



## Canadians Ramping Up COVID-19 Collaborations and IP

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Innovative Canadian companies and researchers thrive through collaborations. Collaborations allow sharing of expertise and resources, to move products forward toward commercial reality.

Many new collaborations have been rapidly initiated to fight the COVID-19 pandemic. Some of these collaborations are focused on medical treatments and software tools (eg. tracking disease spread). Others focus on basic supplies, such as manufacturing personal protective equipment (ventilators, masks, gowns, gloves etc.) that is in short supply. There are also many collaborations involving social or business issues.

Many innovators set up their own research collaborations. However, there are also many opportunities being created through various umbrella groups trying to organize collaborations in Canada and globally.

Time is of the essence, researchers need to find the best quality collaborations and make maximum use of preexisting resources. There is no time to reinvent the wheel.

### Canadian Governments and their Agencies

Some examples of collaborative initiatives are below.

The [federal](#) and [Ontario](#) governments are taking all suggestions, creating databases of company names and skills, and helping match collaborators. Other provinces are doing similar things. There are also specific programs being run through government agencies.

The National Research Council of Canada (“NRC”) launched the *Pandemic Response Challenge Program*. This program will build teams to address challenges requiring further R&D for solutions to meet COVID-19 related needs in diagnostics, therapeutics, vaccines and digital health (eg. disease tracking). The NRC will build these teams drawing on government capacity, businesses and academic researchers that register online [here](#).

Canadian [superclusters](#) are going to refocus their strategic innovation fund to prioritize COVID-19 research.

Mitacs Canada is a government agency that sponsors graduate students to work in industry-academic collaborations. Mitacs is focusing on supporting COVID-19 collaborations [all across Canada](#).

In Hamilton, McMaster University Professor Wael El-Dakhkhni and a team of McMaster engineers are using AI to predict how and where people will be affected by COVID-19. In addition, Dr. El-Dakhkhni has partnered with the City of Hamilton on a long-term project to create a “digital twin” of the city, with the goal of being able to test municipal strategies on the digital version of the city before deploying it in real life. <sup>1</sup>

### Canadian Technology Associations and Institutes

The [Vector Institute](#) is currently actively setting up collaborations on COVID-19. It is also providing [resources](#) to support collaborations, such as online AI tools at its website.

The Ontario Centres of Excellence has launched a [COVID-19 collaboration platform](#) for Ontario innovators to come together. Examples of their target audience include both providers and searchers of AI/Data Solutions, logistics, and remote healthcare.

CIFAR, a Canadian-based global charitable organization, recently held an [International Roundtable on AI and COVID-19](#) in which it has expressed its desire to connect researchers in public health, AI, and mathematical modelling.

A team of Canadian researchers, students, activists and web developers have launched a [COVID-19 Resources Canada portal](#) to support front-line healthcare workers and expand capacities of public health and research labs.



The Ryerson DMZ, an accelerator for tech startups in Canada, announced [#HackTheCurve](#), a national tech challenge with \$10,000 in cash prizes for a technology solution to help flatten the curve of COVID-19.

The Moriarty Lab, an infectious diseases lab at the University of Toronto, has called upon [researchers, students and healthcare professionals to volunteer](#) to help with COVID-19 testing.<sup>2</sup>

Canadian collaborations are also looking internationally, to share resources and skills. The Star recently reported that experts are calling for a coordinated global response to COVID-19.<sup>3</sup> Kirsten Hillman is the new Canadian ambassador to the U.S., and she told The Star that the Canadian government recognizes that international cooperation will be essential to get out of the global pandemic.

### Canadian Companies

There are many Canadian companies setting up their own collaborations. One example is Myant, a Toronto-based company that is no stranger to superclusters<sup>4</sup>, which recently announced its [call to action](#) to collaborate on a connected care solution addressing the impact of COVID-19 on vulnerable populations.

### U.S. Government and Companies

In the U.S., the Food and Drug Administration (FDA), Department of Veterans Affairs, National Institutes of Health, and America Makes has formed a public-private [partnership to respond to COVID-19](#). This partnership facilitates information-sharing regarding the use of 3D printing and other advanced manufacturing technologies in the context of personal protective equipment (PPE) and other medical device parts.

Amazon is helping the World Health Organization (WHO) by increasing capacity and security for the WHO website; providing ML & AI for WHO's Epidemic Intelligence from Open Sources initiative; assisting with the translation and transcription of WHO's knowledge catalogue; and providing logistics support.<sup>5</sup> Mr. Bezos also discussed the need to produce and distribute COVID-19 test kits.

### International Associations

The international community has launched an initiative called [Crowdfight COVID-19](#) to pool all available resources to fight COVID-19. Researchers may ask for help, and experts may volunteer to help.<sup>6</sup>

The [CrowdHelix Network](#), a network that connects research institutions and innovation companies around the world, launched an open access [match-making platform for global COVID-19 researchers](#).<sup>7</sup>

The World Health Organization (WHO) is coordinating a multinational trial named SOLIDARITY with the goal of identifying treatments to mitigate the damage done by COVID-19. Numerous Canadian hospitals are reportedly planning on enrolling patients in this collaboration to test potential treatments.<sup>8</sup>

### Conclusion

At every level – global, multinational, national, provincial/state, municipal, and local – there are opportunities for collaboration. Many organizations have looked for ways to inspire people to collaborate and engage in whatever way they can to help us together overcome COVID-19, a virus that knows no borders.

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<sup>1</sup> Jessie Park, "McMaster engineers using machine learning to aid Canada's crisis response", March 26, 2020, retrievable at <https://brighterworld.mcmaster.ca/articles/mcmaster-engineers-using-machine-learning-to-aid-canadas-crisis-response/>

<sup>2</sup> CBC Radio, "Scientists are mobilizing from the ground up and the top down in our fight against COVID-19", March 27, 2020, retrievable at <https://www.cbc.ca/radio/quirks/scientists-are-mobilizing-from-the-ground-up-and-the-top-down-in-our-fight-against-covid-19-1.5512558>

<sup>3</sup> Alex Ballingall, "COVID-19 requires a co-ordinated global response, experts say. But the world order is crumbling", The Star, March 26, 2020, retrievable at <https://www.thestar.com/politics/federal/2020/03/26/covid-19-requires-a-co-ordinated-global-response-experts-say-but-the-world-order-is-crumb>

<sup>4</sup> "Myant commits \$100M to the Advanced Manufacturing Supercluster", October 11, 2017, retrievable at



<https://www.newswire.ca/news-releases/myant-commits-100m-to-the-advanced-manufacturing-supercluster-650456233.html>

5 Jeff Bezos, “Good call with @WHO Director-General @DrTedros” Instagram post, March 27, 2020, retrievable at <https://www.instagram.com/p/B-NbzviHy5B/>

6 “Crowdfight COVID-19”, Twitter page, accessible at <https://twitter.com/crowdfightcovi1>

7 “CrowdHelix launches open access match-making platform for COVID-19 researchers – for a faster solution”, March 26, 2020, retrievable at <https://sciencebusiness.net/framework-programmes/news/crowdhelix-launches-open-access-match-making-platform-covid-19>

8 Jennifer Yang and Kate Allen, “Canadian hospitals to start enrolling patients in global COVID-19 drug trials”, The Star, March 26, 2020, retrievable at <https://www.thestar.com/news/canada/2020/03/26/canadian-hospitals-to-start-enrolling-patients-in-global-covid-19-drug-trials.html>

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