



A Guide To Writing A 'Most Significant Contributions' (MSC) Statement

Knowledge to Impact

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UNIVERSITY OF
CALGARY

This guide has been developed by the [Knowledge to Impact team](#), Research Services Office (RSO), at the University of Calgary. It is intended to support University faculty, staff, students and partners that require a statement of significant contributions, including as part of a larger narrative CV (e.g., [Tri-Agency CV](#)).

What is a MSC Statement and why do I need one?

'Most Significant Contributions' (MSC) statements allow researchers to communicate and contextualize their achievements and impact for any number of opportunities including funding and award applications, career advancement, and other profile-building opportunities. A well-written MSC allows you to tell a **unique story about the value and impact of your research**.

In contrast to more traditional list-based CVs or resumes, MSCs are written accounts of your research contributions (i.e., narrative-based) and are intended to highlight the full spectrum of your research outputs. MSCs should be **tailored to the target audience(s) and each specific opportunity**, and **should clearly explain the quality, significance, and/or value of your work** – with examples and evidence in support of your claims.

An MSC may be a standalone document, or may be one component of a larger narrative CV, such as the [Tri-Agency CV](#).¹ With its emphasis on context, a mix of qualitative and quantitative evidence, and a broad range of contributions, it is a [DORA-aligned](#) evidence-based account of your key research achievements, tailored to the audience(s) evaluating it.



The MSC Statement is part of the unique story about your research. Use this section to highlight the significance of your work that is most relevant for the opportunity at hand.

How to write a MSC Statement

Each MSC should be written with the requirements of your specific opportunity in mind. Think about your experiences, outputs, and contributions that will make you the right fit for this job, opportunity, or project.

Getting Started: 4 Steps



¹ Please note: the information on the CIHR page is specific to CIHR applicants. There may be some important differences in formatting or other requirements for applicants to SSHRC, NSERC, or other funders. Always check the requirements for your specific application.

1 LIST research contributions and activities

Select **5-10 contributions** relevant to the opportunity

Ask yourself:

- *Which of your contributions tell the strongest story about your scholarship?*
- *Which of these are the most relevant to this opportunity?*
- *Can you bundle any of these together?*

Try and think in terms of **areas or periods of scholarly work or research**. For example: publications, presentations, white papers or policy reports; partnerships, networks and collaborations; mentoring; government relations, technology etc. In many cases, an individual contribution does not have to be a single publication or output but instead can include a collection or group of outputs.



Bundling outputs together into a single contribution is optional. If you choose to do so, ensure that the contributions fit under a unifying theme or relate to a specific project.

- *How do I know which contributions are the most significant?*

When brainstorming which of your scholarly contributions to include, try defining the specific impact of each contribution (i.e., see step 3), and then look for obvious themes or groupings that support a cohesive narrative, according to the opportunity. This will help you select your top 5-10.

See: [Appendix 1](#) (for 'What Counts as a Research Contribution or Scholarly Activity') and [Appendix 3](#) (Example MSC Statements).

2 DEFINE and describe the role you played in this contribution

Ask yourself:

- *How did your role in each example demonstrate that you are uniquely suited for this new opportunity?*

3 DESCRIBE the goal(s) achieved and the outcomes or impact of the research activities (see [Appendix 2](#))

Ask yourself:

- *Who benefitted from the activities and when did that benefit occur?*
- *What were the research objectives achieved by your project(s) or activities?*
- *Were there any benefits or outcomes from this work, expected or unexpected?*

Focus on the state of your field or area of work before and after your contribution(s).

Provide as much context as possible for your audience, especially those who may not be experts in your exact area of research.

4 SUPPORT your impact with evidence

Ask yourself:

- *What qualitative and/or **quantitative** data supports the difference your scholarly activities have made?*

Integrate your evidence throughout your statement, to ensure each claim is supported.

See [Appendix 3](#) for examples of the types of evidence you might consider.



The strongest MSCs are very clearly organized – make sure your MSC is formatted so readers can follow your reasoning. Provide a strong narrative ‘flow’ to keep readers engaged.

Keeping your MSC updated

Although MSCs should be built for each opportunity, this doesn’t mean they have to be written from scratch every time. Consider creating a ‘template’ or ‘master’ MSC with pre-formatted and pre-organized sections that have all required details completed (e.g., one sentence summaries of the project, key partners/collaborators, metrics, outputs, outcomes, evidence, citations, etc.). You can use these as your ‘building blocks’ to develop a more fulsome and targeted MSC for specific opportunities – elaborating and concentrating on the most relevant contributions while shortening or removing less impactful ones.



Carefully consider the adjudication criteria for the opportunity you are applying for.

Select and prioritize your contributions based on the objectives, priorities, and/or guidelines from the opportunity. Remember: criteria and objectives may be listed in different places in each opportunity!

Key considerations

✓ DO

- ✓ **Tailor your MSC** for each application or opportunity
 - Review the details of the specific opportunity criteria
 - Consider your reviewer audience and use language appropriate to their expertise. What do they want and need to know about your research contributions?
 - Highlight your strengths specific to the goals, priorities, and/or objectives of the specific application
 - Make it clear why a chosen contribution is relevant to the opportunity
- ✓ Avoid unnecessary use of technical terms and jargon - write in **clear, active, and plain language** appropriate to the audience
- ✓ **Be succinct** - generally contributions should be described in 250-500 words or fewer
- ✓ Provide a **short, clear title sentence** about what the contribution is, ideally **bolded**
 - Beneath, provide clear descriptions of your outcomes and impacts, citing relevant research outputs. (e.g., “**Contribution 1, [short title of contribution]:**”)
- ✓ **Be selective** - not comprehensive - about which contributions to include
- ✓ Support your chosen contributions with **evidence** that showcases your research impact, and aligns with the specific opportunity or application
- ✓ Highlight your **partnerships** and **collaborations** (e.g., with community members, partners, industry, or people with lived experience) where appropriate
- ✓ Adhere to the formatting requirements of the specific application
- ✓ Carefully review and, if needed, re-frame your MSC to fit each application

⊗ DON'T

- ⊗ Simply convert your Academic CV into a Narrative CV!
- ⊗ Use [Journal Impact Factor \(JIF\)](#), other journal-based metrics and/or h-index as evidence of quality (see [Appendix 2](#))
- ⊗ Provide an exhaustive career history or list of scholarly activities
- ⊗ Re-use previous MSCs for new applications without careful review

Appendices



APPENDIX 1: What counts as a ‘Research Contribution’ or ‘Scholarly Activity’?

What counts as a relevant contribution will depend on the criteria and requirements for the opportunity. Think broadly about your work and research engagements. Contributions may have scholarly benefits or applications, or wider societal ones.²

Ensure your contributions highlight your strengths as a researcher and are **relevant and specific to your application**.

There are a number of different areas or types of activities to consider. Each of the Tri-Agencies and other funders will likely provide a list of acceptable research contributions. University of Calgary’s [General Faculties Council also provides a list of research and scholarship activities](#).³

These include, but are not limited to:

- research that creates new knowledge including research creation and creative practice
- synthesis of knowledge across disciplines, and across topics within a discipline
- research that involves entrepreneurship and/or innovation, including patents and/or commercialization
- systematic study of teaching and learning processes, including the scholarship of teaching and learning
- generating and mobilizing research results into solutions to compelling/complex problems in the community
- knowledge creation grounded in or engaged with Indigenous nations, communities
- societies, or individuals that embraces the intellectual, physical, emotional and/or spiritual dimensions of knowledge and interconnected relationships with people, places, and the natural environment

For more information on research contributions accepted by Tri-Agency funders, please refer to the Tri-Agency CV instructions and associated FAQs for your particular funding agency.

² For an extensive list of CIHR’s example contribution areas, in alignment with DORA, please see: <https://cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/53702.html>
³ (see section 1.2.5 - pp.12)



APPENDIX 2: What does ‘Impact’ mean?

‘Impact’ is a broad category and can mean different things to different audiences. Although there are various definitions and frameworks for impact, it may be useful to think about research impact as **an effect on, change or benefit to the economy, society, culture, public policy or services, health, the environment or quality of life, within and beyond academia, as a result of scholarly activity.**

There are a variety of unique pathways to impact - from innovation and entrepreneurship to collaboration and co-production with communities. While not every project will lead to broad societal impact, we recommend thinking about the steps that you have taken **toward impact** in a way that is relevant to your research program and your career stage.

Although the journey to impact is often non-linear, and can be unexpected, it can help to think of these pathways toward impact as following several ‘steps’:



Your MSC statement should present a clear story that allows your readers to follow the pathway(s) your work has taken through these steps to arrive at your research impact.

Consider conceptualizing or organizing your impact and across these broad, commonly-used categories:

- Advancing knowledge
- Building capacity
- Informing decisions
- Economic impact
- Health impact
- Social impact
- Environmental impact
- Cultural impact

Thinking about your research impact with these categories in mind may help you organize and connect your research contributions and activities into themes or areas. It is important to carefully summarize your impact and the benefits that your research has had across various audiences.



Publishing in a high-profile journal is a big accomplishment. In some fields, journal-based metrics such as the Journal Impact Factor (JIF) are used to demonstrate the value or impact of publication. Metrics like the JIF are based on average numbers of citations per publication in a journal in a specific time span, while in reality the distribution of citations is often skewed.

Therefore, the JIF of a given scholarly journal is often attributed to very few highly cited papers and does not accurately represent the quality of individual research papers published in the journal.⁴

In line with both the University of Calgary and the Tri-Agencies' commitment to DORA,⁵ we recommend that you consider showcasing your research quality by writing about the novelty of the content of the publication, reach of the readership, meaningful collaborations, citations received on the article itself, or key comments from peer review or external experts.

To learn more about assessing and demonstrating your research impact, please visit the KI website: [Knowledge to Impact | University of Calgary](#)

4 <https://www.nature.com/nature-index/news/whats-wrong-with-the-jif-in-five-graphs>

5 <https://research.ucalgary.ca/research/our-impact/DORA>



APPENDIX 3: Example MSC Statements

The following examples are provided as possible templates to create your own research contribution statements. By connecting a number of these statements together, you can assemble an MSC that showcases your scholarly work in the most relevant way for each opportunity.

Remember to follow the steps listed in the guide (see below), which will support you in organizing and presenting your information in a clear, consistent manner.



Example 1 – (Health Impact, Building Capacity, Informing Decisions):

Contribution [#]: Developed novel MRI imaging technique for visualizing cartilage degeneration following trauma.

[STEP 1 – List research contributions & activities] Leading my research team, we developed an imaging technique which uses a negative-charged MRI contrast agent to penetrate areas of knee cartilage that may be impacted following traumatic injury.

[STEP 2 – Describe your role] As part of my current role as principal investigator and program director, I have co-published [X#] peer-reviewed articles* in radiological journals focused on this technique, which allows for the testing of new therapies which may prevent or reverse the effects of early osteoarthritis in patients with knee ligament tears. As part of our commitment to knowledge mobilization, in addition to our published articles, my team and I have given [X#] of presentations on this work*, including at the 2023 annual meetings of the Radiological Society of North America (RSNA) and the Canadian Association of Radiologists (CAR), as well as published articles* in the Hospital News magazine (estimated readership of over 60,000).

[STEP 3 – Describe your impact] These innovations help fill the gap in accurate prognostic imaging to help patients recovering from knee injuries at all stages of life.

[STEP 4 – Support your impact with evidence] LIST MOST IMPACTFUL RELATED RESEARCH OUTPUTS – e.g., bibliographic entries of related papers, presentations, datasets, patents, etc.

*[List citations and research output references]

Example 2 – (Environmental Impact, Advancing Knowledge, Informing Decisions):

Contribution [#], Advancing Arctic climate science through education, collaboration, and policy

[STEP 1 – List research contributions & activities] My Arctic research efforts have been ongoing since 2014, utilizing field experiments that simulate multiple environmental changes in Arctic ecosystems as a result of human-driven climate change. This includes experiments focused on elevated CO₂*, UV-B radiation*, nutrient enrichment*, and precipitation changes*. As part of a network of [#] scholars and lab collaborators, we have published [X#] papers, major international assessment reports ([list reports])*, and educational outreach programming to communities around Canada and internationally.*

[STEP 2 – Define & Describe Your Role] I facilitated direct outreach and exchanges with Indigenous Sami partners, sharing our own findings and integrating their ecological knowledge of habitat changes as part of their reindeer herding activities.

[STEP 3 & 4 – Describe and document the impact and support with evidence] With our collaborators at [X institution], we have also developed [#] of educational modules focused on impacts of climate change for students K-12, which have been accessed [#] of times by educators worldwide from our website. In addition to elucidating key drivers and impacts of global climate change in the Arctic, our work has directly informed policy and education at multiple levels, including providing evidence bases for Arctic Council reports (2011, 2015)*, the IPCC Assessment Report ([year])*, and through face-to-face policy briefings for ministers at the UK, EU, and climate negotiators worldwide.* Our work continues to garner significant media interest*, and has had a significant effect on the global conversation about anthropogenic climate change and its effects on the ecosystems of the Arctic. Taken together, these outputs have shifted scientific understandings of the ecological impacts of extreme winter warming events and the loss of insulating snow cover.

*[List citations and research output references]

Example 3 (Health Impact, Building Capacity, Informing Decisions):

Contribution [#], Using qualitative research to transform modes and models of care for long-term care residents.

[STEP 1 – List research contributions & activities] As co-lead on a [describe grant], our research aimed to improve care quality and health outcomes for people living in long-term care facilities across/in [locations]. Our research team used ethnographic observations and semi-structured interviews to explore opportunities and challenges related to novel social and relational models of care, emphasizing those who may be socially and/or clinically marginalized. Our research produced new knowledge and understandings of the embodied and situated perspectives of caregivers, managers, family members, and residents as new policies and standards of care were implemented in these facilities.

[STEP 2 – Describe role] My contributions focused on supporting the research team to produce a meaningful, inclusive, intersectional analysis of the perspectives of those who live and work in these facilities, and to mobilize the knowledge to policy- and decision-makers to generate maximum impact.

[STEP 3 – Describe and document the impact and STEP 4 – Support your impact with evidence] In addition to [#] peer-reviewed publications*, which were co-authored alongside our patient, family, and nursing partners - our team produced a landmark report, [title of report]* and I was invited to discuss this research and its findings and recommendations with the House of Commons Standing Committee on Health (HESA). Our research has helped re-centre patients' and families' embodied experiences of long-term care in spaces where purely economic or financial considerations have otherwise driven policy and models of care delivery.

*[List citations and research output references]

Example 4 (Economic Impact, Advancing Knowledge, Social Impact, Informing Decisions):

Contribution [#]: Developing and implementing novel approaches to mixed service delivery models in international freight shipping.

[STEP 1 - List research contributions & activities] As the leader of a community of practice

[STEP 2 - Define your role], I brought together over 30 business, academic, and community leaders and partners representing 22 international organizations to share experiences with supply chain policy change and organizational quality improvement.

[STEP 3 - Describe and document the impact and STEP 4 - Support your impact with evidence] Working collaboratively, we refined and finalized a mixed service model implementation framework, which was adopted by 5 of the businesses as part of a pilot exercise. The average shipping cost reductions from these organizations measured up to 20% across a two-year period, and we have since gained the commitment of an additional 3 organizations who aim to implement this framework in the next three years. As an extension of this work, I collaborated with industry partners to co-publish 3 papers focused on the framework and its implementation, and have presented at 4 international conferences to share our successes and learnings. Both the framework and the implementation guides created to support it have seen wide interest and uptake by industry partners, policymakers, and academic researchers from across the globe, with over 50,000 downloads of these resources from our dedicated website.

*[List citations and research output references]

Example 5 (Cultural Impact, Advancing Knowledge, Building Capacity, Health Impact):

Contribution [#], Developing and applying a new model of bibliotherapy to improve the mental well-being of asylum seekers and refugees.

My most recent work has focused on how literary works build community not by erasing racial difference, but by actively remembering the histories of racism that shape our present.*

[STEP 1 - List research contributions & activities] Building on examples of bibliotherapy practice (broadly defined as ‘using books for therapy’), I have developed a new model to address and encourage building empathy and identification in post-trauma contexts.* In this work,

[STEP 2 - Define and describe your role] I lead a research team to help demonstrate the therapeutic benefits of communal reading practices with new immigrant, refugee, and asylum seeking communities. Partnering closely with [XYZ organization], our pilot study facilitated [X#] of workshops with [#] participants in a group studied over a two-year period.*

[STEP 3 - Describe and document the impact] Using narrative analyses and follow-up interviews, our work demonstrates that this new model of bibliotherapy empowers individuals to give meaningful shape to their own lives, overcome isolation, and confront trauma in a safe, collective environment.*

[STEP 4 - Support your impact with evidence] Based on the strength and relevance of this research, I have been invited to give presentations at [#] of national and international symposia, and our model of bibliotherapy has been adopted and embedded at [#] of partner institutions, including [XYZ].* This work has transformed how these organizations approach group therapy with refugees, and given hundreds of participants new ways of processing and working through their feelings of depression, anxiety, and isolation.

*[List citations and research output references].

Example 6 (Health Impact, Informing Decisions, Advancing Knowledge, Building Capacity):

Contribution [#], Publications and guidelines on obesity and weight stigma.

Early in my career, **[STEP 1 - List research contributions & activities]** I was first author on two manuscripts that explored the intersections of social justice and weight, which were some of the only published academic sources worldwide on this topic* and led to a change in how weight stigma was conceptualized and studied.

[STEP 3 - Describe and document the impact and STEP 4 - Support your impact with evidence] The growth of this area - now with dozens of articles appearing yearly - means that weight issues have become understood as marginalized identity and social justice challenges, which I have published about in a weight bias chapter* in [textbook name]. Perhaps more importantly,

[STEP 2 - Define and describe your role] I was invited as one of 62 global experts to develop the Adult Obesity Clinical Practice Guidelines for [journal name].*

[STEP 4 - Support your impact with evidence] Released in 2020, these Guidelines resulted in over 80 million media impressions (including front-page coverage in the National Post and Global & Mail) from nearly 300 unique stories, including international media coverage through CNN, BBC, and Irish Times, among others.* Since their release in 2020, these open access Guidelines have been downloaded nearly 500,000 times and cited by over 1,400 other publications. As a part of a commitment to knowledge mobilization and reaching a variety of audiences through various outputs, the Guidelines are accompanied by a podcast* and the weight bias chapter has likewise been adapted into an article for general audiences, published in [online periodical].*

[STEP 3 - Describe and document the impact] Along with regular citation and discussion, it is clear that these Guidelines have made an impact on how the public health challenge of weight in adults is managed, with multiple clinics across the world implementing changed care practices and weight stigma approaches based on these Guidelines.*

*[List citations and research output references]

Acknowledgments and Additional Resources

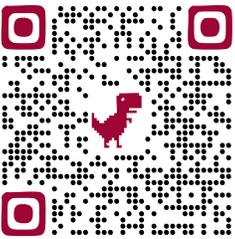
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Additional Resources

For the most current list of resources, please visit our online version of this resource: [Narrative CV Support](#)



Visit: [Knowledge to Impact](#) | University of Calgary

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