to salpingectomy in Canada to improve equity in ovarian cancer prevention (link)	CCS
Huntsman, David (BC)	Development and characterization of humanized patient derived xenograft models for ovarian cancer (link)	
Marshall, Jean (NS)	A new approach to sustained, local, immunotherapy for ovarian cancer (link)	CRS
McCloskey, Curtis (ON)**	Targetable Cellular Ecologies in Ovarian Cancer (link)	CRS
Mcphedran, Sarah (BC)**	Uncovering novel metabolic regulators of T cell function (link)	CRS
Mueller, Christopher (ON)	The earlier detection of ovarian cancer using an mDETECT liquid biopsy (EN ; FR)	Ovarian Cancer Relief Foundation's Dawn Ride
Nachtigal, Mark (MB)	Investigating how a novel glycolipid drug kills chemotherapy-resistant ovarian cancer (link)	CRS
Neilson, Andrea (BC)**	Fallopian imaging and lavage for early-stage tubo-ovarian cancer detection (EN ; FR)	
Schrader, Intan (BC)	Evaluation of novel parent-of-origin detection sequencing tool: improving cascade testing through innovation (link)	AstraZeneca

*Only includes projects for which agreements with Ultimate Recipients were finalized by March 31, 2025. Links to OCC's Research Showcase are provided for each; translation for corresponding French article is underway if not currently listed.

**denotes early-career investigator (e.g., trainee or up to 5 years as independent investigator).

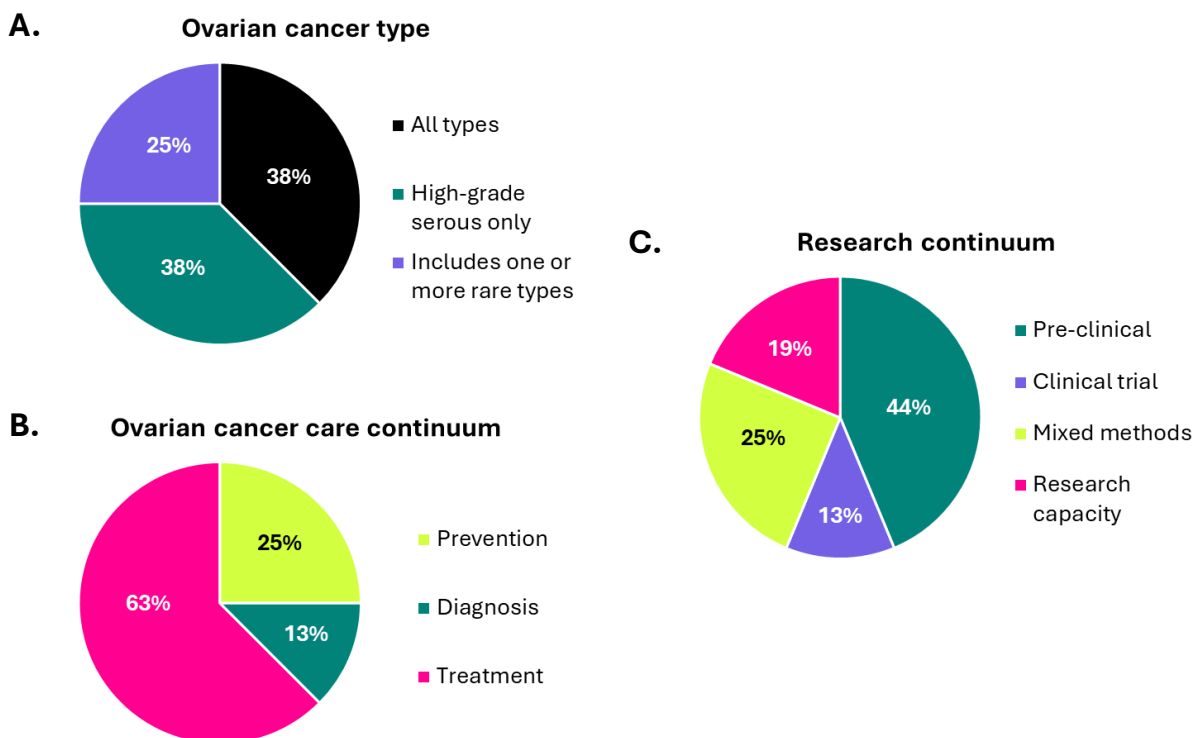


Figure 1. Breakdown of new research projects. The proportion of new research projects focused on different types of ovarian cancer (A), different stage of the ovarian cancer care continuum (B) and research continuum (C).

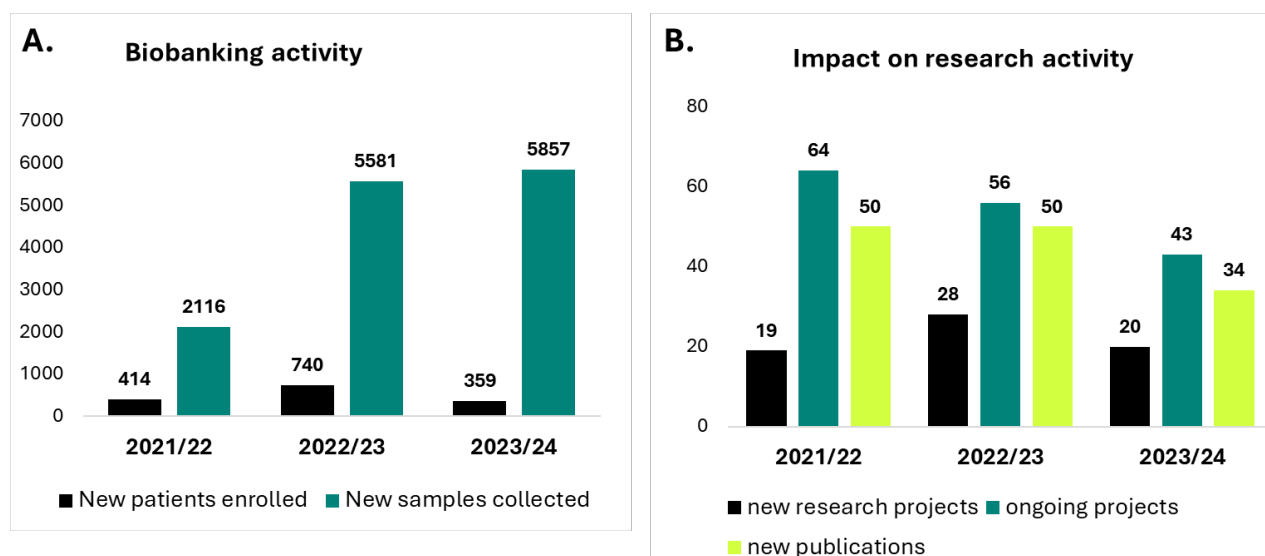


Figure 2. Annual activities of SSF-supported biorepositories. Shown is annual biobanking activity (A; including number of new patients enrolled and new samples collected) and impact on research (B; including new and ongoing research projects and new publications) for the three tissue banks and one biorepository supported by SSF funds in 2024/25.

B. Activities Undertaken

B.1 OCC-led national funding competitions

A note on process. OCC has developed a standardized process for open funding competitions, including evaluation by an independent expert review committee made up of Canadian and/or international clinical and scientific experts (“academic reviewers”) and individuals with lived experience of ovarian cancer as a patient or caregiver (“patient reviewers”). Selection of reviewers is made in compliance with OCC’s *Research Conflict of Interest and Confidentiality Policy* (accessible [here](#)). All committee members are required to sign a *Declaration of Understanding and Compliance with Organizational Policies Form* (accessible [here](#)), prior to receipt of their assigned applications.

Each proposal is initially reviewed and scored by at least two academic reviewers and a team of two trained patient reviewers, using well-defined evaluation criteria ([academic](#), [patient](#)). At the final committee meeting, the proposal is presented, discussed and scored (**Figure 3**). Final application scores and the rank order listing is reviewed by OCC leadership, with funding recommendations made to the CEO/OCC Board of Directors for approval.

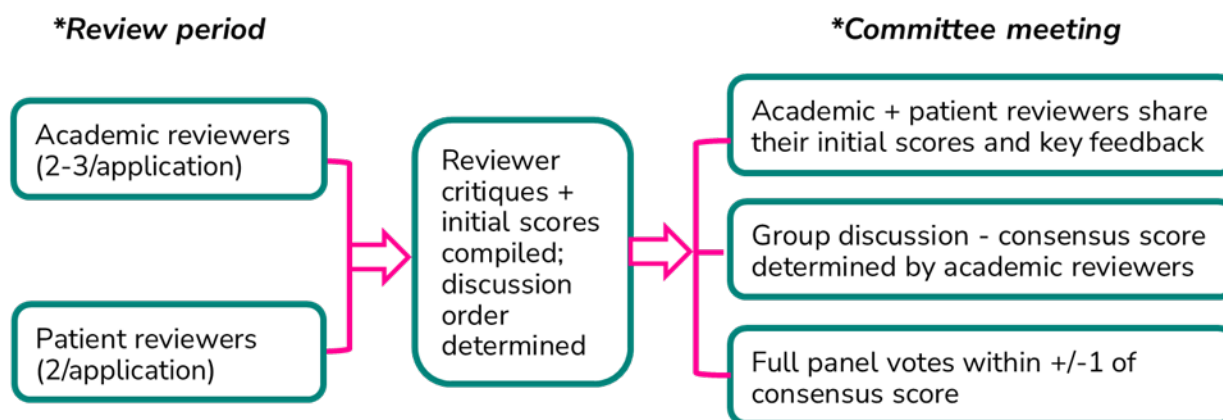


Figure 3. Standardized decision-making process for OCC-led funding competitions. Evaluation criteria for academic reviewers include project fit, scientific merit, potential for impact, research team, patient engagement and lay summary, which patient reviewers assess importance, relevance, impact and lay summary. **reviewers are excluded from reviewing or discussing any application/s for which they have a conflict of interest.*

Ovarian cancer research models open call (complete). This competition ran from September-December 2024, with funding agreements finalized in February and March 2025. The goal was to fund projects focused on: 1) development or characterization of high-fidelity, sharable research models of OC; 2) knowledge transfer or training opportunities related to the development and/or use of high-fidelity research models of OC. Competition scope (outlined in guidelines [here](#)) was set through an open-invitation priority setting meeting, with 25 members of the OCC Models Consortium in attendance. Eight applications were submitted, with three projects recommended for funding based on expert scientific review and open consensus discussion by Consortium members. *Total OCC x SSF investment of \$308,738.*

Early detection pilot award open call (complete). This competition ran from September-December 2024, with funding agreements finalized in March 2025. The goal was to fund discovery, pre-clinical and translational research pilot projects with the greatest potential to drive advancements in the early detection of OC ([here](#)). Four applications were submitted, with two recommended for funding based on the standardized OCC funding decision process. *Total OCC x SSF investment of \$100,000.*

Pragmatic clinical trials open call (ongoing as of March 31, 2025). This competition ran from September 2024 – April 2025, with funding agreements finalized in June 2025. The goal was to fund one or more pragmatic clinical trials with the greatest potential to drive advancements in OC care in Canada (guidelines [here](#)). Innovative and patient-centred ideas that could be integrated into the existing healthcare system were encouraged. Up to \$800,000 was made available through partnership with BioCanRx; partner funding was contingent upon submission of a high-ranking application focused on immune oncology in OC. Competition priorities were set through a bilingual open call for patient community feedback in September 2024, and communicated to prospective applicants through competition guidelines and presentation at a multidisciplinary pragmatic clinical trials workshop in November 2024 (detailed in Section B.3). Five applications were submitted, with one recommended for funding based on the standardized OCC funding decision process (project details to be included in 2025/26 report). *Total OCC x SSF investment of \$400,000.*

Survivorship open call (ongoing as of March 31, 2025). Planning for this unique competition - named **RISE** (**R**esearch **I**mpact in **S**urvivorship and **E**ngagement) - started in January 2025, with funding decisions expected in December 2025. This unique patient-driven competition will fund varied types of research (e.g., translational, psychosocial, mixed methods, pragmatic) that aims to address one or more survivorship priorities identified by ovarian cancer patients and caregivers in a recent national survey (guidelines [here](#); [EN](#) and [FR](#) overview of survey). Twenty-six patients and caregivers from 9 provinces and territories worked with OCC and funding partner CRS to co-develop the competition framework, survey questions and research priorities. Twenty applications are currently undergoing a preliminary academic review, with patients and caregivers driving final funding recommendations. *Total OCC x SSF investment of \$100,000.*

B.2 Partner-led national funding competitions

CRS-led competitions (complete). OCC joined as a 50:50 partner for CRS's 2024 annual competition cycle, including joint funding of Next Generation of Scientists awards (NGS; guidelines [here](#)), Doctoral Research Awards (DRA; guidelines [here](#)) and Operating Grants (OG; guidelines [here](#)). Funding by OCC was contingent upon submission of OC-focused applications that were highly ranked through CRS's independent review process. Six OC-focused projects (2 NGS, 2 DRA, 2 OG) met these criteria and were co-funded by OCC. *Total OCC x SSF investment of \$250,000.*

BioCanRx-led competitions (ongoing as of March 31, 2025). OCC joined as a 50:50 partner for BioCanRx's 2025 Open Call for Proposals (Cycle 3 Call 1). Two OC-focused grants were highly ranked through BioCanRx's independent review process, including one Catalyst grant and one Enabling Grant (guidelines [here](#)). While funding decisions were finalized in February 2025, agreements between Ultimate Recipients and OCC were not finalized until June 2025 (project details to be included in 2025/26 report). *Total OCC x SSF investment of \$250,000.*

B.3 Knowledge exchange and mobilization activities

Canadian Conference on Ovarian Cancer Research (CCOCR). CCOCR is a biennial conference, established in 2002, that brings together ovarian cancer researchers from across Canada to exchange knowledge, foster connections, and drive innovation. The 11th CCOCR took place in May 2024 in Halifax, with **169** delegates representing **9** provinces and territories in attendance. A few highlights of programming included:

- ✓ Foundational workshop for trainees - attended by **53** research and clinical trainees, representing **16** research institutions from Canada, the United States and Europe;
- ✓ Patient-focused workshop providing an overview of emerging treatments, prevention, equity issues, survivorship and the 'mechanics' of research – attended by **47** patient partners and local patients and caregivers;
- ✓ Plenary sessions by invited Canadian and international experts, highlighting key challenges and advances in prevention, diagnosis, treatment and survivorship;
- ✓ Oral presentations and poster sessions featuring work by trainees, patient partners, and clinical and scientific investigators at varying career levels;
- ✓ Networking opportunities for trainees, including a 'meet-the-experts' breakfast with established investigators, a trainee-survivor lunch and Partnered Perspectives Program.

Educational webinars. We hosted a series of virtual presentations for both the research community (independent investigators and trainees) and the broader patient community, including:

- ✓ Health Equity Series – “Towards Equity in Cancer Genomics: identifying racial disparities in cancer genetics services” with Dr. Yvonne Bombard, Unity Health, Toronto (**16** live research attendees)
- ✓ Health Equity Series – “The Importance of the Indigenous Cancer Sharing Circle” with Niki Fehr, Wellspring Cancer Support, Alberta (**14** live research attendees)
- ✓ Health Equity Series – “Equitable Access to Cancer Care” with Robin Urquhart, Dalhousie University, Halifax (**19** live research attendees)
- ✓ OCC x BioCanRx – “Immune oncology in ovarian cancer: current challenges and new possibilities” with Dr. Anne Goodbody, Patient Partner in Research, Dr. Jeanette Boudreau, Dalhousie University, Marie-Pierre Hardy, Institute for Research in Immunology and Cancer, Dr. Brad Nelson, BC Cancer (**35** live research attendees)
- ✓ Ovarian Cancer Prevention Task Force Series – “Genetic testing can save lives” with Michaela Schellenberg, Health Sciences Centre, Winnipeg and Robin Martin, previvor (**63** live attendees, **256** [youtube](#) views)
- ✓ Ovarian Cancer Prevention Task Force Series – “Surgery to prevent ovarian cancer: personalizing your plan” with Dr. Lesa Dawson, BC Cancer, Christa Slatnik and Cindy Sanchez, previvors (**67** live attendees, **394** [youtube](#) views)

Pragmatic clinical trials workshop. OCC collaborated with the GOC to host the inaugural Pragmatic Clinical Trials Workshop in November 2024, attended by 29 researchers, oncologists and patients across Canada (news link [here](#)). The goal of the workshop was to educate researchers on the principles of pragmatic clinical trials and how to operationalize them, and to facilitate open discussions on pragmatic clinical trial ideas and patient perspectives. The learnings from this workshop were published in Current Oncology ([here](#)), with members of OCC's PPiR team included as co-authors.

Bilingual research communications. While competition guidelines, funding applications and scientific reports are typically in English only, other public-facing communications – whether on our website,

email newsletters or social media - about our research activities, projects and progress are in English and French. Web pages that highlight our research in both languages include (* indicates key pages):

- ✓ ***Research Showcase** – provides overview of specific research projects funded or conducted by OCC, including information on lead scientists, funding partners, project scope and associated publications or news articles ([EN](#); [FR](#))
- ✓ ***Research Blog** – features news and stories related to research activities that we are involved in and/or fund ([EN](#); [FR](#))
- ✓ ***For Researchers** – provides an overview of scientific resources, research policies and processes, competition guidelines/application documents for current funds and awards, and information on how to collaborate with our national PPiR team ([EN](#); [FR](#))
- ✓ **About Our Research** – high-level impact of our comprehensive research program; acts as landing page for additional research-focused content ([EN](#); [FR](#))
- ✓ **Our Research Approach** – overview of our unique research model, spanning the full research and ovarian cancer care continuum ([EN](#); [FR](#))
- ✓ **Our Funding Partners** – overview of key funding partners that help maximize the impact of our research investments ([EN](#); [FR](#))
- ✓ **Our Research Impact** – overview of how we are impacting collective research progress in Canada and beyond ([EN](#); [FR](#))
- ✓ **Get Involved in Research** – provides an overview of ways in which the patient community can get involved, either as a research participant or research partner ([EN](#); [FR](#))
- ✓ **Our Research Community** – high-level overview of how OCC collaborates with the scientific and clinical research community to accelerate progress ([EN](#); [FR](#))

B.4 Establishing best practices for patient engagement in research

We co-developed a series of best practices for researchers in collaboration with our national team of patient partners, based on learnings from 5 years of patient engagement experience. The process we used to develop these best practices, in addition to real-world examples and testimonials to illustrate their impact, was published in *Current Oncology* ([here](#)). This publication resulted in invited talks to diverse audiences (research trainees, clinical investigators) at international meetings in early 2025/26, and consultations with other groups interested in setting up patient engagement programs at their own institutions. The unique, patient-centered approach underlying our RISE competition has also been accepted for oral presentation at the next Canadian Conference on Cancer Research, happening in November 2025.

C. Response to Previous SSF Feedback

Feedback received to date has been primarily related to our initial application. The feedback provided by the SSF Expert Panel on our original \$15.6M, five-year proposal has been integrated into our plan to the extent possible, considering that the final funded plan represents 20% of the original proposal. Specific reviewer feedback related to partnerships and fundraising plans are addressed through high prioritization of these initiatives in operational planning, enabling OCC to attract \$2,159,825 (72% additional) in matched and/or leveraged funds from partners. The original fundraising plan was based on a 5-year funding cycle, and a revised plan under our 2-year cycle does not leave sufficient time for donor cultivation for specific projects. This was addressed through modification of matched funding

requirements in our contribution agreement. Further to feedback regarding Governance and diversity among the Board and senior leadership, OCC maintains the highest commitment to strong governance practices. In addition to regular governance reviews through our previous accreditation with Imagine Canada, OCC has an active Governance & Nominating Committee, chaired by our Board's Vice-Chair with strong legal expertise in governance. Our Board and staff recruitment is very much focused on recruitment of individuals with diverse backgrounds, ethnicity, experience, regional representation and perspective and has prioritized outreach that supports diversity in accordance with OCC's Diversity, Equity and Inclusion policy.

D. Equity, Diversity and Inclusion

We have made progress towards greater representation of under-represented groups (23% vs. 8% at time of SSF application submission), despite a small Board & Senior Management team (**Figure 4**). Recruitment of new members to the Board of Directors has followed principles outlined in OCC's *Equity, Diversity and Inclusion Policy* ([here](#)). Individuals who identify as women continue to make up a large proportion of the team, likely a reflection of our organization's focus on women's and gynecologic health.

We have made a dedicated effort towards all EDI objectives in our 2024/25 Corporate Plan, which we will continue to build on in 2025/26:

- 1) *Intentional relationship building with individuals and communities typically under-represented in ovarian cancer research.*
 - ✓ Targeted recruitment of individuals from rural and remote communities, and with rare types of ovarian cancer, to our national PPiR team (current team N=23; **Figure 5**).
 - ✓ Focused meetings and/or invited presentations by individuals and organizations representing the LGBTQ2+, Indigenous, racialized and lower socioeconomic communities.
- 2) *Co-designing and co-decision-making with the patient community.*
 - ✓ Co-design and interpretation of bilingual surveys accessible to the national patient community to identify priorities for the pragmatic clinical trials and survivorship competitions led by OCC;
 - ✓ Full integration of patient reviewers in OCC-led competitions and in partnership with CRS;
 - ✓ Co-development of best practices for patient engagement and novel patient-centered competition framework (RISE);
 - ✓ Invited presentations and panel discussions by patient and previvor partners at national research meetings (e.g., CCOCR) and educational webinars (e.g., with BioCanRx and the Ovarian Cancer Prevention Task Force).
- 3) *Open and fair competition.* OCC-led and partner-led competitions were open to the entire ovarian cancer research community, with efforts to expand our reach beyond well-established (mid-late career) biomedical and lab-based researchers who traditionally apply to our competitions. The impact of these efforts is shown in **Figure 6**.

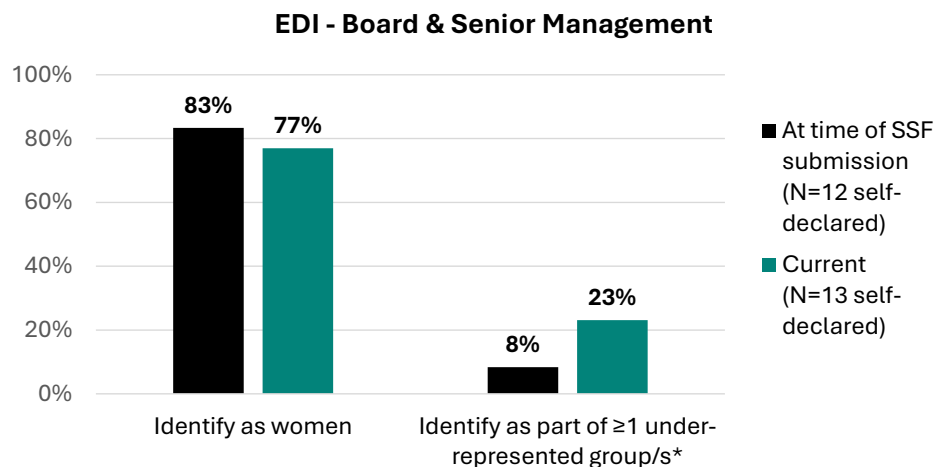


Figure 4. Representation by gender and under-represented groups on senior team. *includes individuals who identify as part of a visible minority community, LGBTQ2+, Indigenous and/or a person with disabilities.

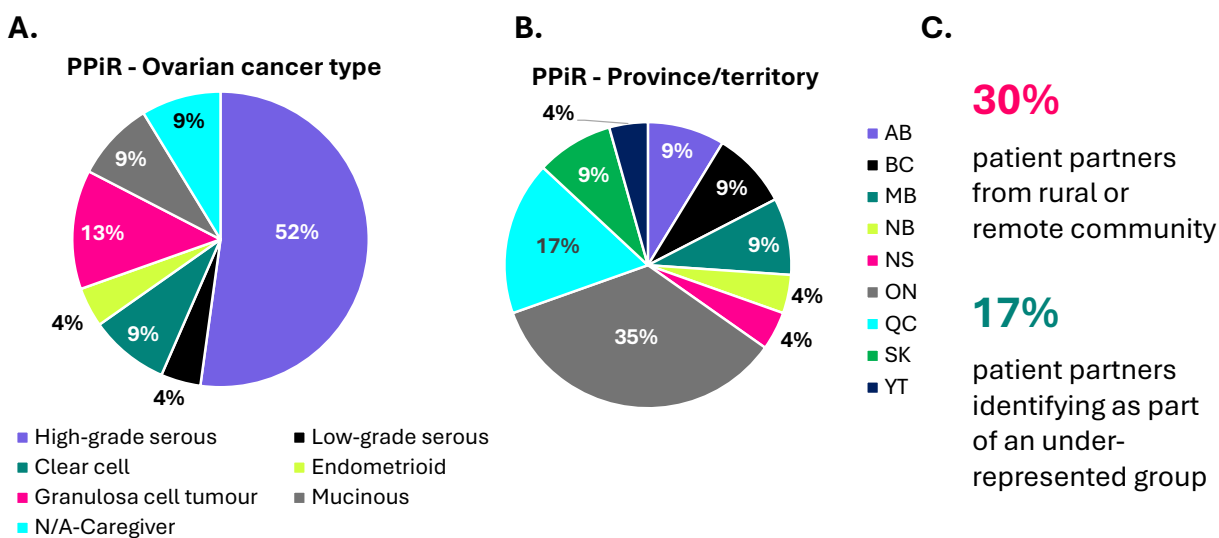


Figure 5. PPiR team demographics. Our current team of 23 patient partners represent diverse perspectives based on age (not shown), type of ovarian cancer and/or caregiver status (A), province or territory of residence (B), and other variables such as belonging to a rural/remote community or under-represented group (C; e.g., visible minority community, LGBTQ2+, Indigenous).

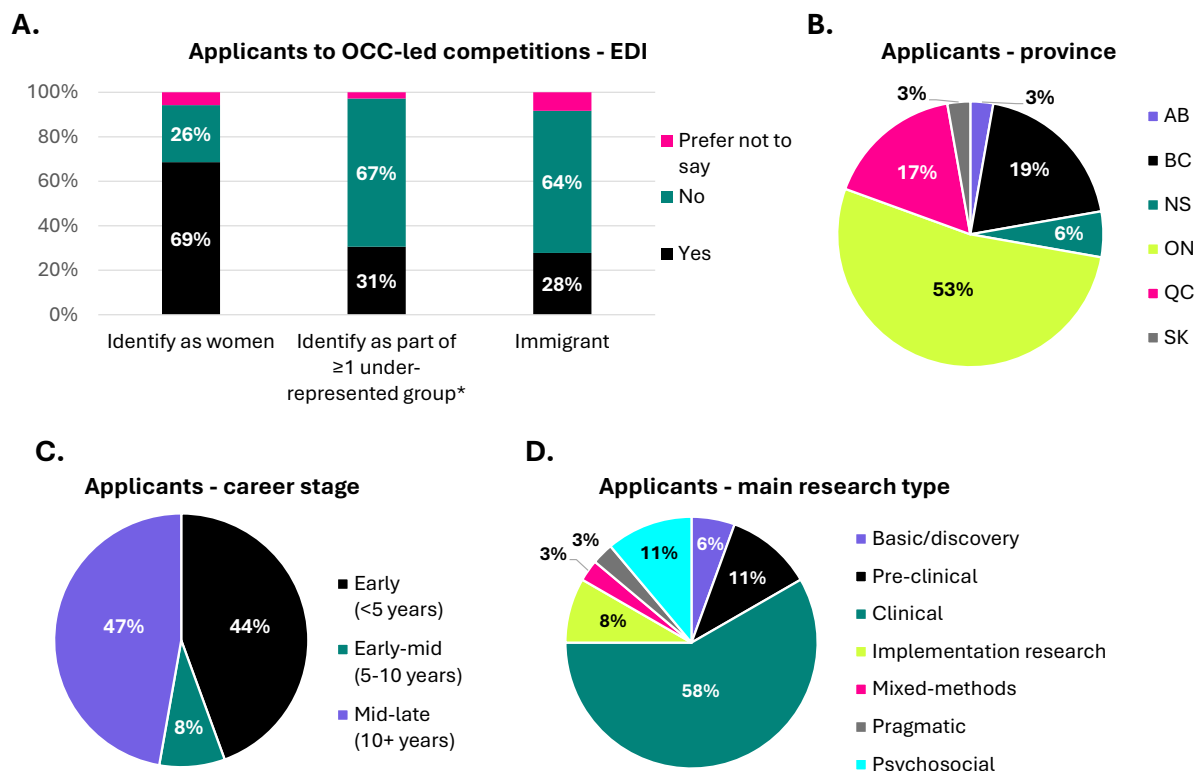


Figure 6. Characteristics of principal applicants to OCC-led competitions in 2024/25. We were able to attract a diverse pool of principal applicants, based on variables such as gender identity, belonging to an under-represented group and immigrant status (A), geographic location (B), career stage (C) and type of research (D).

- 4) **Funding of equity-focused research.** We directly funded or provided in-kind support to several equity-focused research projects and initiatives in 2024/25, with many more expected in 2025/26.
 - ✓ **Improving access to opportunistic salpingectomy in Canada to improve equity in ovarian cancer prevention** (Dr. Gillian Hanley and Dr. David Huntsman, BC Cancer; [link](#)). This initiative aims to: (a) understand the barriers to uptake of preventive measures such as opportunistic salpingectomy in rural and remote regions and (b) begin building intentional partnerships with Indigenous communities to co-develop research on specific barriers in these communities. *Total OCC x SSF investment of \$72,000.*
 - ✓ **Establishing a national rare gynecologic cancer registry – a pilot study of clear cell and mucinous ovarian carcinomas** (Dr. Mark Carey, BC Cancer; [link](#)). OCC is supporting the work of the GOC Rare Cancer Community of Practice to establish a rare gynecologic cancer registry, starting with clear cell and mucinous ovarian cancer. This national resource will help patients affected by these cancers by facilitating future projects, linking clinicians with specific disease interests, understanding practices across the country, sharing knowledge, fostering ongoing research collaborations, and helping patients access clinical trials. *Total OCC x SSF investment of \$60,000.*
 - ✓ **Maximizing opportunities for genetic testing for ovarian cancer risk genes** (Dr. Janice Kwon, BC Cancer and the GOC National BRCA Collaborative). We continued to provide in-

kind support to the National BRCA Collaborative, which aims to maximize opportunities for ovarian cancer prevention through genetic testing and risk-reducing surgery. 2025/26 efforts will focus on building relationships with Indigenous communities, given their under-representation in genetic testing initiatives, barriers to access and harms caused by historical forced sterilization practices.

- ✓ **Toward equity in cancer genetics: identifying racial disparities in cancer genetics services** (Dr. Yvonne Bombard, Unity Health). We provided in-kind recruitment support for this important initiative as part of our Prevention Task Force work.

E. Financial Performance

The breakdown of 2024/25 funds spent by category is shown in **Figure 7** and **Tables 2-3**.

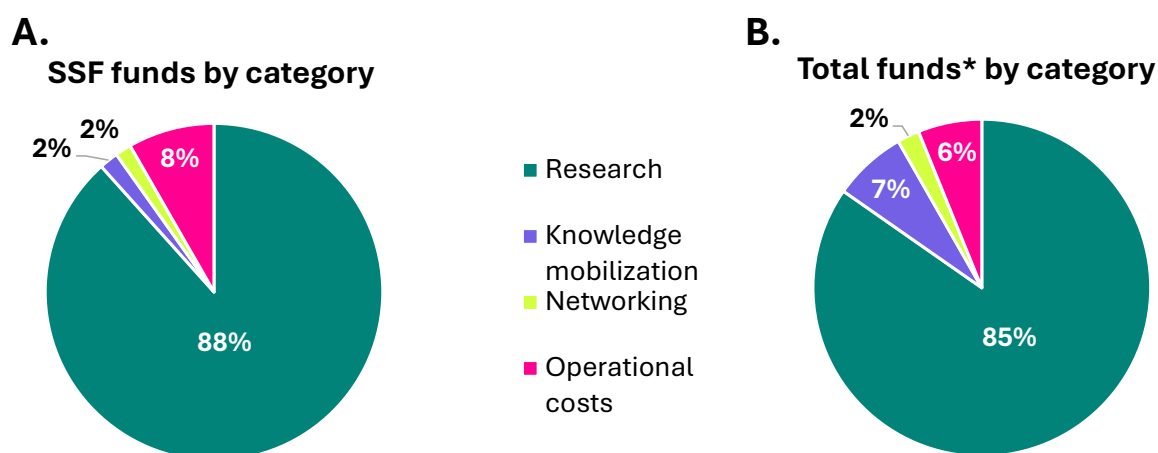


Figure 7. Breakdown of 2024/25 funds spent* by category. Spending limited to SSF funds (A) or total including non-SSF partner funds (B). *includes 4% of committed funds carried over to 2025/26.

Table 2. 2024/25 SSF funds: revenue & expenditures

Category	SSF budget ^{&}	SSF actual*	Carry-over to 2025/26**	Total (actual + carry-over)
Research	\$1,328,608	\$1,284,263	\$41,199	\$1,325,462
Knowledge mobilization	\$35,392	\$8,853	\$18,429	\$27,282
Networking	\$20,000	\$23,120	\$0	\$23,120
Operational costs***	\$116,000	\$124,136	\$0	\$124,136
Total	\$1,500,000	\$1,440,372	\$59,628	\$1,500,000

[&]as per Year 1 Corporate Plan; *funds distributed to Ultimate Recipient/s as appropriate; **funds committed but will be spent in 2025/26 due to timing of funding agreements with Ultimate Recipients;

***remuneration costs do not exceed Full-Time Equivalent rates as per SSF program guide

Table 3. 2024/25 Non-SSF funds

Category	Partner type	Value	Total non-SSF funds by category
Research	Not-for-profit	\$250,000	\$395,000
	Other partners	\$95,000	
	Major gifts	\$50,000	
Knowledge mobilization	Other partners	\$116,000	\$116,000
Networking	Other partners	\$20,000	\$20,000
Operational costs			\$0
Total			\$531,000

F. Policies, Standards and Procedures

F.1 Current policies

OCC currently maintains 49 policies across all areas of the organization. Information regarding the required policies as per the contribution agreement is as follows:

- ❖ **Privacy & Protection of Personal Information:** OCC's *Privacy* policy has been in place since 2015 with a review schedule of every 3 years; the next review is scheduled for October 2025. New *Privacy Breach Procedures* were adopted in 2025.
- ❖ **Conflict of Interest:** OCC's organizational *Conflict of Interest* policy has been in place since June 2006 with a review schedule of every 3 years; the next review is scheduled for October 2026. The policy surpasses the minimum requirements to include disclosures and management of conflicts. Specific to Research and this contribution, OCC adopted a *Research Conflict of Interest & Confidentiality Policy* and an accompanying *Declaration of Understanding & Compliance with Organizational Policies* in October 2024.
- ❖ **Equity, Diversity & Inclusion:** OCC adopted a new *Diversity, Equity & Inclusion* policy in August 2024.
- ❖ **Security Plan:** OCC adopted a new *Research Safeguarding Policy* in April 2024 and a *Research Security Plan* in October 2024.
- ❖ **Data Management:** OCC has undertaken an extensive 18-month data optimization process to ensure effective data governance and management for the organization; this work is completing in August 2025.
- ❖ **Official Languages:** OCC delivers all official communication in both English and French.
- ❖ **Intellectual Property & Benefit to Canada:** OCC developed a new *Intellectual Property Policy* in May 2025.
- ❖ **Reserve for Wind-down of SSF Supported Operations:** With the significant reduction in the funding cycle to 2 years, there is insufficient time to build a reserve fund; future research operations will be funded at a level that can be supported by fundraising and partner support.

- ❖ *Statement of Investment Policy*: OCC adopted a new *Investment Policy* in 2024 with an annual review schedule; the next review is scheduled for October 2025.
- ❖ *Travel & Hospitality*: OCC adopted a new *Expense Reimbursement & Business Travel Policy* in 2023 with an annual review schedule; the last review and update was in July 2025.

F.2 Travel and Hospitality: Information to support the one-time verification

As a national organization with staff and volunteers disbursed across the country, OCC incurs limited travel costs for certain operational needs and to reach key objectives. These costs are incurred only for activities or initiatives deemed necessary to advance the objectives of the organization and/or when in-person meetings will have a significant benefit to the organization. OCC had had a comprehensive travel policy (titled *Expense Reimbursement and Business Travel*) in place for several years, which is reviewed/updated every year. Policy elements include:

- Eligible travel – descriptions and exclusions;
- Limitations on fare/accommodations class, mileage;
- Mandatory use of corporate travel agent;
- Supervisory approval requirement;
- Meals and hospitality – descriptions and exclusions;
- Incidentals and other expenses – descriptions and exclusions.

The approved policy delegates travel expenditure policy authority to Management, documented in the approval authority section of the policy. The policy is applicable to all staff, volunteers, committee and Board members. OCC does not typically incur travel costs for sub-contractors, and the policy does not specifically include the Ultimate Recipients funded by the SSF contribution. Since the addition of the travel requirements in the contribution agreement in April 2025, OCC does not provide for travel costs within our agreements with Ultimate Recipients. The only direct costs funded through the contribution are for Patient Partner in Research engagement and training, as per the corporate plan. OCC's travel policy is consistent with the principles of the [*Modern Travel Practices of the National Joint Council Travel Directive*](#) and the standards set out in the current [*Treasury Board Directive on Travel, Hospitality, Conference and Event Expenditures \(THCEE\)*](#).

G. Results of Audits and Evaluations

The annual audit is reaching a conclusion in August 2025. No significant findings or issues are anticipated.