

2025 – 2026 IMPACT REPORT

From research to real-world impact:

Building pathways for kids, youth, and families

kids brain health + | santé du cerveau des enfants +

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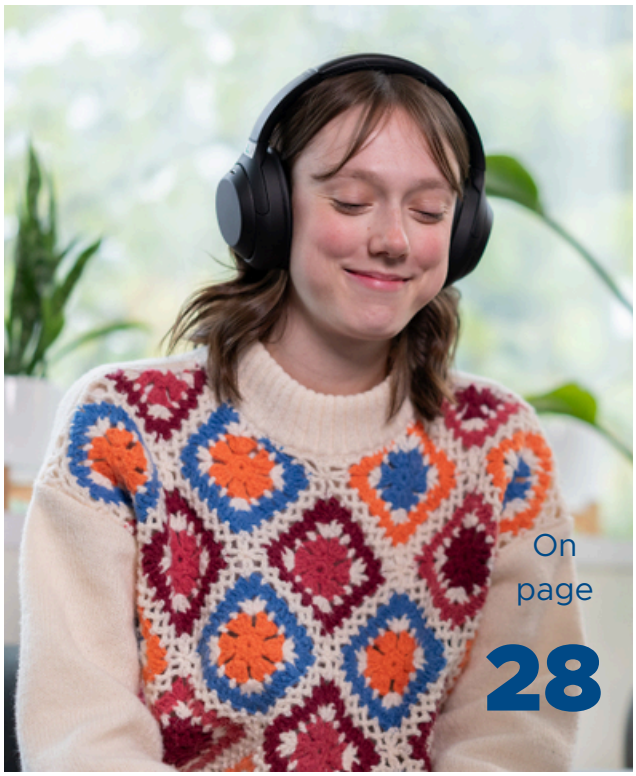
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Leadership Message



Sara Saber Freedman
Board Chair
Kids Brain Health Network



Geoff Pradella
Chief Executive Officer
Kids Brain Health+

For 17 years, the work behind Kids Brain Health+ (KBH+) has changed lives. From programs that help toddlers speak their first words, children sleep through the night, to families feeling connected again. That's what becomes possible when families can access evidence-based solutions built to improve outcomes for children and youth living with neurodisabilities.

This year, we brought our three entities together under a single national platform: KBH+ where government funding, philanthropy, and impact investing work towards one mission: better access and outcomes for children and youth living with neurodisabilities, and their families.

Since 2009, Kids Brain Health Network (KBHN), Canada's first national network dedicated to children's neurodisabilities, has led transformative research and real-world solutions that improve outcomes for children, youth, and their families. In 2016, the Kids Brain Health Foundation (KBHF) was established to mobilize philanthropy, partnerships, and public support and extend the reach of our work. Our latest initiative, the Kids Brain Health Innovation Fund (KBH-IF), creates commercialization and investment pathways that accelerate the growth, scale, and spread of proven innovations from the KBHN and KBHF portfolios.
These three entities form KBH+: a national platform that turns coordinated government funding, philanthropy, and impact investing into early identification, effective interventions, and real access to family supports.

In our first year as KBH+, we not only met what we set out to do. We went further.

We funded more than we planned

New partnerships and co-investment enabled us to launch and expand five funding streams. The new funding streams drew in more matched and leveraged funds, partners, researchers, and families than we anticipated. This reflects how strong Canada's pediatric research community has become, and how much appetite there is to move it forward.

We opened a new chapter with Indigenous communities

For the first time, we developed a funding opportunity led by and for Indigenous Peoples. The Indigenous Stream launched two new streams that brought additional federal funding to the table, enough to support five Indigenous-led or Indigenous-partnered projects in a single year and advance truth and reconciliation. Guided by a first-in-Canada National Indigenous Advisory Circle focused on neurodisability and communities choose these projects on their terms.

We watched Canadian solutions go international

We watched Canadian solutions go international. Sound Sensitivity, a made-in-Canada technology that helps children manage overwhelming sound, now reaches families across five continents: North America, Europe, Africa, Australia, and Asia. This shows how far a good idea, with strong support, can reach those who need it most.

Behind every milestone is the same commitment: great research means nothing until it reaches a child. This year, we invested heavily in getting solutions off the shelf. We matched funded teams with hands-on support to teach researchers how to bring their work to families. We also worked with governments in five provinces to expand access to programs that already work.

This is not the finish line. We enter the year ahead with real momentum. With a larger, more diverse portfolio, a stronger path from research to real-world impact, and more partnerships across the field. The children and families at the heart of this work deserve more than the benefits of today's research. They deserve a system built to keep delivering, and that is exactly what we are building.

Together, KBH+ is working toward a Canada where every child and youth living with a neurodisability, and their family, can reach their full potential and access the support they need when they need it.

KBH+ Strategic Direction

Mission

By catalyzing collective action across sectors, KBH+ ensures optimal care and better outcomes for children and youth living with neurodisabilities and their families.

Vision

All children and youth living with neurodisabilities enjoy a good quality of life, inclusion in all aspects of society, and reach their full potential.



Strategic Objectives

Catalyze implementation-ready innovations and advance a pipeline of research innovations.

Accelerate equitable and sustainable uptake of solutions by innovating and adopting processes that support the scale and spread of research innovations.

Strengthen capacity in Canada's research system through education, training, and outreach programs.

Focus Areas

Early identification

Identifying neurodisabilities early leads to timely interventions. Too often, children and youth are not identified during the critical early periods of brain development when interventions have the most significant impact on the trajectory of their disabilities. KBH+ supports initiatives that advance diagnosis into infancy, allowing early identification of neurodisabilities in children and youth.

Effective interventions

Early interventions have the greatest impact on children and youth with neurodisabilities. KBH+ works at the cutting edge of brain health to ensure all children, youth, and families can access effective interventions.

Family support

Families raising children and youth with neurodisabilities face challenges that affect most aspects of their lives. KBH+ collaborates with experts with lived experience to advance strategies and projects that enhance family support, reduce family stress, improve communication, and increase access to resources that help children and youth reach their full potential.

14

newly-funded projects

69

family and lived-experience partners: ensuring funded work is shaped by those closest to neurodisability systems and services



174

dissemination activities reaching 3,588+ participants, plus 19 publications: moving knowledge to families, service providers, and decision-makers

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2025-2026 Impact at a glance





95

new collaborators: researchers, clinicians, innovators, and partners, reflecting KBH+'s growing role as a national convener



$3,827,360

matched partnership funding: co-investment that shows how the Strategic Science Fund anchor funding draws new resources and expertise into the sector







5

Outstanding Awards recognizing leadership across the research ecosystem, from inclusive researchers to lived-experience leaders, trainees, and mentors

7,401

interest holders reached through learning events, downloads, and real-world uptake - evidence that funded tools and innovations are being used where they are meant to be





4

new international patents: granted in Australia, Korea, Japan, and China for a made-in-Canada AI sound-management system, proving the global scalability of Canadian technology

kids brain health network

réseau pour la santé du cerveau des enfants

Strengthening Canada's research ecosystem capacity



Behind every program that reaches a family is a team who built and tested it and a system that trained them to do it. KBH+'s third strategic objective is to strengthen that system and to build the people, skills, and partnerships Canada needs to continue delivering for children and youth with neurodisabilities long after a project ends.



The KBH+ Team with the Brain Computer Interface (BCI) project team in the BCI4Kids lab, located at the Alberta Children's Hospital in Calgary, Alberta.

This year, that meant investing in talent at every stage of the process. KBH+ has supported more than 2,800 trainees over its history, including students, fellows, and professionals who are now working in the field, and this year strengthened the specific skills that carry research into the real world. Through "From Lab to Life: Commercializing for Kids," our first-of-its-kind program with MaRS, project team members gained commercialization training that was once hard to come by in children's health research. Ten teams now have concrete plans to bring their work to market. Through The Centre for Implementation, we sponsored fifteen trainees in implementation science and backed every funded project with hands-on support to drive forward the vital work of moving evidence into everyday practice.

We also invested in the people who keep research grounded. This year, KBH+ trained researchers, innovators, policy thinkers, caregivers, and family partners, including young people with lived experience who now help move research into practice. More than 230 family advocates work directly with project teams and shape the work rather than simply receiving it. Initiatives such as the KBHN and the University of Calgary's Alliance for Disability Voices, Advocacy, and National Community Empowerment (ADVANCE) Network are developing the next generation of leaders through dedicated fellowships. At the same time, our work with five provincial governments is building the policy capacity needed to expand access to programs that already work.

As training capacity grows, trainees become researchers and family partners become co-producers, and each project builds the skills and connections that make the next solution possible. By strengthening research, implementation, commercialization, and policy, KBH+ is building a system that keeps delivering.

Establishing Innovation Capacity to Create Impactful Solutions for Families



In March 2026, KBHN announced more than $4 million in funding for 14 projects—a transformative investment to scale and spread innovative solutions that improve outcomes for children and youth living with neurodisabilities, and their families, across Canada.



The first two streams are a partnership between KBHN through the Government of Canada Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada's Strategic Science Fund (SSF), and Brain Canada delivered through the Canada Brain Research Fund, with support from Health Canada.

Together, these projects reach across the full path from evidence to impact. Two implementation projects move proven research directly into practice, policy, and community settings, helping families, clinicians, educators, and service providers adopt approaches that already work.

Three innovation projects carry promising Canadian ideas toward commercialization and wider reach, turning early potential into products and services families can use. Four Strategic Opportunities projects let us act quickly on emerging research, new partnerships with provincial governments, and made-in-Canada inventions that have earned international patents.

The most meaningful shift this year was in who shaped the work. Through two new dedicated streams: three Indigenous Impact projects and two Indigenous Connections projects, KBHN started funding Indigenous-led and Indigenous-partnered research grounded in community priorities and self-determined definitions of impact.

These projects advance culturally relevant approaches to early identification, intervention, and family support, guided by Indigenous leadership and ways of knowing, and made possible through the leadership and guidance of our Indigenous Advisory Circle.



Indigenous Stream

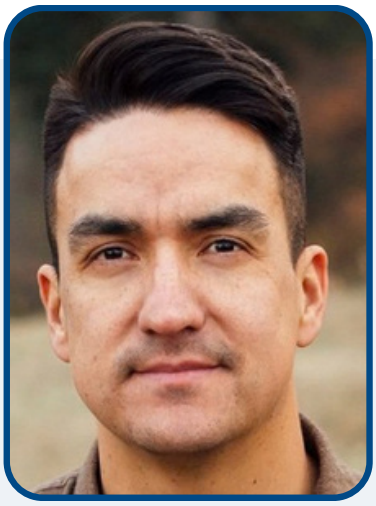
In 2025, KBHN and Brain Canada launched the Indigenous Stream, a first-of-its-kind funding opportunity that supports community-driven projects improving outcomes for Indigenous children and youth with neurodisabilities and their families across Canada.

The Indigenous Stream is more than a funding opportunity, it reflects a shared commitment to reconciliation and Indigenous leadership. Meaningful solutions for Indigenous communities must be rooted in the knowledge, priorities, and strengths of Indigenous Peoples themselves. In alignment with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, the Stream affirms Indigenous Peoples' right to self-determination in shaping the research and programs that affect their communities.

Its impact reaches beyond any single project. By supporting researchers and strengthening Indigenous leadership across research, care, and knowledge translation in children's brain health, the Stream builds lasting capacity for the future.

None of this would have been possible without the guidance of our Indigenous Advisory Circle, to whom KBHN extends its sincere thanks. The Circle played a critical role in identifying and recommending transformative proposals — addressing key challenges in early identification, access to culturally grounded interventions, service integration, and family supports.

Reflecting on the milestone, KBHN's Scientific Advisor and Indigenous Advisory Circle Chair, Dr. Grant Bruno, shares:



"The Indigenous Stream represents a meaningful shift toward Indigenous-led, community-defined solutions for children and youth with neurodisabilities. Rooted in relationships, culture, and lived experience, these projects reflect the strength and innovation within Indigenous communities, and it has been an honour to help ensure funding decisions are guided by Indigenous priorities and sovereignty. I am grateful to lead KBHN's Indigenous Advisory Circle, and I am excited for the impact these projects will have for Indigenous children, youth, and their families."

Meet KBHN's 14 newly funded projects

INNOVATION PROJECTS



Co-creating a social prescribing model for pediatric rehabilitation contexts in Canada
Principal Investigator:
Dr. Michelle Phoenix

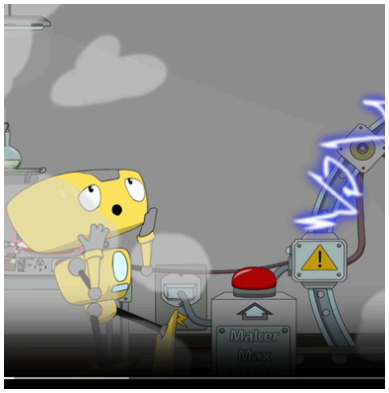


From Play to Paralympics: Brain Computer Interface enabled Boccia
Principal Investigator:
Dr. Adam Kirton



PIONEER: Power Training Implementation for Optimizing National Engagement in Evidence-based Rehabilitation
Principal Investigator:
Dr. Lesley Pritchard

IMPLEMENTATION PROJECTS



Bootle Blast
Principal Investigator:
Dr. Elaine Biddiss



Implementing BRIGHT Coaching within Canada: Exploring sustainable models for waitlist support
Principal Investigator:
Dr. Tatiana Ogourtsova

INDIGENOUS STREAM PROJECTS



Indigenous-driven community-based supports for disability
Principal Investigator:
Dr. Stephanie Glegg



Miyo-pimâtisiwin (Good life) for Pîtoteyihtam (those who think differently) in Kinosao Sipi
Principal Investigator:
Dr. Reg Urbanowski



Partnering with Indigenous communities to advance understanding of experiences, needs, and priorities for children with motor differences and their families
Principal Investigator:
Dr. Jill Zwicker



The Eastern Door Center
Principal Investigator:
Dr. Lori Cox



Walking Together in Care
Principal Investigator:
Dr. Teresa Bennett

Strategic Opportunities Projects



BRIDGE OS
Principal Investigator:
Asif Hasan



Addressing Complex and Dangerous Behaviours in Children and Youth with Brain-Based Disabilities
Principal Investigator:
Maude Champagne



Implementing Social ABCs in Manitoba
Principal Investigator:
Jane Kidd-Hantscher



Pilot Implementation of the KeenSpire Digital Companion App
Principal Investigator:
Amélie Paquette

Year One, Real change

Our newly funded 2025 projects are only beginning, but our year-one projects already have stories to tell and impact to showcase. Alongside the new cohort from KBHN's Innovation, Implementation, Indigenous, and Strategic Opportunities streams, we are proud to share their stories of impact.

Here are a few projects showing how they are driving change and transforming the lives of families.

ADVANCE: Driving Community-Informed, System-Level Change for Youth with Disabilities Across Canada



The inaugural ADVANCE Network Fellows
(L to R: Dr. Meaghan Reitzel, Dr. Laura Mudde, Kelsey Seguin, and Dr. Sarah Raza)

The ADVANCE Network is a national collaboration of scholars, community partners and people with lived and living experience — co-led by Dr. Jennifer Zwicker, Dr. Lucy Lach, Dr. Keiko Shikako, Dr. Michelle Phoenix, Dr. Grant Bruno, Genevieve Currie, Logan Wong and Sharon McCarry. It drives system-level change for youth with neurodevelopmental disabilities by translating evidence into policy and practice in real time. Through sustained engagement with policymakers, service providers, families and researchers, its five working groups have produced actionable recommendations on coordination, access, eligibility, exclusion and Indigenous priorities, with final impact narratives published in September 2026.

Building on this momentum, the team is preparing a Phase 2 application for a seven-year Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council Partnership Grant to expand its reach.

From Words to Impact: Transforming Cross-Sectoral Services with the F-words for Child Development

Principal investigator: Dr. Andrea Cross



The F-words project is working to catalyze a lasting shift in how childhood neurodevelopmental disabilities are understood and addressed, across Canada and beyond. The F-words are our six favourite words in child development: family, fun, friends, functioning, fitness and future. With 22 partner organizations spanning seven provinces and one territory, plus significant international interest, it is well positioned to scale across jurisdictions and help build more coordinated, family-centred and equitable systems of care for children and their families. That reach is already global. In June 2026, the F-words framework took centre stage at the European Academy of Childhood Disability Conference in Galway, Ireland — one of the largest international childhood disability conferences in the world, where it also shaped the program's design.

"I feel incredibly fortunate to be part of this project and to be able to witness firsthand the positive impact it has already had on families." –Service Provider

Every Pain, Every Brain: Implementing Neuroinclusive Pain Management

Principal investigator: Dr. Kathryn Birnie



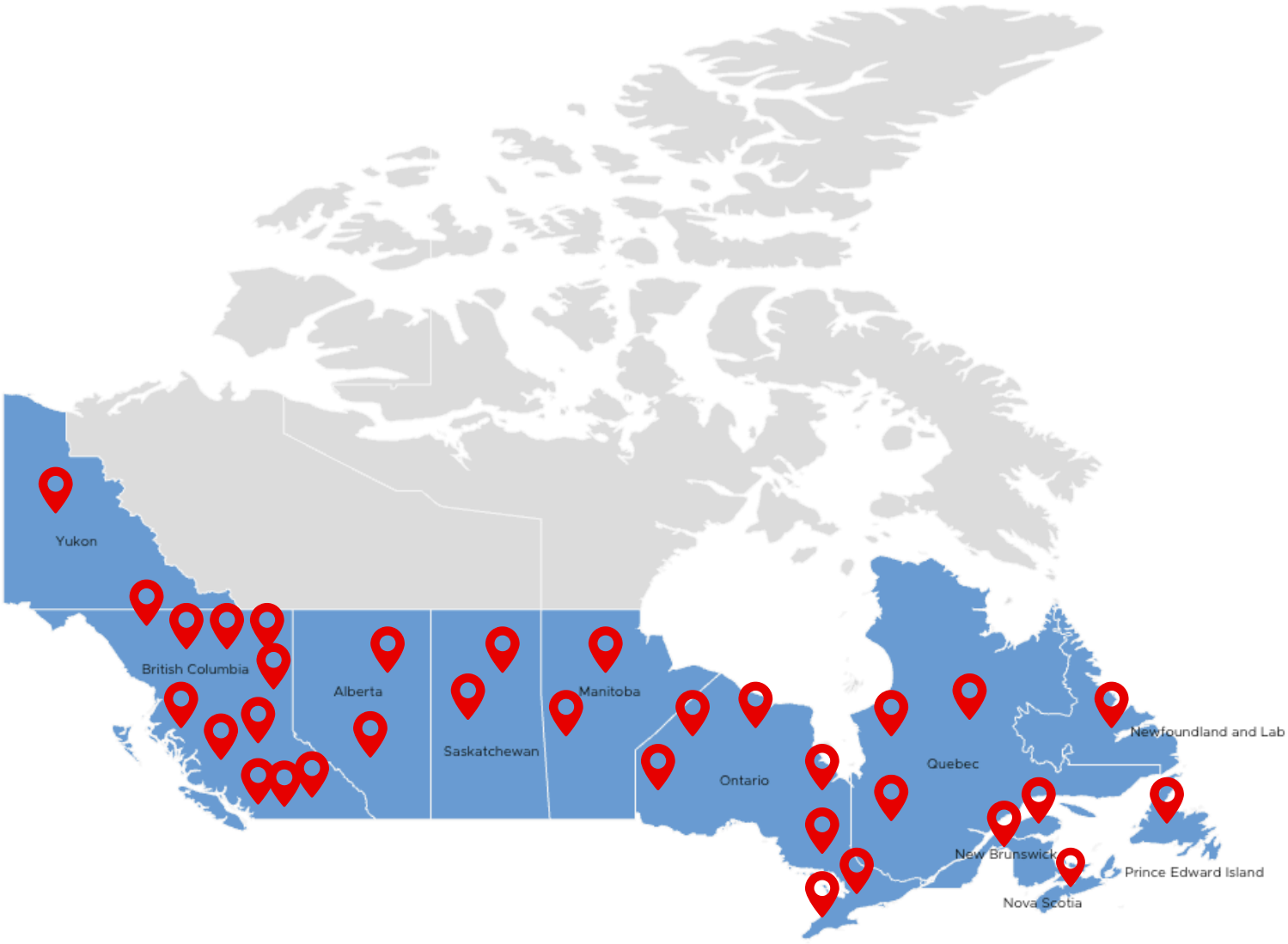
For an estimated 700,000+ Canadian children with neurodisability, pain too often goes unrecognized and untreated. This initiative is out to change that — driving systems-level improvements in equitable pediatric pain care. Built to outlast the project, it aligns awareness, practice and policy with CAN/HSO 13200:2023, the world's first national health standard for pediatric pain management. The principle is simple: quality, equitable pain care is every child's right. Youth, families, clinicians and community partners co-produce its tools, grounding them in lived experience. With seven children's hospital partners nationwide, the initiative sets best practices that could benefit all eight million children in Canada.

"When your child can't tell you they're in pain in the usual ways, you're left trying to read the signs and push for answers, often without feeling fully heard. This project and the tools being created will help kids with neurodevelopmental disabilities and their families trust what they're seeing, feel believed, and finally get their child the pain care they need." –Family Partner

Building better futures: KBH+ projects across Canada

24 projects. All 10 provinces and one territory.

KBH+ brings together researchers, clinicians, families, and policymakers from coast to coast to coast. Together, we are working to improve early identification, deliver effective interventions, and expand access to family supports — no matter where families live.



Expanding Implementation Capacity and Driving Real-World Adoption



This year, we focused on the practical work of moving solutions into real life and training the people and building partnerships to move this vital work forward.

With MaRS, one of Canada's largest innovation hubs, we launched "From Lab to Life: Commercializing for Kids," teaching researchers how to turn discoveries into products and services families can access. Thirty project team members participated, and ten now hold real plans to bring their work to market.

Alongside this, our partnership with The Centre for Implementation deepened how we move evidence into everyday practice — getting solutions to the families who need them most.

That work is already reaching the world: Sound Sensitivity, a made-in-Canada technology that helps children manage overwhelming sound, earned new international patents. A demonstration of how far Canadian innovation can travel.

Lasting change needs people to carry it forward. This year, we trained researchers, innovators, policy thinkers, caregivers and family partners, including young people with lived experience who now help move research into practice to build a community that will move solutions forward for years to come.

We recognize that real change needs government at the table. This year, we worked with the federal government, decision-makers, and policymakers in Alberta, British Columbia, Manitoba, Nova Scotia, and Ontario to expand access to programming, inform policy, and address the growing complexity families and classrooms face while laying the groundwork for proven interventions like Social ABCs to reach far more children.



"The guidance provided by The Centre for Implementation added tremendous value to our 'Every Pain, Every Brain: Implementing Neuroinclusive Pain Management for Kids' initiative. Their deep understanding of implementation science, coupled with hands-on expertise in supporting organizations with practical change, brilliantly complemented the expertise of our national Solutions for Kids in Pain (SKIP) network alongside our organizational, youth, and family partners." – said Dr. Kathryn Birnie, Project Investigator

kids brain health innovation fund

fonds d'innovation pour la santé du cerveau des enfants



The Venture Studio: A Structured Approach to Innovation

Between promising research and the scale-up of a program that's accessible to families lies a huge gap where too many good solutions get stuck. To build out the pipeline beyond promising research and invention, and extend the research-to-market pathway, we developed the third KBH+ entity – the Kids Brain Health Innovation Fund (KBH-IF).

Launched and developed throughout 2025-26, KBH-IF brings together innovators, founders, inventors, a broad cross section of scientists and entrepreneurs, investors, venture philanthropists, families, researchers, and partners to turn promising research into lasting, real-world solutions.

KBH-IF's mission and focus is to scale and 'commercialize' (take to market and make access increasingly available through provincial support programs) science and evidence-based innovations that have been 'proven' through trials, pilots and proof of concept work to improve the lives of children and youth with neurodisabilities, and their families.

To do that, it works with and invests in founders and their teams to create and build the conditions for business success – the fundamentals that get innovations with strong potential for national and international expansion as commercial products or sustainable social enterprises into the hand of the kids, youth, young adults and families who need them.

Bridging "The Middle"

Canadian children too often wait months or years for assessment, therapy, and family support. Meanwhile, solutions that work — early identification tools, digital supports, assistive technologies, community-based programs — get stuck at the pilot stage, never reaching the families who need them. The innovations exist, yet too few reach families.



Venture Studio: First in Canada. World's only.

To close that gap, in 2025-26 KBHN started the work to build a Venture Studio in close collaboration with KBHF and KBH-IF. Together, they form the world's only incubator, accelerator and direct investment model dedicated to children and youth with neurodisabilities. Inspired by pioneering models in the world's most highly recognized innovation economies, it's purpose-built to move research to market, and get compelling inventions and breakthroughs from lab to life.

The Venture Studio brings the right people together in one place, including people with lived experience and gives innovations, their founders and teams what they need to succeed: mentorship, funding, expertise, and space. Ideas come in from across Canada and around the world, and the Venture Studio will support and shape these innovative solutions into investable businesses, and social enterprises.

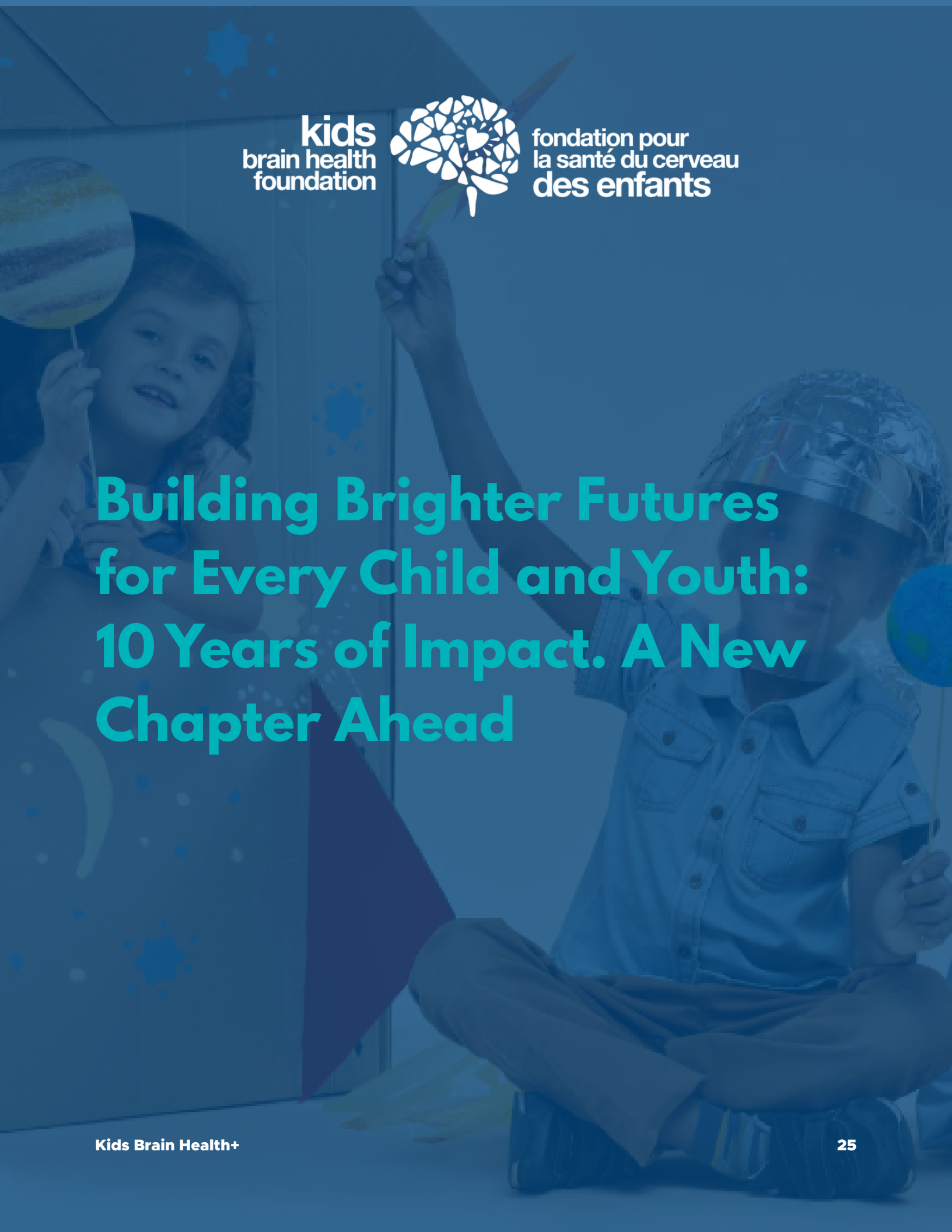


Looking ahead to 2035

By 2035, the Venture Studio aims to grow more than 150 Canadian startups, draw world-class innovators to Canada, and help position the country as a global leader in solutions for children and youth with neurodisabilities, accessing programs, services, and proven solutions to families faster.

kids brain health foundation

fondation pour la santé du cerveau des enfants



Building Brighter Futures for Every Child and Youth: 10 Years of Impact. A New Chapter Ahead

Ten years ago, KBHN established the Kids Brain Health Foundation (KBHF), and set out with a simple yet urgent belief: children and youth with neurodisabilities — and the families who love them — deserve better. Better research. Better care. A real chance for every child to reach their full potential.

That belief has grown into a movement. Through the generosity of our donors and the dedication of researchers, clinicians, families, and partners across the country, we have helped fund breakthrough science, trained the next generation of neurodisability experts, and moved proven solutions out of the lab and into the lives of children who need them most.

This year, KBHF celebrates that decade and steps into what's next. Lasting change takes more than good science. It takes putting research into practice, building relationships with government, and governance that reflects the communities we serve.

Solutions Exist – Pathways to Expand Access is the Priority

Every child deserves the chance to grow, learn, and thrive. Yet for the one in ten children in Canada living with a neurodisability, that chance is too often out of reach. Families face years-long waitlists for diagnosis, gaps in essential services, and out-of-pocket costs that can reach up to $80,000 a year.

Behind every statistic is a child: a toddler still searching for the words to say "I love you," a child who can't fall asleep at night, a teenager who struggles with everyday tasks — and the caregivers working tirelessly to hold their families together.



Here's what makes the wait so hard to accept: For many of the challenges families face, proven solutions already exist—the challenge is getting them to the families who need them. For more than a decade, we have developed and tested programs that change lives — helping toddlers speak their first words, children sleep through the night, and families feel safe and connected again. These aren't theories or pilot projects. They are proven, refined, and ready to reach more communities. With donor support, we can close that gap.

Programs Making a Difference Today

Across Canada, KBHF-funded programs are helping children communicate, connect, sleep, learn, and thrive. Each is grounded in years of research, shaped by the voices of families, and ready to reach more children with your support.



No Caregiver Left Behind: Acceptance and Commitment Training (ACT)

Caring for a child with a neurodisability is deeply rewarding, but it can also be exhausting and isolating, and few supports address that. ACT is a mindfulness-based program, co-designed with families, that pairs proven psychological strategies with peer support. Through group workshops, caregivers learn to manage difficult emotions, stay present in hard moments, and act in line with their values, and report less anxiety, less isolation, and greater wellbeing.

"This group made me realize I wasn't alone. I feel stronger, and I know I can keep going for my child." -ACT parent participant



Dino Island

Many children with neurodisabilities struggle with executive function — attention, memory, planning, self-regulation. These are skills that shape everything from schoolwork to friendships. Dino Island, a therapeutic video game grounded in 30 years of research, strengthens them through play. Children make real gains in focus, memory, and problem-solving, with parents seeing greater confidence too.

"When my son plays Dino Island, he's not just having fun — he's learning to focus, to plan, to work through challenges. It's incredible to see." -Parent



Social ABCs

For many parents, the first signs of autism bring confusion, fear, and long waits. Social ABCs changes that. This evidence-based, parent-led program helps families of toddlers (12–42 months) build communication and connection through one-on-one coaching. Having reached 2,500 families, the program has demonstrated its strong positive impact towards toddlers' communication and parents' confidence.

"I believe the reason I have the relationship with my son that I do is because of the Social ABCs, and the work you've done with both of us. He is a totally different kid today than when we started." – Parent



Sound Sensitivity

For many children with neurodisabilities, a grocery store's hum or a classroom's buzz can be overwhelming. Sound Sensitivity changes that. Its AI-powered system, Hearon, filters distressing sounds while preserving meaningful ones. Co-designed with autistic people, caregivers, clinicians, educators, and engineers, Hearon shows strong potential to ease distress and increase participation.

"If I had had this in my younger years, it would have made things a lot easier for me. It would have made me able to stay in uncomfortable situations longer, because the device would make them comfortable." -Kenzie Curby, Autistic advocate and inclusive education support worker

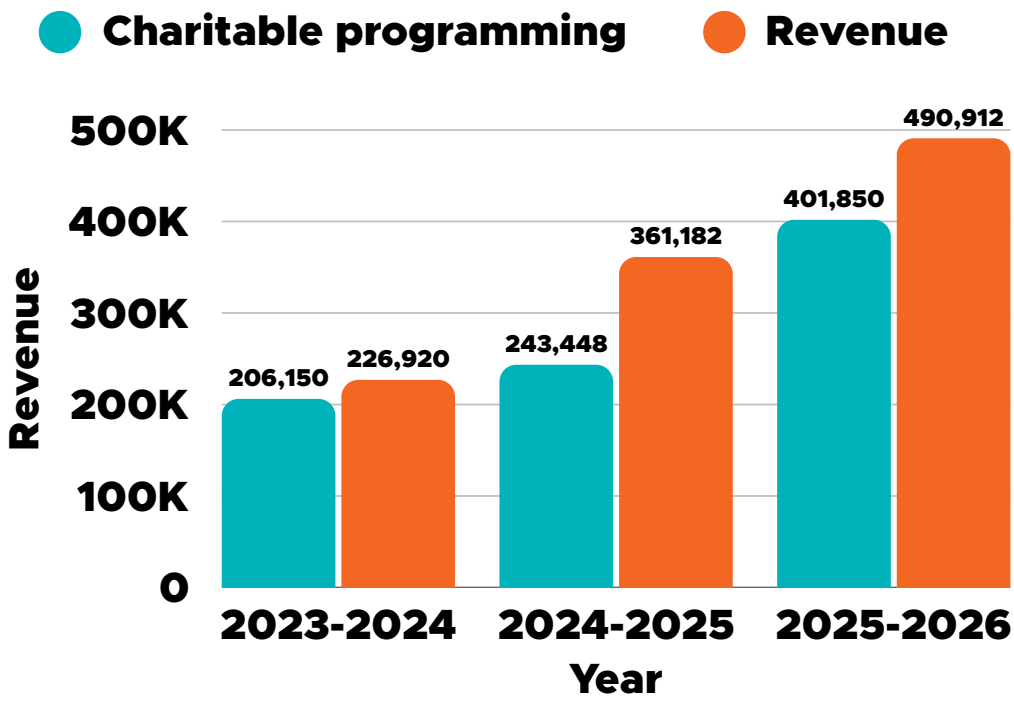
Together, KBHF's programs demonstrate what's possible when research becomes action: children thrive, families find strength, and communities grow more inclusive. Yet these stories are only a fraction of what could be. Each program is ready to reach more families and what decides how far and how fast is not science. It's investment.

That's why the Brighter Futures Fund exists: to get solutions that work to the children and families who can't wait.

The Brighter Futures Fund: Fueling Change

The Brighter Futures Fund is the engine behind real change for children and families. Because it's unrestricted and donor-powered, it lets us act fast — bringing proven programs directly into homes, schools, and communities the moment a chance arises to change a child's life. A single gift doesn't just support one program; it accelerates many. Your generosity can help Social ABCs reach toddlers waiting for their first words, expand ACT so caregivers are supported, or bring Indigenous-led programs, such as Indigenous-driven community-based supports for disability, into more communities, strengthening cultural pride and resilience.

When you give to the Fund, you are investing in hope, dignity, and opportunity for thousands of children and families across Canada — moving proven solutions out of the lab and into the hands of families who need them most.





Thank You to Our Donors

Every milestone this year was made possible by you. Your belief in this work means more children are receiving the support they need, and more families are finding hope for the future. Without you, none of it would be possible.

Your donation makes a difference.

Leadership & Governance



Strong outcomes begin with strong foundations. This year, KBHN and KBHF made significant investments in the leadership structures that guide their work, welcoming new thought leadership and building the governance capacity needed to deliver on an ambitious mandate.

From the formation of a national Indigenous Advisory Circle to the appointment of two Scientific Advisors and the expansion of the KBHF Board, these developments reflect a shared commitment to reconciliation, collaboration, and impact.

Together, they position KBHN and KBHF to move with greater purpose, ensuring access to essential programs and services reaches the families and communities who need it most.

Guided by Indigenous Wisdom: A New Chapter for KBHN

A circle of Indigenous leaders, Elders, Knowledge Holders, innovators, and allies is stepping forward to guide a new chapter at KBHN. The Indigenous Advisory Circle was created to build and administer a first-in-Canada Indigenous funding stream for neurodisability — one whose governance reflects the priorities, knowledge systems, and self-determined impact pathways of the communities it serves.

Chaired by Dr. Grant Bruno, a nêhiyaw (Plains Cree) scholar at the University of Alberta, the Circle brings together scholars, clinicians, Elders, parents, advocates, and youth leaders from the Atlantic region, Central Canada, the Prairies, and the West Coast.

The Circle ensures the stream is Indigenous-led from the first design decision: OCAP® principles are woven into how funding works, and funded projects undergo an Indigenous-led process for merit-based review, evaluation, and oversight. Circle members guided every step of the launch funding allocation, selection criteria, and culturally appropriate evaluation methods and directly selected the funded projects.

Launched in fall 2025 with Brain Canada, the Indigenous Stream funds early-stage to fully implemented projects in early identification, evidence-based interventions, and family support. Its five inaugural projects span community-based research, innovative interventions, and culturally adapted programs, laying the foundation for a future where Indigenous children, youth, and families access care that reflects who they are and where they come from. The Circle has already attracted co-investment from Brain Canada.

Meet KBHN's Indigenous Advisory Circle Members



Dr. Grant Bruno



Louis Busch



Sabrina Eliason



Will Landon



Elder Leona Makokis



Jolene R. Morin



Tanya Northcott



Laranna Scott



Melanie Sheldon



Sara Spence



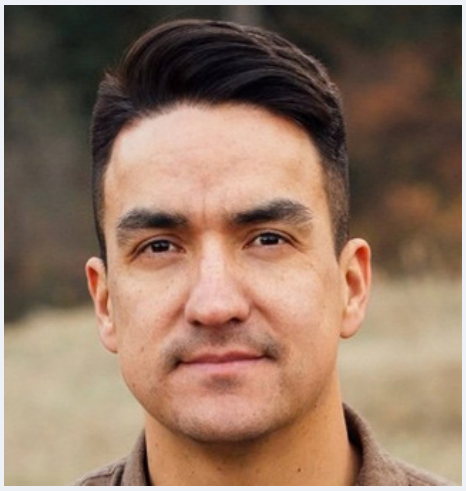
Katie Timms



Daniele Wolf

KBHN appoints Scientific Advisors for Indigenous Initiatives and Research Impact

KBHN appointed two Scientific Advisors to strengthen its ability to deliver evidence-based solutions to children and youth living with neurodisabilities and their families.



Dr. Grant Bruno

Dr. Bruno advises on all Indigenous-focused initiatives, including the new Indigenous Stream and engagement with the Advisory Circle. His work centres on culturally grounded healthcare and Indigenous knowledge systems. Dr. Bruno founded Ispimihk Awâsisak (Sky Children Program) and the Indigenous Caregiving Collective, and serves as Academic Lead for Indigenous Child Health at the Women and Children's Health Research Institute.



Dr. Kathryn Graham

Dr. Graham, Professor of Research Impact Assessment at the University of Calgary, advises on frameworks for evaluating and communicating the impact of KBHN's research funding, philanthropic investments, and commercialization pathways. A Fellow of the Canadian Academy of Health Sciences and co-founder of the International School on Research Impact Assessment, Dr. Graham brings nearly three decades of experience helping organizations scale for societal benefit and leads the Research Innovation Impact Assessment Lab at the University of Calgary.

KBHF welcomes new board members to create brighter futures for children

In December 2025, KBHF welcomed eight new board members whose combined expertise across healthcare, finance, fundraising, community advocacy, non-profit governance, and lived experience will help shape the Foundation's next chapter. Appointed following a national search with Morgan Campbell Executive Search, they strengthen the Board's strategic capacity and position KBHF for expanded reach and the delivery of transformative, evidence-based programs.

Meet KBHF's new board members



Matt Cohen



Mariana Cowan



Johannes Dyring



Stacey Hatcher



Alfonso Licata



Annie Martineau



Liv Mendelsohn



Clint Warkentin

Engaging the KBH+ Community of Impact Ecosystem



To realize our vision, kids and youth living with neurodisabilities, and their families, reach their fullest potential with purpose, fulfilment, and dignity. We are working to transform the childhood disability health ecosystem and drive system-level change. Our national partnerships are central to that work, amplifying our impact through collective effort.

Canada

In 2023, Innovation, Science and Economic Development (ISED) Canada's Strategic Science Fund announced funding for recipients of the Strategic Science Fund (SSF). KBH+ was among 24 organizations sharing over $850 million in federal funding. SSF recipients form a community of Canadian non-profit, science-focused organizations making a direct difference in Canadians' lives. KBH+ is proud to build a more promising future alongside 23 other prestigious organizations — and as we collaborate, we will identify synergies, cross-promoting and advancing one another's work for wider awareness and impact.

Fondation Brain Canada Foundation

A landmark achievement this year was the creation of a new partnership with Brain Canada, a leader in brain health research, co-funded by Health Canada, to support the new Indigenous Impact and Indigenous Connections streams. This federal funding, alongside KBHN's Strategic Science Fund investment, enabled five Indigenous-led or Indigenous-partnered projects to launch in a single year — advancing Canada's commitments to the Calls to Action for truth and reconciliation.

CHILD-BRIGHT Network

Youth with lived experience of neurodisability offer insight no one else can — and this year, we built a lasting way to bring it into our work. In January 2025, KBHN partnered with the CHILD-BRIGHT Network to give our funded researchers and teams direct access to CHILD-BRIGHT's National Youth Advocacy Council (NYAC), a pan-Canadian group of youth research partners with diverse lived and living experiences of brain-based developmental disabilities.

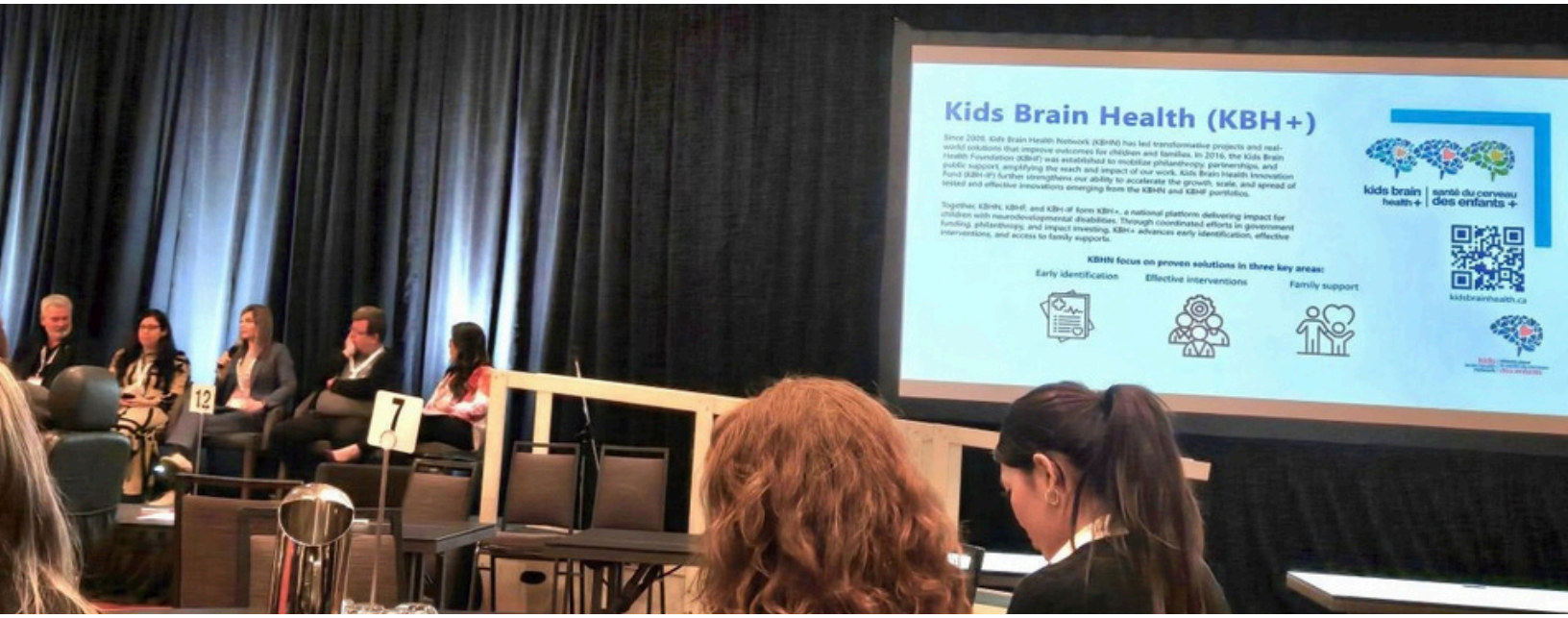
Through the partnership, KBHN teams can consult the NYAC to strengthen their research and policy work, while youth partners gain meaningful skill-building, collaboration, and networking opportunities. It builds on a track record of youth-engagement collaborations between the two networks, and deepens our shared commitment to research shaped by the people it's meant to serve — ensuring solutions are relevant, inclusive, and responsive to the children and families at the centre of the work.

In partnership with CHILD-BRIGHT, KBHN co-hosts monthly Implementation Community webinars — online and open to everyone in KBHN's ecosystem, centred on advancing implementation science across KBHN and the broader field of neurodisability.

Lasting change needs people to carry it forward. That's the heart of our partnership with MaRS, one of Canada's largest innovation hubs. This year, we launched "From Lab to Life: Commercializing for Kids," a first-of-its-kind program that teaches researchers how to turn discoveries into products and services families can use. Thirty people from our project teams across the country took part, gaining skills long out of reach in children's health research. The results speak for themselves: ten teams now have real plans to bring their work to market, and 85% said the program left them more likely to reach families — closing a long-standing gap.

KBHN partnered with TCI to close a common gap: even well-funded, evidence-based programs get implemented unevenly across settings. Rather than treat this as a performance problem, KBHN framed it as a systems question—how to build shared implementation skills and infrastructure across its funded teams.

Starting in 2022, funded teams moved through TCI's training, learning a common language and core concepts. Four cohorts have completed foundational training, with some advancing to Level 2 certification. Peer sessions grew into a standing Implementation Community across the Network—creating a distributed group of practitioners who share a common approach to turning research into practice.



Dr. Jennifer Zwicker, KBHN's Chief Scientist, speaks on the "Learn from the Wood-Wide Web" panel at the 2026 CHILD-BRIGHT Conference in Toronto.

KBH+ cultivates an active, engaged Community of Impact to mobilize knowledge and drive change in the childhood neurodisability field. To transform the ecosystem, share knowledge, and demonstrate thought leadership, our team members take part in conferences and events across the country. Below is a snapshot of our thought leadership and sponsorship activities in 2025–2026.

2025

April	Children's Healthcare Canada (Ontario)
	Empowered Kids Ontario Symposium (Ontario)
	Meeting with the Department of Health and Wellness (Nova Scotia)
	Autism Alliance, Canadian Autism Leadership Summit (Ontario)
May	Expanding Horizons 2025 Infant and Early Mental Health Promotion (Ontario)
	Developmental Origins of Health and Disease Conference (Quebec)
	AccessFest (Ontario)
June	Abilities Expo – British Columbia
July	Calgary Stampede (Alberta)
October	Research Canada (Ontario)
	Canadian ADHD Resource Alliance (CADDRA) Research Day (British Columbia)
	Canada Fetal Alcohol Spectrum Disorder Conference (Ontario)
November	Canadian Caregiving Summit 2025: Act on Care (Ontario)
	Canadian Science Policy Centre Conference (Ontario)
	The 20th Annual Bloorview Research Institute Symposium (Ontario)

2026

February	CHILD-BRIGHT Conference (Ontario)



Looking Ahead

We enter 2026–2027 with more in motion than at any point in our history. Our 14 newly funded projects move from launch to delivery, and our Indigenous Advisory Circle enters its first full year guiding a funding stream now drawing co-investment from One Child Every Child. The Venture Studio takes its first innovations toward market, an early step toward the 2035 goal of growing more than 150 Canadian startups.

Proven programs have further reach. The Social ABCs is on track to reach 1,000 more families over the next five years, and the F-words framework, fresh from the international stage in Galway, Ireland, is scaling worldwide. The ADVANCE Network is preparing a seven-year SSHRC Partnership Grant application to expand its influence on national policy. Our work with five provincial governments moves from preparation to access, opening doors for proven interventions to reach far more families.

With a newly expanded Foundation Board and stronger partnerships across research, implementation, commercialization, and policy, we are better resourced than ever to close the gap between what innovations work and who they reach.

Everything still comes back to our mission: improving outcomes for children, youth, and families. The children at the heart of this work deserve more than the benefits of today's research. They deserve a system built to keep delivering, and that is what KBH+ is building. The commitment driving us has not changed—what's changed is our capacity to act on it and deliver better outcomes and broader access for families.

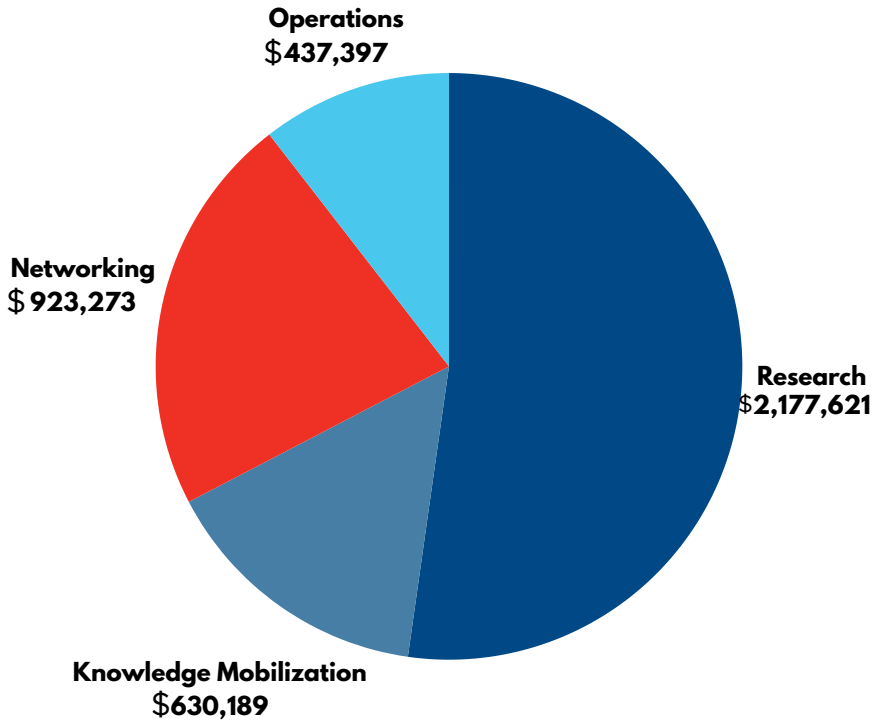
To the partners, funders, families, and practitioners who make this possible: thank you.

The next chapter is ours to write together.



Financial Report

The spending in 2025-2026 aligned closely with the year's corporate plan. The total research budget represented more funds being allocated to research projects and significantly funding more projects than anticipated.



kids brain health + | santé du cerveau des enfants +

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Scan the QR code to join us and support our mission

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Helping ALL children and youth with neurodisabilities thrive.