



THE CANADIAN LONGITUDINAL STUDY ON AGING (CLSA)

EVALUATION SUMMARY

About the Canadian Longitudinal Study on Aging

Established in 2008, the Canadian Longitudinal Study on Aging (CLSA) platform aims to understand the complex interplay between physical, social, and psychological determinants of healthy aging.

- Follows approximately 50,000 Canadian men and women between 45 and 85 years old until 2033.
- Takes an integrative approach, examining healthy aging through a number of different lenses with investigators collecting information on the changing biological, medical, psychological, social, and economic aspects of people's lives.
- Has completed baseline data collection, the first follow-up wave and is currently completing the second follow-up.
- Represents a total CIHR investment of \$80.6 million, with additional partner contributions.

CLSA website: <https://cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/18542.html>

Results: What We Found

- The CLSA is uniquely positioned to address a continued need within the Canadian aging research landscape. The platform is well aligned with Federal Government and CIHR roles and responsibilities to promote healthy aging.
- To date the CLSA business model has been implemented as designed but sustainability remains a concern. Succession planning of CLSA's scientific leadership continues to be an on-going risk.
- The governance model of the CLSA is consistent with those of similar longitudinal studies but may need to adapt as the platform matures and its focus shifts more towards data utilization and scientific productivity.
- The current funding model possesses significant challenges to the long-term sustainability of the platform. Future funding should be aligned with CLSA's 3-year data collection waves.
- The CLSA has met its target (15%) for leveraging funding and resources from non-CIHR sources for the duration of both Directed Grants.
- CLSA has implemented a communication plan that promotes data access and raises awareness of the CLSA platform; however, opportunities exist to improve its effectiveness.
- The CLSA is supporting the advancement knowledge in the field of aging through the increase accessibility to high quality data. An opportunity exists to increase data promotion and access particularly with stakeholders in public and private sectors.
- At approximately 94.5%, CLSA's participant retention strategy has been extremely effective.

*Office of Audit and Evaluation, Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR)
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Recommendations and Management Response

1 CIHR should better position the CLSA to achieve its intended outcomes by aligning future funding with remaining data collections waves; ensuring the ongoing relevance of the data to be collected; and facilitating the full utilization of the platform following data collection.

Response: Management agrees, and will coordinate the CLSA phase 3 funding opportunity with future data collection waves. Furthermore, it will undertake an inclusion of relevance and facilitation of data utilization into the phase 3 funding opportunity.

2 CIHR should consider modifying its governance structures for the CLSA to: better support the platform's knowledge mobilization and scientific productivity outcomes; clarify the roles of the CIHR co-leads with respect to initiative leadership and oversight; and develop an independent mechanism to obtain scientific advice.

Response: Management agrees, and as part of the Phase 3 funding opportunity, will require that CLSA governance is appropriate for the lifecycle of the platform. Furthermore, management will evolve CIHR's oversight function to obtain independent scientific advice related to the CLSA.

3 CIHR should increase the promotion and access of CLSA data to international researchers, and stakeholders in the public and private sectors.

Response: Management agrees, and will explore various strategies and mechanisms to increase the promotion and access of CLSA data with various stakeholders both nationally and internationally. .

4 CIHR should ensure that measures are in place to safeguard the continuity of the CLSA's scientific leadership for the continued sustainability and legacy of the platform, which could potentially include incorporating incentives as part of succession planning, within the limits of existing policies.

Response: Management agrees, however, CIHR does not support the idea of providing incentives as part of succession planning. Management will incorporate a succession planning requirement in the CLSA phase 3 funding opportunity.

About the Evaluation

CIHR's Evaluation Unit conducted the evaluation in 2018-19 to meet the requirements of the [Policy on Results](#) and provide CIHR senior management with valid, insightful and actionable findings regarding:

- Needs addressed by the platform;
- Effectiveness of platform design in supporting its objective; and,
- Achievement of the platform's outcomes

Scope



Covered the period from 2009-10 to 2018-19



Focus on informing future phases of the CLSA

Methodology



Analyses of documents and administrative data



Environmental scan



Key informant interviews and solicitation of independent scientific advice on longitudinal studies



Survey of researchers and trainees who accessed CLSA data

Full Evaluation Report: <https://cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/52770.html>
Management Action Plan (MAP): <https://cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/52771.html>