

The background of the cover features a stylized profile of a human head facing left. The head is composed of two overlapping shapes: a light grey one on the left and a dark olive green one on the right. The text is centered within the grey portion of the head.

The IRSST's Scientific Policy

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Table of Contents

1. Science: The IRSST's DNA	4
2. Action Principles	6
3. Sphere of Action	7
3.1 Needs Identified by Stakeholders	
3.2 Needs Identified by the Research Community and Standardization Committees	
3.3 Needs Identified through Database Analysis	
3.4 Needs Identified through Scientific Watch Activities	
4. Means of Action	8
4.1 Grant Programs	
4.2 Calls for Proposals	
4.3 Partnerships	
4.4 Contractual Agreements	
4.5 Graduate Studies Scholarship and Postdoctoral Fellowship Program	
5. Sharing of Responsibilities	10
5.1 Board of Directors	
5.2 Executive Office	
5.3 Scientific Advisory Board	
6. Revision and Effective Date	11



1. Science: The IRSST's DNA

The Institut de recherche Robert-Sauvé en santé et en sécurité du travail (IRSST) is a unique scientific organization combining the functions of research centre, funding agency, laboratories, and liaison and knowledge transfer centre.



The IRSST is a leader in advancing and mobilizing scientific and technical knowledge in occupational health and safety (OHS). It is present for and influential on its OHS partners and in the public sphere, with its expertise informing actions aimed at improving the health and safety of Québec workers. The Institute is recognized at both the national and international levels for the quality and relevance of its achievements.

In keeping with the spirit of Québec's Act respecting occupational health and safety (AOHS) and the Act respecting industrial accidents and occupational diseases (AIAOD), the IRSST's mission is:

To contribute to workers' health and safety through research, its laboratories' expertise, and knowledge dissemination and transfer, with a view to promoting prevention and sustainable return to work.

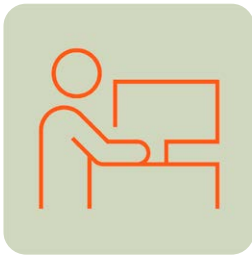
Drawing on its **unique pool of skills and expertise in OHS**, the Institute fulfills this mission through the following specific actions related to its four scientific levers. It:

Research



- Fosters the development of new OHS knowledge in collaboration with the scientific community and its partners;
- Demonstrates leadership, anticipates emerging needs and plays a facilitator/coordinator role in OHS matters for its partners and scientific communities; and
- Contributes to the development of standards and regulations pertaining to OHS.

Grant programs



- Funds research projects that align with the IRSST's [Reference Framework for OHS Research](#); and
- Contributes to the training of highly qualified OHS personnel.

Laboratories



- Offers protective-equipment evaluation services, calibration services, scientific and technical training sessions, and expert reports, as well as the environmental, toxicological and microbiological analysis services needed to support the activities of the public prevention-inspection network; and
- Develops, optimizes and validates analysis, testing, sampling and calibration methods in response to regulatory changes, the introduction of new substances, revisions to standards, research projects or emerging issues.

Communication, strategic watch and knowledge mobilization



- Mobilizes OHS knowledge in both workplaces and the scientific community;
- Promotes knowledge generated by IRSST-conducted or -funded research and disseminates it to workplaces; and
- Responds to ad hoc requests for expertise received from various OHS professionals.

As the scientific reference centre for OHS in Québec, **the IRSST keeps abreast of changes in workplaces and of OHS knowledge needs** through its regular examination of emerging problems.



2. Action Principles

The IRSST's actions across all its scientific activities are guided by the following principles:

- The Institute's activities must be pertinent, in compliance with its mission and of high scientific quality.
- The Institute's activities must be associated with current or emerging problems, and must pertain to the needs expressed by the Commission des normes, de l'équité, de la santé et de la sécurité du travail (CNESST), its partners, workplaces or the scientific community.
- The Institute's research activities must be original. Thus the Institute avoids duplicating studies conducted elsewhere and whose results it can transfer or adapt to the Québec context.
- The Institute prioritizes multidisciplinary and interdisciplinary within research teams as a means of better understanding the often-complex nature of OHS problems.
- The Institute supports various methodological approaches and encourages the development and use of multi-factorial and multi-level approaches in the studies conducted by its researchers or funded through its grant programs.
- Studies requiring the participation of human subjects must comply with the rules set forth in the IRSST's Politique d'éthique de la recherche avec des êtres humains (in French only);
- Research projects carried out in workplaces must, generally speaking, be conducted using a parity approach with the consent and participation of both employers and workers.
- The IRSST focuses on research work that can lead to improvements in OHS, without, however, excluding certain projects with a fundamental aim that would eventually offer concrete benefits in workplaces.
- The Institute supports efforts to disseminate and apply results in order to maximize their usefulness and the benefits for Québec workplaces.
- In its knowledge mobilization activities, the IRSST collects and objectively organizes knowledge gleaned from the scientific literature, grey literature and workplace practices.
- The Institute promotes the complementarity of its own scientific resources with those of universities and public or private research centres.
- The IRSST supports the new generation through its competitive Graduate Studies Scholarship and Postdoctoral Fellowship Program for candidates whose work aligns with the Institute's [Reference Framework for OHS Research](#).



3. Sphere of Action

The challenges that arise in terms of OHS in Québec are very diverse and complex, as evidenced in the IRSST's [Reference Framework for OHS Research](#). The Institute must therefore channel its efforts toward the most promising niches. This involves carrying out a continuous process of identifying and updating OHS knowledge needs.

When establishing priorities, the Institute is thus guided by its pooling and analysis of the following needs:

3.1 Needs Identified by Stakeholders

The Institute identifies its partners' main concerns and expectations through consultations and exchanges with the CNESST, joint sector-based associations (ASPs), the Ministère du Travail and the Ministère de la Santé et des Services sociaux and its network, as well as employer and union associations.

3.2 Needs Identified by the Research Community and Standardization Committees

The IRSST's scientific personnel remain at the forefront of knowledge by conducting research work, participating in numerous scientific events and serving on standardization committees. They are also ideally positioned to signal both persistent problems that require ongoing research and knowledge mobilization efforts, and emerging problems that may warrant particular attention.

3.3 Needs Identified through Database Analysis

In-depth statistical analyses using the databases of the CNESST and of some other provincial, federal or international organizations allow the Institute to detect high-risk populations, occupations or industrial activity sectors, as well as the emergence of new OHS risks.

3.4 Needs Identified through Scientific Watch Activities

Structured scientific watch activities help position the Institute's work relative to that carried out elsewhere in the world. They also serve to identify emerging problems likely to affect Québec workplaces in the medium or long term.



4. Means of Action

The IRSST's development strategy for advancing and mobilizing scientific and technical knowledge is supported by its own scientific resources and by those available within universities and public or private research centres.

The Institute also uses various means to ensure that researchers, scientific professionals, and research and laboratory technicians adhere to its [Reference Framework for OHS Research](#). These means sometimes take the form of grant or scholarship/fellowship programs, and sometimes, of more targeted initiatives designed to ensure the funding and execution of research projects or other scientific activities in areas deemed high priority.

4.1 Grant Programs

The IRSST's grant programs help fund OHS research projects and are intended for the Institute's own researchers or those affiliated with Québec universities or with private or public Québec research centres.

4.2 Calls for Proposals

Calls for proposals are designed to support research on themes pre-determined by the Institute and for which it hopes to develop new knowledge in areas where expertise is not readily available. This type of initiative helps attract new researchers to the OHS field and to build a pool of researchers in targeted areas that the Institute deems priority.

4.3 Partnerships

Research partnerships constitute a lever for growing OHS research capacity. They are formalized through agreements in which the Institute and other organizations (ministries, public agencies, funding agencies, educational or research institutions, structured research networks, private companies, etc.) join forces and make a common commitment to develop specific research sectors in OHS. Some of these agreements involve pooling resources and combining expertise, while others include financial investments from each partner to support scientific activities.

4.4 Contractual Agreements

Occasionally, the IRSST enters into contractual agreements with experts or external organizations to respond to ad hoc needs for OHS knowledge.

4.5 The Graduate Studies Scholarship and Postdoctoral Fellowship Program

The Institute's Scholarship and Fellowship Program is intended for students at the master's and doctoral levels and postdoctoral trainees demonstrating particular aptitudes for graduate studies. Its aim is to increase the number of scientists able to meet OHS needs. This program may also offer supplements to candidates who have obtained funding from another granting agency.

This program is not the only source of support available for training highly qualified OHS personnel. Support is also provided at the Institute through actions such as hosting trainees, integrating students into scientific activities and supervising their master's-level or doctoral work.



5. Sharing of Responsibilities

In accordance with the provisions of Québec's Règlement intérieur de l'Institut de recherche Robert-Sauvé en santé et en sécurité du travail, the responsibilities for developing, adopting, amending and applying the Scientific Policy are shared as follows:

5.1 Board of Directors

The Board of Directors holds the decision-making authority over the adoption of the IRSST's Scientific Policy and any potential amendments to this policy.

5.2 Executive Office

The Executive Office is responsible for developing and applying the Institute's Scientific Policy. Together with the management team, it oversees the deployment of its services for all the activities involved in the Institute's four scientific levers:

(i) development of new OHS knowledge through research;

(ii) funding and coordination of research;

(iii) delivery of laboratory and scientific expertise to the public OHS prevention network; and

(iv) communication, strategic watch and knowledge mobilization.

The Executive Office is also responsible for ensuring a safe and exemplary work environment in order to foster collaboration among the Institute's personnel, its workplace partners and members of the scientific community, and for stimulating creativity and innovation in the performance of activities related to the Institute's four scientific levers.

5.3 Scientific Advisory Board

The Scientific Advisory Board serves as a consulting body for the Executive Office. The latter must obtain the Advisory Board's recommendations when developing and implementing the Institute's Scientific Policy, with regard to the following:

- the general orientations of the Institute's various scientific activities, notably the setting of research priorities, the nature and scope of the funding programs, the action framework for the laboratories, and knowledge dissemination and mobilization practices;
- the pertinence of projects submitted under the grant programs, as well as of scholarship/fellowship applications submitted under the Institute's Graduate Studies Scholarship and Postdoctoral Fellowship Program;
- ensuring that a process for evaluating the scientific quality of research proposals and of scholarship/fellowship applications is in place by enlisting experts recognized in their areas of expertise, and that the process is in accordance with the generally accepted standards and practices in scientific communities; and
- the partnerships, calls for proposals and contractual agreements designed to meet specific ad hoc research and development needs.



6. Revision and Effective Date

This policy is revised by the Scientific Advisory Board and the Governance and Ethics Committee. It is updated as needed and at least every five years.

This edition of the policy was adopted by the Board of Directors on April 4, 2024.

