

## **Research Support Fund Institutional Investment Stories**

### Investment Story #1

The creation of the Indigenous Research Ethics Board (IREB) was born of a need that arose from York's ongoing efforts to decolonize research under the auspices of the Indigenous Framework and the Decolonizing Research Administration Action Plan. While the University's Human Participants Review Committee (HPRC) has aimed to ensure the safety and health of Indigenous research participants, Indigenous leaders throughout York identified a greater need for Indigenous-specific knowledges and leadership within research supports in order to ensure appropriate sensitivity to cultural and community rights, roles and responsibilities across any research projects. There needs to be Indigenous voices and Indigenous Peoples who have a say and control over all aspects of the approval process and not just a consultative piece to it. Recognizing the rights of Indigenous communities to steward knowledge production, it places the responsibility for ethical knowledge creation in the minds and hearts of Indigenous communities, which is where it must be. It is a significant move in returning to Indigenous people agency, authority, and sovereignty in knowledge production on this land. What distinguishes the IREB from a pro forma paperwork process is that it engages scholars from the moment that they start thinking of research, speaking to them about the ethics and the implications of the work.

The IREB is comprised of a council that includes five University faculty members, one undergraduate and graduate student – all representative of a diversity of First Nations, Inuit and Métis Peoples and gender identities. It also includes three external elders and/or knowledge keepers, as well as three non-University affiliated Indigenous community representatives. Non-faculty members will be compensated for their time serving on IREB.

In its first full year of operations, in 2024-2025, the IREB reviewed 43 ethics protocols for research involving Indigenous human participants.

### Investment Story #2

United Way Greater Toronto - KMb York Partnership: The opportunity was unique, and the goal was simple: to strengthen an historic relationship and explore mutual benefit in building KMb capacity and exploring deeper engagement opportunity between our offices and organizations. Since its inception in 2006, the Knowledge Mobilization Unit at York University (KMb York) has partnered closely with community organizations to develop community-university research partnerships that can help with innovation in social services in the community. United Way of York Region (now United Way Greater Toronto) was a partner from the beginning. UWGT staff served York committees and vice versa. We collaborated on funding opportunities, securing a shared SSHRC Public Outreach Grant. We have shared speaking engagements at conference and workshops. And we have published together.

The result of this collaboration was the formation of a new partnership in 2024. This arose in part because of a high-profile institutional MOU, which would see the Manager of Knowledge Mobilization physically work within the United Way Greater Toronto (UWGT) Research, Public Policy, and Evaluation (RPPE) team on a weekly basis for a year. This is the knowledge mobilization equivalent of an Industry Liaison Officer spending time working in industrial settings, such as a chamber of commerce.

The deliverables of this collaboration were designed to build the culture of knowledge mobilization at the United Way and explore deeper engagement opportunities. Specifically, the partnership has resulted in:

- a series of workshops and capacity building exercises for the RPPE team
- the co-creation of the knowledge mobilization and storytelling series for UWGT member agencies
- embedded engagement in a Real Estate Assets Mapping project
- the creation of knowledge mobilization resources for RPPE team access.

Leadership changes within UWGT – both within their CEO role and within the RPPE team – means that evaluating the success of this initiative will be important as these changes potentially open up new opportunities to deepen the relationship beyond the scheduled end of this pilot in the spring of 2025.

Importantly the partnership identified the following priorities from UWGT:

- Affordable housing
- Food security
- Income security
- Mental health

York has research strengths in all these areas and for 2024-2025 chose to partner on Mental Health and Income Security. For Income Security we have identified Thomas Klassen, Leah Vosko and Luin Goldring as potential academic principal investigators. These will be the focus on research partnering events in 2025-2026.

Partnering with the community in such a proactive fashion represents the social innovation equivalent of “market pull” and will facilitate not only productive partnerships but will also enable societal impacts by working on topics identified by the community.