

HEARING RESEARCH INTERNATIONAL

Major Gifts Program Development

Hearing Research International (HRI) is an international research foundation powered by Canadian Hearing Services (CHS), advancing innovative research in Hearing Health and Deaf Studies.



Operating over the last five years as CHS Global Partnerships for Research & Innovation, Global Partnerships became Canada's largest funder dedicated to improving quality of life for Deaf and hard of hearing individuals. Research funding in the millions has been awarded by a 64-member scientific review grant panel from North America, Europe, and Australia to Canadian primary investigators working in collaboration with researchers in 20 countries.

Responding to a growing worldwide hearing-health challenge, the newly branded Hearing Research International was officially launched on World Hearing Day 2026, as a global foundation, positioning Hearing Health and Deaf Studies research on the world stage.

HRI represents the next evolution of research leadership, fostering collaboration across institutions, disciplines, and borders, setting the agenda for innovative research in the international research ecosystem. To shape the future, the foundation supports research that:

- Advances prevention, identification and treatment
- Strengthens accessibility and inclusion
- Informs policy and professional practice
- Improves quality of life for Deaf and hard-of-hearing individuals

HRI commits to investing in innovative research, fostering cross-border partnerships, shaping global research agendas, and translating knowledge into meaningful advancements. By catalyzing collaborations and connecting expertise, HRI research initiatives and partnerships, generate knowledge improving the lives of Deaf and hard of hearing individuals worldwide.

Hearing Research International engaged S. Sutton & Associates Inc. for an eighteen month period to support the design and execution of a Major Gifts Program, enabling the foundation to build on a proof of concept demonstrated over the past five years while expanding its global presence and impact. The engagement is delivered through the firm's proprietary Innovation Team Model, which brings specialized technical expertise to each phase of the work and positions HRI for significant growth in major gift philanthropic receipts.



The Innovation Team's Major Gifts Program Development work included:

- **Initial Meeting and Process Review:** Meetings with staff, leadership, and key stakeholders to understand current practices and confirm scope, expectations, and the current state of HRI.
- **Major Gift/Marketing/Communication/Branding Program Review:** Audit and evaluation of current practices (including structure, staffing, resource use, policies, and procedures), captured in a formal SWOT analysis and written report with strategies for consideration.
- **Comprehensive Multi-Year Plan:** Development of a multi-year major gifts/marketing/branding plan aligned with CHS strategy, including goals, timelines, roles, measurable indicators, and donor recognition and stewardship components to support long-term sustainability.
- **Prospect Research, Final Case for Support, Creation and Implementation of Initial Donor Gift Plans, and Warm Cultivation through Testing the Case for Support:** Prospect research and relationship mapping, refinement and testing of the Case for Support, and creation/implementation of initial donor gift plans, with warm cultivation initiated through case testing and early relationship-building.
- **Interim Program Management:** Ongoing support to maintain momentum, advance and refine gift plans, monitor progress, and provide monthly reporting summarizing activity, opportunities, challenges, and recommended next steps, with an emphasis on pipeline movement and early wins where readiness is evident.

This phased approach was designed to support a smooth transition between the consulting period and longer-term internal staffing of the major gifts function, while helping leadership, staff, and volunteers acclimate to major gift fundraising and maintain progress toward results.

S. Sutton & Associates Inc. was honored to partner with HRI by providing due diligence and Major Gifts Program Development through the Innovation Team Model, supporting the tools, strategy, and implementation discipline required to strengthen major and principal gift readiness and sustain fundraising momentum over time.

