

# Canadian Neurodevelopmental Research Training (CanNRT) Platform Curriculum Codesign Final Recommendations

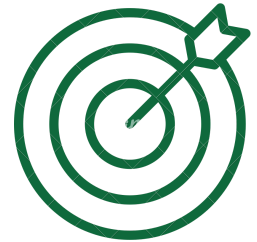


## CanNRT Mission

CanNRT is a collaborative training environment that supports research excellence, and sustainable and equitable pathways for early career researchers in neurodevelopmental conditions across Canada through multidisciplinary cross-sector learning, mentorship, and connectivity.

## CanNRT Priorities

- Build a dynamic learning environment
- Strengthen member engagement
- Promoting equity, diversity and inclusion
- Codesigning high-quality accessible curriculum focused on key priority areas
- Connecting research and community partners



## Language Choices

Preferred and inclusive language choices were used during the codesign process and in reports. Some of these intentional language choices include:

1. **Neurodevelopment Condition** is used instead of 'neurodevelopment disability' as it aligns with the preferences of people who have a neurodevelopmental condition but do not identify as disabled
2. **"People With Lived and Living Experience"** (PWLLE) is used to describe individuals living with a neurodevelopmental condition
3. While our team originally used the term self-advocate to refer to PWLLE this was not the preference of the people who participated in the codesign process. Therefore, we switched to using the terms that people identified with such as, **disabled youth, neurodivergent trainee, autistic adult**
4. **Identity-first** language was used throughout the codesign process and report to align with the preferences of many disabled and autistic adults
5. **Interest-holders** is a term used to identify PWLLE, service providers, policy-makers, researchers, clinicians, and family who took part in the codesign process

## What is Codesign?

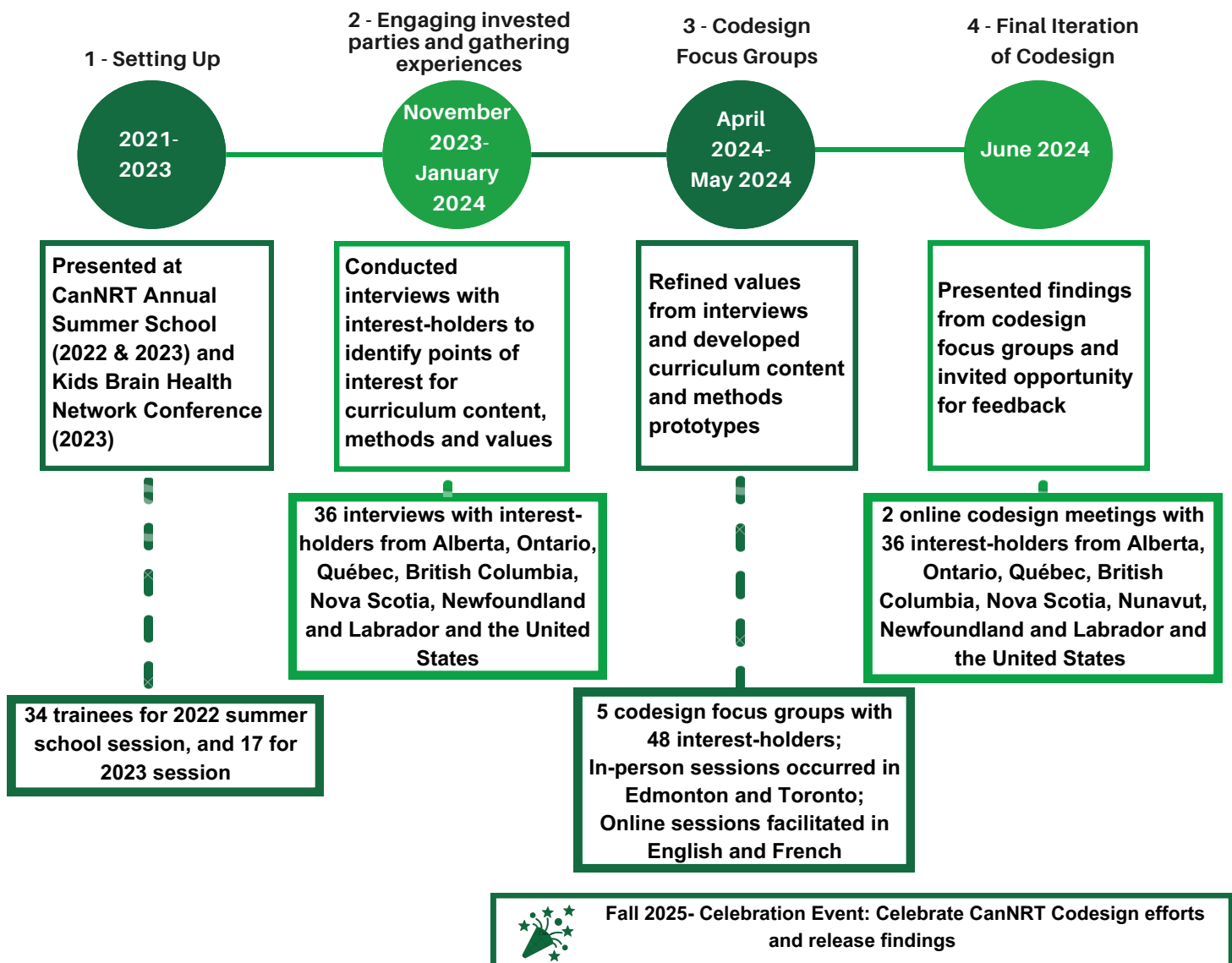
Codesign is an approach to research that focuses on collaboration, sharing power, and prioritizing input from PWLLE in all aspects of a project. Codesign has been used in health-related research to develop programs and address challenges with services.



## Our Application of Codesign

CanNRT used codesign to engage trainees (students in graduate school and post doc), neurodivergent individuals, caregivers, researchers, and community partners to develop recommendations for a curriculum for trainees engaged in neurodevelopmental research. The objectives of this process were to: 1) Identify and describe the content areas that should be developed as part of the training platform; and 2) Provide recommendations and resources that inform the methods for delivering the curriculum content to trainees. The CanNRT curriculum was developed and offered to current trainees in parallel with the codesign process.

## Our Codesign Journey





## Findings for the CanNRT Training Curriculum

These findings represent the recommended areas for curriculum content, methods of delivery and value statements for the CanNRT training curriculum

### Curriculum content in the area of critical reflexivity:

- Cultural humility and learning about historical harms in the communities that are engaged in research (e.g., Asperger and Nazi ideology)
- The evolution and variation of models of disability and of language (e.g., identity vs. person first)
- An understanding of intersectionality theory and the social drivers of health
- Critically questioning who is included as a driver of research (e.g., PWLLE), and what is the desired impact (e.g., systems advocacy)

“If you don’t have people with lived experience with disability, you’re bound to repeat history. You’re bound to repeat the same errors that exist in academia.” (Neurodivergent Individual)

“It’s very, very important to be the way you are... because when you share your own vulnerability, the other person gets encouraged to share their vulnerability because you are breaking the ice with more honesty and authenticity.” (Caregiver)

### Curriculum content in the area of self-awareness:

- An understanding of one’s own positionality and bias
- Awareness of bias and stigma in academia (e.g., disclosure and impression management)
- Identification of one’s own strengths and limitations

## Methods of Delivering Critical Reflexivity and Self-Awareness Curriculum:

Case examples paired with group discussion



Reflective activities (e.g., developing a positionality statement)

Using a living library, which is a method to share knowledge by listening to other people’s lived experiences



Panels with people with living and lived experience

**Curriculum content in the area of community engagement:**

- The value of community engaged research and practical components of community engaged research (e.g., community partner compensation)
- Provide information about existing training opportunities to develop community engaged research skills (e.g., CanChild Family Engagement in Research training course)
- How to identify community needs and develop relationships to meet community and academic needs
- Build a network by defining the CanNRT community and building relationships within it, across training institutions (e.g., other labs), and with communities

“When you're working with a neurodevelopmental condition, I think that incorporating that human aspect into it is so important. And I mean, I will die by that statement that when you're dealing with someone's identity, you need to have that human touch to it.”  
(Neurodivergent Individual)

**Methods of Delivering Community Engagement Curriculum:**

Experiential learning (e.g., home visits, clinic observations)

Panels with researchers and community organizations

Taking part in existing community engagement trainings

“I think that model of really co-learning and breaking down power differentials, recognizing individuals' different and unique experiences and areas of expertise, and that we really can learn and just really help support and grow the field better together” (Academic Researcher)

**Curriculum content in the area of research skills included:**

- Recognizing/valuing different types of knowledge (e.g., lived experience) and research traditions (e.g., bench science)
- Developing inclusive, ethical, accessible and flexible research methods (e.g., adapting research to individuals) and practice research skills (e.g., interviewing)
- Communicating research to different audiences (e.g., families, policy makers, funders, community organizations)

**Methods of Delivering Research Skills Curriculum:**

Case examples about research scenarios for trainees to discuss

Panels with individuals who have completed different types of research

Participatory learning experiences through simulations, role-play, elevator pitches, and lab visits

## Codesigned Value Statements

The following are four value statements developed with input from interview and codesign focus group participants during the codesign process. The statements represent the values interest-holders felt CanNRT as a platform should prioritize when training future researchers:

Be passionate and driven to create equitable opportunities for meaningful improvement in the quality of the lives of neurodivergent individuals, prioritizing the voices and goals of the neurodivergent community and with recognition for the diversity within this community



Be curious, open-minded, reflexive and willing to learn from diverse people (e.g., those with living experience, family members, community partners, researchers, peers) by valuing all forms of knowledge and methods of communication, appreciating differences as well as recognizing your own diverse stories, strengths, and limitations with an openness to accept feedback

Be caring, empathetic, authentic, respectful, forthright and trustworthy seeing all people as whole, and committing to recognizing the strengths of others



Be flexible, adaptable and creative in your approach to completing ethical and high-quality research while working with a range of collaborators (e.g., those with living experience, family members, community partners, researchers, peers) in equitable partnership, presuming competence, prioritizing safety for all involved and with a commitment to both minimizing and addressing harm