NGI ENRICHERS TRANSATLANTIC

D3.1 – FIRST REPORT ON OUTREACH AND PARTNERSHIP ACTIVITIES

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Abstract	The Outreach and Partnership Activities play a strategic role in the development and implementation of the NGI Enrichers programme, promoting the connection with US and CA organisations and the establishment of lasting partnerships with host organisations for the Fellows' collaborations. The main objective of this report is to provide a comprehensive overview of the Outreach and Partnership Activities, with a focus on delineating the step-by-step process involved in the establishment of partnerships with new host organisations.
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The NGI Enrichers programme supports European researchers and innovators to spend 3-6 months in the US or Canada to collaborate with host organisations, promoting knowledge-sharing and establishing long-term collaborations on Next Generation Internet technologies, services, and standards.

The programme has developed a system for identifying partnerships and promoting NGI Enrichers activities in the US and Canada. The continuous search for new host organisations fosters the creation of an R&D network between Europe and North America, contributing to the enhancement of the transatlantic scientific and innovation landscape.

The main objective of this report is to provide a comprehensive overview of the Outreach and Partnership Activities, with a focus on delineating the step-by-step process involved in the establishment of partnerships with new host organisations.

The programme has set an ambitious goal of signing up to 90 MoUs with US host organisations. Currently, the NGI Enrichers team has achieved 35 signed MoUs with organisations in the US and 5 signed MoUs with Canadian organisations. Additionally, 2 informational sessions were conducted to disseminate NGI Enrichers' activities and encourage new organisations to join the programme.

The document provides a clear introduction to the Outreach and Partnership process and the following chapters, detailing the process of the potential host organisations contacted from the US and Canada and the number of MoUs signed.

Lastly, this deliverable explores the lessons learnt from SPI and APRE through the initial implementation of this procedure, alongside the next steps planned to overcome identified challenges.

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ABBREVIATIONS

CA Canada

EU European Union

MoU Memorandum of Understanding

NGI Next Generation Internet

Q&A Questions and Answers

R&D Research and Development

US United States of America

WP Work package

1 INTRODUCTION

The Outreach and Partnership Activities play a strategic role in the development and implementation of the NGI Enrichers programme, promoting the connection with US and CA organisations and the establishment of lasting partnerships with host organisations for the Fellows' collaborations.

This document is a product of NGI Enrichers, funded by the European Commission and aims to present the NGI Enrichers Outreach and Partnerships activities developed under the framework of WP3 – Community building, Engagement and Scale Up.

The NGI Enrichers Outreach and Partnership Activities are designed to create a strong R&D network of organisations related to Internet innovators in Europe, the United States (US) and Canada (CA) and willing to collaborate in promoting regular exchanges and best practices among researchers. Developing successful interactions between the NGI Enrichers programme and the host organisations generates a smoother operation and experience for the Fellow internship.

With the main objective of consolidating and building new partnerships, with organisations in the US and CA specialized within the designed domains of the programme, NGI Enrichers seeks to significantly broaden and engage a more extensive array of contact points within the academic, research centres and private companies through the North American innovation landscape. The development of this network enhances the reach and impact of the project, as well as fosters a dynamic exchange of knowledge, expertise, and resources between key stakeholders in the transatlantic academic and innovation communities.

The specified objectives listed below have been identified as key components for the effective execution of the project:

- Sign 50 MoUs with new US organisations;
- Sign 20 MoUs with new CA organisations;
- Sign 40 MoUs with former organisations;
- Survey each organisation that signed a MoU;
- Co-organisation of two info-sessions with affiliated networks;
- Promote the project in a minimum of 20 external events.

2 OUTREACH AND PARTNERSHIP PROCESS

2.1 METHODOLOGY

Systematizing the process for locating and selecting appropriate partnerships is essential for the success of the project. From the inception of NGI Enrichers, signing a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with both former and new host organisations has been a central axis of the work. Therefore, the sequence of steps, described below, was developed:

> Step 1 – Identification and Selection of Potential Host Organisations;
>
> Step 2 – First Contact and Follow up;
>
> Step 3 – Meeting with Potential Host Organisations;
>
> Step 4 – Signature of MoUs between the Programme and the Host Organisation;
>
> Step 5 – Survey the Host Organisation.

Step 1 - Identification and Selection of Potential Host Organisations

Identification of potential host organisations in the US

The NGI Enrichers team initiated the process by conducting desk research of potential contact points from a list of former NGI Explorers host organisations. On a second moment, SPI increased the list of potential host organisations by conducting new desk research targeting US university engineering and informatics departments working in the next-generation internet domain. Moreover, the list was expanded by adding US research centres and innovation-profit private companies.

In the case of universities, the QS University World Ranking was used to select the top 150 universities specializing in Computer Science and Information Systems[1]. The research centres were selected based on a survey of universities, identifying those with research centres that address the themes of the project, and a search of

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[1] https://www.topuniversities.com/university-subject-rankings/computer-science-information-systems

the most innovative companies in the sector was also carried out using the ranking developed by Scimago Institutions Rankings[2].

Following the selection of the potential host organisation, the deans of each computer science school were identified, alongside the principal investigators of the research centres and the development representatives of the respective companies.

Identification of potential host organisations in Canada

The identification of Canadian host organisations potentially interested in joining the NGI Enrichers Fellowship Programme has been guided by different approaches and sources of information through the project:

- Leveraging on the contacts provided by MITACS, thanks to the partnership and synergies established in the framework of the NGI Enrichers project and the organisation of regular internal meetings with APRE and MITACS;
- Desk research aimed at identifying relevant contacts (personal details, role in the organisation, email address) contained in the "Expertise finder"[3] database, which is a searchable directory including the full list of faculties and academic experts from Canadian universities. The preliminary list of potential experts and professors to be contacted has been built by applying keywords related to the NGI domain and topics as filters;
- Contacting top performer Canadian private and public organisations participating in Horizon Europe and Horizon2020, identified through the Horizon Dashboard[4];
- Contacting the Canadian host organisations selected by Applicants in the Paired Teams track, in order to involve them in the Programme through the sign of the Memorandum of Understanding, fostering their participation in all the three tracks.

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[2] https://www.scimagoir.com/rankings.php?area=1700&ranking=Overall&country=USAt the beginning of the project, the absence of the NGI Explorers host organisations list slowed the process of reaching out to former hosts. The NGI Enrichers team managed to search through documents and deliverables from the previous project and was able to identify and contact some former organisations, yet many others were not identified.
[3] https://expertisefinder.com/list-university-faculty-experts-directories-canada/
[4] https://ec.europa.eu/info/funding-tenders/opportunities/portal/screen/opportunities/horizon-dashboard

Step 2 - First Contact and Follow-up

First contact and Follow-up with US host organisations

A standardized email has been crafted to capture the interest of potential host organisations. This email outlines the several advantages associated with participation in the programme, indicates the pertinent research topics, and provides comprehensive contact details of the NGI Enrichers team responsible for the partnerships in the US, as illustrated below:

UNIQUE OPPORTUNITY! Host a researcher/engineer from Europe, subsidized by European Commission, at no extra charge

Dear,

*The European Commission offers a fully funded travel programme for **European engineers/specialists and researchers to be Hosted by US or Canadian private or public organisations to work on their research or innovation projects.** We can help you find the right candidate or work with an existing candidate you have already identified.*

Selected candidates will spend 3-6 months in the US or Canada with no costs: living allowance, travel funding, and visa costs are fully covered by the European Commission.

The project identified the following as relevant NGI topics – 5/6G; AI; Big Data; Cybersecurity; Cloud and Edge Computing; Extended and Virtual Reality; IoT; Metaverse; web 3.0; Greening ICT and Quantum Computing.

Become a Host Organisation for researchers/engineers from Europe without any costs attached!

Next steps: *Reply to this email or contact André Almeida (andrealmeida@spi.pt), and sign the attached MoU.*

Website of the Programme: https://enrichers.ngi.eu/

FIGURE 1: STANDARD MAIL SEND

In the correspondence addressed to potential host organisations, an attachment containing a standardized MoU is included for their review and subsequent endorsement. The MoU adheres to a predefined template outlining the scope of the collaborative agreement, delineating the respective responsibilities of both the host and the programme in detail. The MoU is subject to potential revisions by the host organisation, particularly to accommodate any requirements mandated by their legal department, provided that such modifications do not alter the fundamental essence or intent originally conveyed within the document.

Memorandum of Understanding

The present document sets out the **"Memorandum of Understanding (MoU)"**, under which *NAME OF COLLEGE / DEPARTMENT AND ORGANIZATION* (the **"Host Organization"**) agrees to host the selected candidate (**"Fellow"**) for a 3 to 6-month fellowship within the NGI Enrichers Program (**"the Program"**), an initiative funded by the European Union, represented for the purposes hereof by G.A.C. Group, the Coordinator of the Program. Annex below provides further information about the Program.

SCOPE OF THE COLLABORATION

The Host Organization agrees to collaborate as follows:

a. Nominate at least one contact person to deal with the items in this MoU.
b. (optional) Provide criteria to allow the Program to pre-select applicants.
c. Interview up to three pre-selected applicants, and confirm future Fellow to be hosted.
d. Conduct a background review of the proposed candidate to determine whether the planned research can be conducted in accordance with governmental and institutional regulations.
e. Approve the project plan proposed by the Fellow, with the dates, duration and technical details, OR Propose the project plan to the Fellow with these details.
f. Agree the Intellectual Property Rights directly with the Fellow prior to the start of his/her travel.
g. Provide the Fellow with administrative support and a Visa Support letter, if required.
h. Host the Fellow during the duration of his/her mission under the conditions specified below.
i. Provide a suitable working space for the Fellow, as well as the technical and administrative support to allow him/her to implement the project plan.
j. Facilitate the access to materials and resources necessary to carry out the agreed project plan.
k. Inform the Program about any special circumstances related to the Fellow.
l. Approve the PowerPoint presentation of the Fellow about the execution of the project plan and the results obtained.
m. Provide feedback on performance of the Fellow, and suggestions, if any, to the Program.

The Program agrees to collaborate as follows:

a. Nominate at least one contact person to deal with the items in this MoU.
b. Organize promotional campaigns and the call for applicants.
c. Publish short description of the project ("challenge") of the Organisation for the call.
d. Collect and review the applications, engage evaluators.
e. Pre-select up to three applicants with the best match to the selection criteria provided by the Host Organization.
f. Interview up to three pre-selected applicants, and confirm future Fellow to be hosted.
g. Facilitate the organization of the Fellowship.
h. Provide funding to the Fellow according to the schedule announced in the call.
i. Nominate one contact point for the Fellow to deal with unexpected issues.

The collaboration between the Host Organization and the Program will be exempt from any financial compensation between any of the parties.

ORGANIZATION
Host Organization

CONTACT PERSON
[DD MM YYYY]

[Signature]

G.A.C. Group, NGI Enrichers
Program Coordinator

Dr. Svetlana Klessova
[DD MM YYYY]

[Signature]

NGI Enrichers has received funding from the European Union's Horizon Europe Research and Innovation Program under grant agreement 101070125.
Web site in construction, provisional: https://www.enrich-global.eu/ngi-enrichers/

FIGURE 2: STANDARD MOU SEND

First contact and Follow-up with Canadian host organisations

The process established in order to reach out to Canadian host organisations was the same applied to US organisations, as described in the previous paragraph.

A standard email has been drafting in order to engage the Canadian institutions in the NGI Enrichers project, as illustrated below:

NGI Enrichers: take the chance to become an official host!

Dear,

*I am writing you on the behalf of APRE Team, the project partner of the **Next Generation Internet Transatlantic Fellowship Programme** (2022-2025), fully funded by the European Commission and implemented by NGI Enrichers' international consortium.*

*NGI Enrichers will support 70-90 European NGI researchers and innovators to spend 3-6 months in the US or Canada to promote knowledge-sharing and establishing long-term collaborations on NGI technologies, services, and standards. The Fellowship Programme provides **travel funding** and **living allowance** for visiting Fellows from Europe and it supports both Fellows and their host institutions trainings and mentorship sessions.*

*We are contacting you to **win your support as a host organisation** since we believe this unique opportunity could be of interest for the University of Waterloo and a big chance to co-create synergies. Hosts are Canadian and US public/private organisations who agree to host future Fellows selected by the NGI Enrichers Programme.*

The NGI Enrichers programme will launch the last round of calls in March 2024, composed by three tracks:

- *Paired teams - applicants shall submit a proposal to advance their ideas, products and/or services along with an **already identified US or Canadian partner from an organisation**, that already agreed to host the Fellow, if selected.*
- *Open ideas - applicants submit a proposal around their ideas, products or services, **selecting three preferred hosts among the list of organisations collaborating with the NGI Enrichers programme**. The programme will facilitate the best match between the applicant and the host organisations based on the idea, product or service which has been proposed.*
- *Challenges - Hosting organisation from US and Canada – which have agreed to collaborate with the NGI Enrichers programme - **defines specific research topics (challenges) related to the NGI domain**. The applicant can submit a proposal answering a challenge defined by the hosting organisation.*

If you wish to engage and for any further questions about the NGI Enrichers project and the involvement and the role played by host organisations, please contact us. We would be pleased to organise a call in January!

As an attachment, you can find the MoU template that needs to be signed by the host organisations to officially become part of the NGI Enrichers community.

Many thanks and we are hoping to have you on board!

The official NGI Enrichers MoU was included for their review and subsequent endorsement.

Step 3 - Meeting with organisations

After the affirmative response from the host organisation, a meeting is scheduled to serve as a platform for the elucidation of the programme's multifaceted aspects. During this session, a comprehensive presentation of the NGI Enrichers is addressed, clarifying the objectives and methodologies of the programme.

The primary objective of this meeting is not only to disseminate information but also to engage the potential host in an interactive dialogue. Each facet of the NGI Enrichers programme, as well as the MoU, is subjected to analysis, with a keen emphasis on providing clarification to any queries or uncertainties from the host organisation side. This approach ensures a robust understanding of the programme's characteristics, fostering an environment conducive to addressing any potential reservations that the host organisation might harbour. The overarching aim is to fortify the collaboration under the umbrella of NGI Enrichers, instilling a sense of confidence and clarity in the collective pursuit of the programme objectives.

Step 4 - Signature of MoUs between the programme and the Host Organisation

Once the host organisation updates the terms in the MoU, and signs the document, it is reached a significant moment in the collaboration. We make it official by the programme coordinator Svetlana Klesova countersigns the MoUs, signifying a formal partnership between the programme, legally represented by G.A.C Group, and the host organisation. This step not only strengthens the partnership but also shows a shared commitment to the goals and principles outlined in the MoU. Once the host organisation has endorsed the revised terms in the MoU, a pivotal moment in the collaboration is reached. At this juncture, the programme coordinator, Svetlana Klesova, undertakes the act of countersigning the MoUs, thereby formalizing a legal partnership between the programme, represented by G.A.C Group, and the host organisation. This procedural step not only serves to fortify the partnership but also underscores a collective dedication towards achieving the objectives and adhering to the principles delineated within the MoU.

After the agreement is formalized, the host organisation becomes part of the NGI Enrichers network. This integration marks the beginning of a mutually beneficial relationship where both entities gain from the combined expertise, resources, and synergies within the network.

Step 5 - Survey to the Host Organisation

Following the execution of the MoU, the NGI Enrichers team, tasked with establishing the partnerships with the US and Canadian organisations, proceeds to dispatch a request via email for the host organisation to fill out a Google survey. This survey has been designed to gather comprehensive details regarding the host and its specific requirements for the programme calls. The objective is to compile a detailed profile of the organisation, which will subsequently be showcased on the NGI Enrichers website's "Search for hosts" page - https://enrichers.ngi.eu/search-for-hosts/.

By getting the organisation's input through the survey, we aim to better understand their strengths, goals, and focus areas. This helps us tailor our collaboration and showcases the diversity of our network on the NGI Enrichers website. Sharing this information on our official platform reflects our commitment to transparency and highlights the collective capabilities and goals of our collaborative ecosystem in the Next Generation of Internet. Through these profiles, we aim to strengthen the visibility of our partners and build a network that thrives on shared knowledge and support.

- Name of the organisation
- Name of the department
- Link to homepage
- Logo (preferred data types (.jpg, .jpeg, .png, .ai)
- "Short description of organisation max. 500 characters"
- Who are you looking for?
- Which Track(s) are you interested in?   Please specify...
- Which statement applies to your organisation?
- What are your focus areas?
- What is your key application domain?
- Preferred hosting duration
- Maximum capacity (max. Fellows hosted simultaneously)

2.2 OUTREACH AND PARTNERSHIP ACTIVITIES CONDUCTED

- ### MOUS SIGNED IN THE US

Under WP3 - Community Building, Engagement, and Scale-Up, activities were initiated to expand and strengthen both existing and new partnerships. The objective established is to reach 90 host organisations divided into 40 former organisations and 50 new organisations at the end of the project. To achieve this goal, the NGI Enrichers have engaged several potential host organisations through multiple communication channels. Email has been the main mode of contact, complemented by outreach on LinkedIn. Furthermore, the team organised and conducted two informational sessions with US potential host organisations. These sessions were designed to cultivate collaborative relationships and integrate new partners into the programme's network.

The process of connecting with former organisations has presented considerable challenges since the list of organisations from the NGI Explorers was not shared with the NGI Enrichers. This lack of information impacted negatively the task of identifying and reaching out to these organisations. Despite the obstacles, the NGI Enrichers managed to access information on some of the former hosts and successfully contacted 44 former host organisations, comprising 42 universities and 2 research centres.

From the programme's outset, the identification of new potential host organisations has been a key focus. To date, outreach efforts have led to contact with 372 potential new host organisations. The extent of this engagement is detailed in the Table 1 provided below:

Organisation Typology Contacted	New Potential Host Organisations
University	117
Companies	235
Research Centre	20
Total	372

TABLE 1: NEW POTENTIAL HOST ORGANISATIONS CONTACTED

The table presented below offers a comprehensive overview of the current status of the MoUs signed with various entities in the US, encompassing universities, research centres, and innovation companies. Additionally, it provides insights into the status of pending responses, declined partnership invitations, and ongoing processes. The data is distinguished between former and new organisations.

MoUs Status	Former Organisations	New Organisations	Total
MoUs signed	21	14	35
MoUs pending reply	15	331	346
MoUs rejected	4	4	8
MoUs reply - in progress	4	4	8
Total	44	353	397

TABLE 2: MOUS STATUS

The team has made a total of 397 contacts with potential host organisations, leading to the successful signing of 35 MoUs - 21 with former and 14 with new organisations - against a target of 90 MoUs. Currently, there have been 8 rejections of MoU signatures, and another 8 are in the process of finalizing MoU signatures with host organisations. As indicated in the table, a significant majority of these contacts are still pending responses from the host organisations, highlighting a relatively low response rate to the outreach efforts made so far.

During the process of reaching out to potential host organisations, extensive interaction was prioritized to maximize the number of MoUs signed. As noted previously, the email served as the primary communication channel between the NGI Enrichers programme and the host organisation. However, this was supplemented by contacts through LinkedIn, contributing to a substantial volume of interactions. The combined efforts through these communication channels have led to a significant number of contacts, as depicted in the table below, illustrating the comprehensive approach taken to foster these important connections.

Communication Channels	Contacts
E-mail	961
LinkedIn	150

TABLE 3: COMMUNICATION CHANNELS AND CONTACT REQUESTS

- ## MOUS SIGNED IN CANADA

The main objective under task 3.4 was the establishment of at least 20 new Partnerships with Canadian host organisations in the timeframe of the NGI Enrichers project. In order to achieve this Key Performance Indicator (KPI), APRE – as main Partner responsible for the implementation of the above-mentioned task - set up a communication campaign using emails as main tool to reach out the potential host organisations.

The implementation of the task faced many challenges due to different reasons, such as the initial difficulties in accessing the contacts and identifying the most appropriate ones to address, along with the length of the response time. Additionally, APRE could not rely on a set of organisations joining the previous NGI Explorer programme. Despite the obstacles, a total number of 43 potential Canadian host organisations have been contacted (data updated at M18), including both universities and public companies as well as private organisations, as shown in the table below:

Organisation Typology Contacted	New Potential Host Organisations
University	41
Companies	2
Total	43

TABLE 4: TYPOLOGY OF THE POTENTIAL HOST ORGANISATION CONTACTED

Actually, 5 Canadian organisations signed the MoU to become official hosts of the NGI Enrichers Programme, divided into 4 universities (Concordia University, Brandon University, Ottawa University) and 2 private companies (MITACS, Numana). The following table provides an overview of signed MoUs, as well as pending responses, declined invitations and ongoing negotiation processes:

MoUs Status	Number of Organisations
MoUs signed	5
MoUs pending reply	33
MoUs rejected	0
MoUs reply - in progress	5
Total	43

TABLE 5: CANADA MOUS STATUS

To summarise, the team contacted a total number of 43 potential Canadian organisations, leading to the successful signing of 5 MoUs and currently in the process of negotiating with 5 additional universities (McMaster University, University of Victoria, University of British Columbia, University of Alberta, Toronto Metropolitan University). On the other hand, the high number of pending replies highlights the difficulties in reaching out to new organisations in the case of a lack of previous direct contacts.

The NGI Enrichers' proactive efforts to reach new hosts have resulted in significant outreach from a wide array of organisations throughout the US and CA. Figure 3 presented below shows the distribution of the 35 host organisations with signed MoUs, strategically positioned within the 22 states in the US (blue) and 3 provinces in CA (red) which are recognized for their leadership positions in scientific research and development, as well as at the nation's most valuable academic institutions and economic centres.
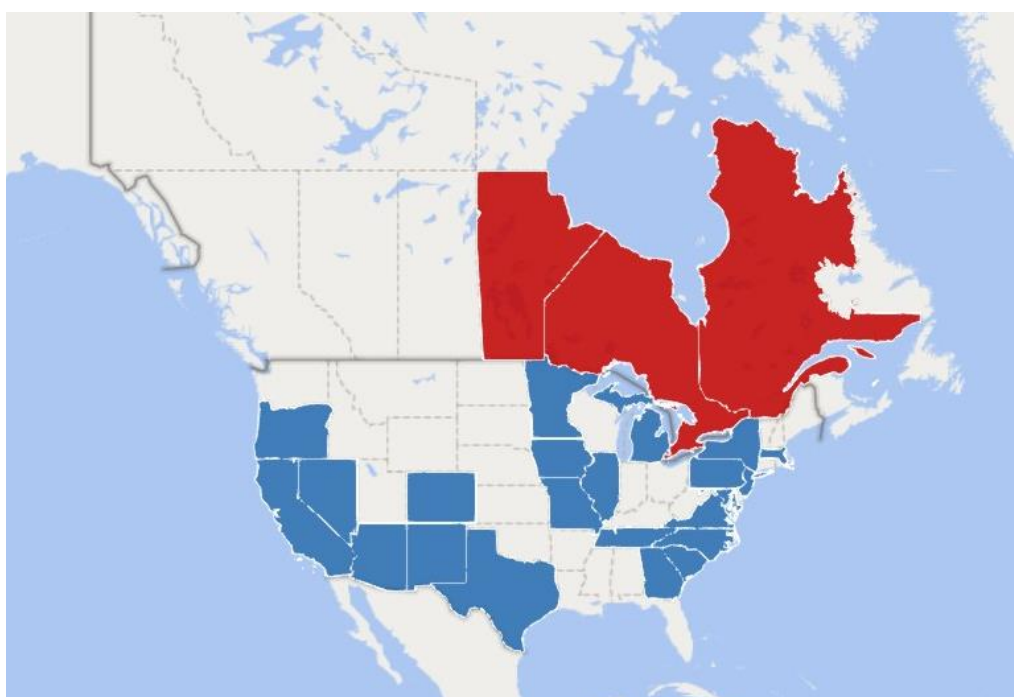

FIGURE 3: DISTRIBUTION OF HOST ORGANISATIONS IN THE US AND CANADIAN

Figure 3 illustrates a uniform distribution of MoUs signed across the US, which is complemented by Figure 4 detailing the host organisations by state. California is the leading host state with 5 organisations, followed by New York with 4, and North

Carolina with 3. Collectively, these three states accommodate 34% of the programme's US hosts.
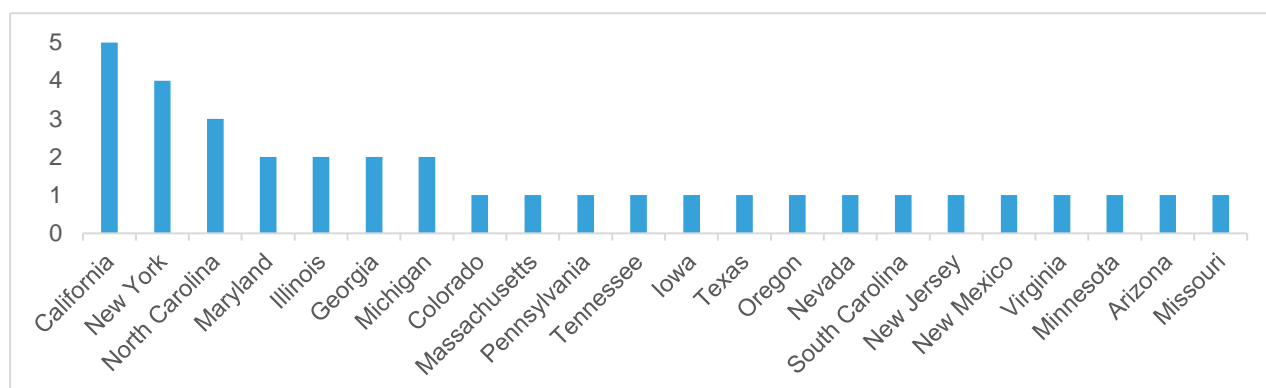

FIGURE 4: MOUS SIGNED BY US STATES

• HOST ORGANISATIONS EXCHANGES

Maintaining a strong relationship with host organisations is essential for improving collaboration between European and North American partners. Also, the participation of hosts amplifies the international visibility of the programme and increases the available choices to European researchers and innovators.

Across the two calls, the NGI Enrichers programme selected 53 Fellows from an extensive array of fields, which were accommodated by 31 host organisations, each with specialisations in one or more relevant areas to the programme.

During the first call, 20 hosts welcomed a total of 32 Fellows. Temple University was distinguished as the institution hosting the highest number of Fellows, with a total of 4, Arizona State University hosted 3 Fellows, and nine additional organisations each hosted 2 Fellows. Regarding Canada, MITACS was the favourite host organisations (2 Fellows), followed by Concordia University (1 Fellow). Figure 5 illustrates the Fellows from the first call received by US and Canadian host organisations.
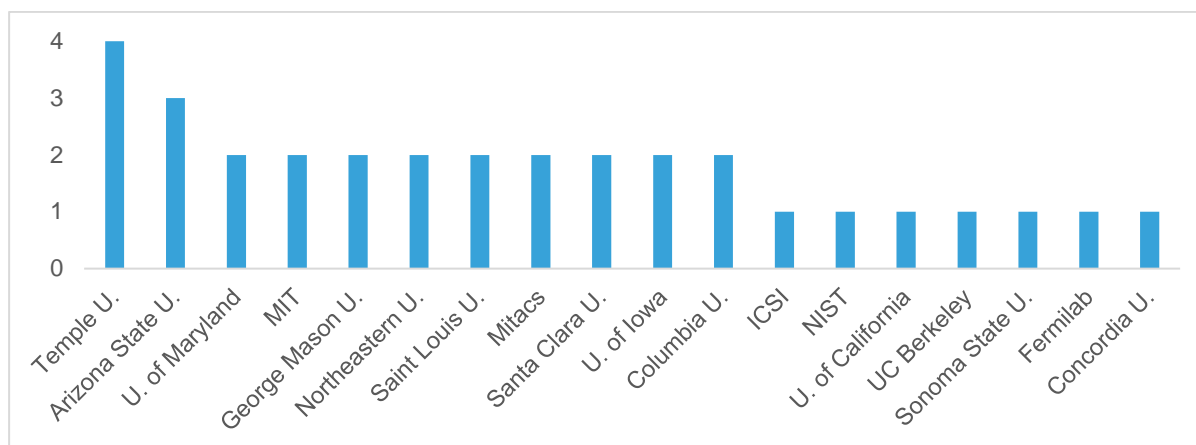
FIGURE 5: FELLOWS FROM THE FIRST CALL RECEIVED BY US AND CANADIAN HOST ORGANISATIONS

During the second call, a total of 21 Fellows were selected and hosted by 18 organisations. Fermilab led the group by hosting 3 Fellows, marking it as the organisations with the highest number of participants hosted in NGI Enrichers during this call, followed by the University of Iowa with 2 Fellows. Regarding Canada, the preferred host organisations were the Carleton University (1 Fellow) and the Lakehead University (1 Fellow), selected in the framework of the Paired team's track. Figure 6 illustrates the Fellows from the second call received by US and Canadian host organisations.
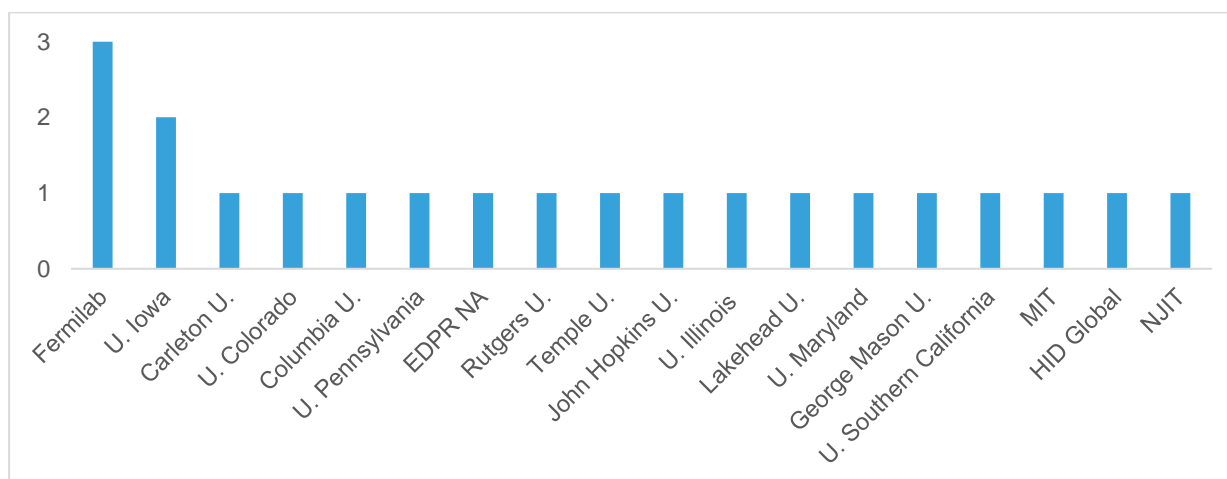

FIGURE 6: FELLOWS FROM THE SECOND CALL RECEIVED BY US AND CANADIAN HOST ORGANISATIONS

- **INFO-SESSIONS ORGANISED**

Additionally, two Q&A info sessions were organised. These sessions counted with the participation of current host organisations, and Fellows, providing an opportunity to share insights and their experience in the programme, with

potential hosts and Fellows, fostering a greater understanding of the NGI Enrichers programme.

- ## NGI Enrichers: Q&A About an Innovative Transatlantic Fellowship Programme

The inaugural information session was organised as an online presentation on November 3rd, 2022. This session served as an introduction to the programme, exploring the details of the innovative transatlantic fellowship initiative. The event aimed to disseminate essential information about the NGI Enrichers but also to foster engagement, address queries from prospective participants, and present testimonies from previous host organisations.

The dissemination process, which preceded the event, involved extending invitations to a targeted cohort of 134 potential host organisations. This strategic outreach ensured the participation of a diverse and qualified pool, creating an inclusive platform for dialogue and collaboration. The emphasis on inclusivity and detailed information sharing underscored the commitment of the NGI Enrichers programme to transparency, accessibility, and the cultivation of meaningful partnerships. Figure 7 represents the agenda of the event.
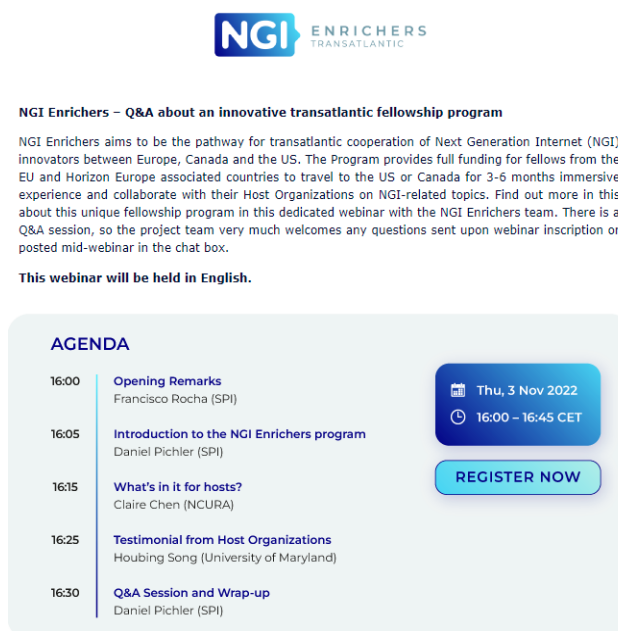

FIGURE 7: NGI ENRICHERS Q&A ABOUT AN INNOVATIVE TRANSATLANTIC FELLOWSHIP PROGRAMME AGENDA

- **NGI Enrichers: Q&A Webinar for Host Organisations**

The second informational session was conducted as an online presentation held on January 18th, 2023. The session's agenda encompassed various key topics, providing a comprehensive overview and facilitating an interactive platform for addressing queries and engaging in discussions pertinent to the NGI Enrichers programme. The online nature of the presentation allowed for widespread accessibility, ensuring that a diverse audience had the opportunity to participate and gain insights into the programme's objectives, processes, and collaborative dynamics. Figure 8 represents the agenda of the event.
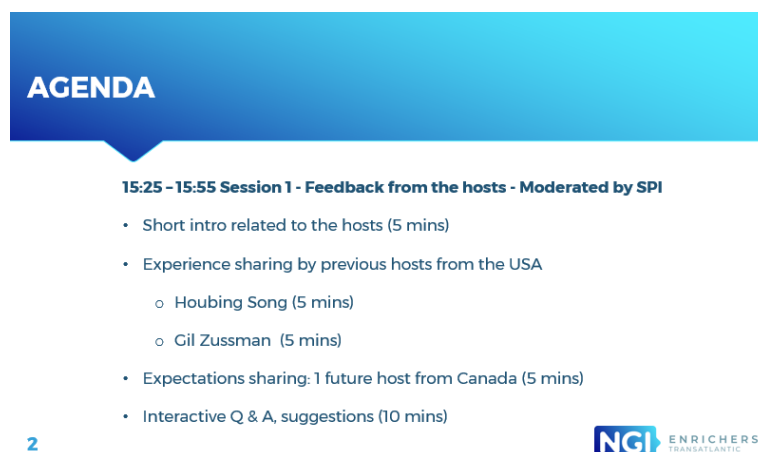
FIGURE 8: NGI ENRICHERS Q&A WEBINAR FOR HOST ORGANISATIONS PROGRAMME AGENDA

- **EXTERNAL ACTIVITIES**

Aiming to enhance the programme's visibility and attract a broad audience of participants and partners, the NGI Enrichers team engaged in several external activities covering a range of pertinent subjects. The programme was presented during the "Sustainability & Funding for Supporting Internationalization to the USA" webinar, part of Enrich in the USA, on December 6, 2022. Furthermore, the webinar has been uploaded to the project's YouTube channel (https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=s9zzXejSLsE&t=305s), where it has received 18 views.

Within this project, the NGI Enrichers were also promoted at the "How to Internationalise to the USA" Workshop held at the SPI office on December 6th, 2023.

3   LESSONS LEARNT AND NEXT STEPS

The outreach and partnership activities are crucial components of the project, demanding significant resilience, consistency, and research capabilities. The work developed aims to reach the objective of signing 90 MoUs with US host organisations, and 20 with Canadian host organisations. This goal was supplemented with the implementation of info-sessions to disseminate the programme and encourage the participation of new hosts, researchers and innovators.

To reach out to US and Canadian organisations, different communication channels were selected, email and LinkedIn to target universities and research centres and WhatsApp for private companies. Also, the communication message was adapted to best fit the target stakeholder (university, research centres and private companies) to increase the levels of success of establishing direct communication with new potential host organisations.

The former host organisations from the NGI Explorers, when possible, were involved in the process of signing a new MoU with NGI Enrichers. The NGI Enrichers team managed to search through documents and deliverables from the previous project and was able to identify and contact some former organisations, yet many others were not identified. The process of engaging US and Canadian companies as host organisations proved challenging. Despite various attempts, these companies generally showed insufficient interest in hosting a Fellow for a short duration of 3 or 6 months, perceiving limited added value to their activities. Not all companies have the capacity to support research in the programme-specific areas. Ideally, a suitable host company would need to be relatively large, with a dedicated R&D division conducting advanced market research in one of the programme's focus areas. Recognizing these constraints, the NGI Enrichers team concluded that Fellows might find more fruitful opportunities within academic settings, such as universities or research centres, where their research aligns more closely with ongoing academic endeavours.

The collaboration with universities proved to be more successful. Yet, in some cases, the process involved multiple requests from the university's legal

department, resulting in long periods to formalize the partnership or even the process came to a standstill.

In light of these challenges, the NGI Enrichers team, tasked with forging partnerships in the US, recommends exploring alternative approaches to expedite collaboration establishment. It is proposed the development of a less formal process that would allow for collaboration initiation without necessitating the formalization of an MoU. This alternative pathway is envisioned to mitigate delays, reduce administrative burdens, and facilitate a more agile and efficient establishment of partnerships, ensuring a smoother progression in the collaboration initiation phase. This simplified modality was partially in use in the NGI Enrichers programme paired teams track, where the participating host organisations did not have to sign a MoU. Despite facing these challenges, the team has successfully built a robust network of partnerships. To date, 35 MoUs have been signed with host organisations, across 22 US states and 3 provinces in CA specialists in Artificial Intelligence, Big Data, Cybersecurity, Internet of Things, Decentralized Internet, 5G/6G and many other areas relevant to the NGI Enrichers programme. Moving forward, the programme will concentrate on extending outreach to new partners and strengthening ties with existing ones.

The team of NGI Enrichers identified discrepancy between the KPI's performance and what was planned. The objective of 90 MoUs sign in the US contrast with low number of host organisations that effectively receive Fellows, and some of these organisations did not sign a MoU with the programme. This situation leads to a significant number of host organisations that do not benefit from the calls and do not receive Fellows, although they have signed MoUs.

Aware of this situation the team requested an amendment of the Grant Agreement for the adjustment of the MoUs KPI's by reducing from 90 MoUs to 45 (25 MoUs from former organisations and 20 from new organisations). This action aims to ensure that the majority of hosts organisations (that signed an MoU) receives at least one Fellow under the NGI Enrichers programme.

The NGI Enrichers team is actively engaged in broadening and fortifying the network, focusing on enhancing connections with partners by disseminating relevant content and ensuring consistent communication with all programme hosts. This approach is designed to foster a more integrated and supportive

community, facilitating the exchange of ideas, insights, and achievements among the organisations and the fellows.

The efforts to expand and reinforce the network will be a key focus in the upcoming months:

- A booklet of success stories from the exchanges will be developed to share the experiences of the host organisations, and fellows and the exchange process from M19 to the conclusion of the third call project.
- Two webinars about the host organisation challenges will be developed as a space to talk about the content, impact and expected results of the challenges the event aims to reach the maximum number of interested potential fellows, scheduled for M20, with the second set for M22.

4 ANNEX

- ## MOUS SIGNED BY US UNIVERSITIES

Name of the organisation	Name of the Department	Track(s) interested	Focus Areas	Key Application Domain
Arizona State University	School of Computing and Augmented Intelligence	Paired Teams, Open Ideas	Artificial Intelligence, Big Data, Blockchain, Cloud and Edge Computing, Cybersecurity, Data Sovereignty, Decentralized Internet, Digital Commons, Greening of ICT, Internet of Things, Trust, Web 3.0	Autonomous V2X, Digitalization, E-mobility, Energy Transition, Environment, Health, Immersive Environment, Inclusiveness, Industry 4.0, Intuitive User Experience, Lifelong Learning, We are open to matching any good idea to the research of any of our faculty members
Binghamton University	Systems Science and Industrial Engineering	Challenges, Open Ideas	Artificial Intelligence, Big Data, Internet of Things, Virtual Realities	Digitalization, E-mobility, Energy Transition, Environment, Health, Immersive Environment, Industry 4.0
Boston University	Computer Science	Paired Teams, Open Ideas	Artificial Intelligence, Big Data, Blockchain, Cloud and Edge Computing, Cybersecurity, Data Sovereignty, Decentralized Internet, Greening of ICT, Internet of Things, Quantum Computing and Algorithms, Trust, Web 3.0	Autonomous V2X, E-mobility, Environment, Health, Industry 4.0, Lifelong Learning
East Carolina University	Ciprian Popoviciu	Paired Teams, Challenges, Open Ideas	Cybersecurity, Internet of Things	Energy Transition, Health, Immersive Environment, Inclusiveness, Intuitive User Experience
Central Michigan University	School of Engineering and Technology	Open Ideas	5/6G, Artificial Intelligence, Big Data, Blockchain, Cloud and Edge Computing, Cybersecurity, Internet of Things	Energy Transition, Health
Columbia University	Data Science Institute & Electrical Engineering Dept.	Paired Teams, Open Ideas	5/6G, Artificial Intelligence, Cloud and Edge Computing, Cybersecurity, Internet of Things, Quantum Computing and Algorithms	Health

Duke University, Athena	Electrical and Computer Engineering Department, Duke University	Paired Teams, Challenges, Open Ideas	5/6G, Artificial Intelligence, Big Data, Cloud and Edge Computing, Cybersecurity, Digital Commons, Greening of ICT, Internet of Things, Metaverse, Virtual Realities	Autonomous V2X, E-mobility
Fermilab	SQMS Center	Paired Teams, Challenges, Open Ideas	Quantum Computing and Algorithms	Digitalization, E-mobility, Energy Transition, Environment, Health, Industry 4.0
Georgia State University	Computer Science	Paired Teams, Open Ideas	5/6G, Artificial Intelligence, Internet of Things, Computer Vision, Robotics, Wireless Communication	Autonomous V2X, Environment, Health, Inclusiveness
Santa Clara University	Computer Science and Engineering	Paired Teams, Challenges, Open Ideas	Artificial Intelligence, Metaverse, Virtual Realities, Xtended Realities, Augmented Reality, Novel Interfaces	Autonomous V2X, Energy Transition, Environment, Health
International Computer Science Institute	International Computer Science Institute	Paired Teams, Open Ideas	Artificial Intelligence, Big Data, Cloud and Edge Computing, Cybersecurity, Data Sovereignty, Decentralized Internet, Internet of Things, Trust, Privacy & Security; Digital Twins; and Biotechnology	Environment
Johns Hopkins University	Whiting School of Engineering	Paired Teams, Challenges, Open Ideas	Artificial Intelligence, Big Data, Cloud and Edge Computing, Cybersecurity, Internet of Things, Trust, Virtual Realities,	Digitalization, E-mobility, Environment, Health, Inclusiveness, Industry 4.0, Aerospace. Transportation.
Kennesaw State University	College of Computing and Software Engineering	Paired Teams, Challenges, Open Ideas	5/6G, Artificial Intelligence, Big Data, Blockchain, Cloud and Edge Computing, Cybersecurity, Decentralized Internet, Greening of ICT, Internet of Things, Metaverse, Quantum Computing and Algorithms, Virtual Realities	Autonomous V2X, E-mobility, Energy Transition, Health, Immersive Environment, Industry 4.0, Intuitive User Experience
George Mason University	Office of Research, Innovation, and Economic Impact	Open Ideas	5/6G, Artificial Intelligence, Big Data, Blockchain, Cloud and Edge Computing, Cybersecurity, Data Sovereignty, Decentralized Internet, Digital Commons, Greening of ICT, Internet of Things, Metaverse, Quantum Computing and Algorithms, Trust, Virtual Realities, Web 3.0, Xtended Realities, Educational technologies; health informatics, smart communities, human-centred computing	Autonomous V2X, Energy Transition, Industry 4.0

New Jersey Institute of Technology	College of Computing	Paired Teams, Challenges, Open Ideas	5/6G, Artificial Intelligence, Cloud and Edge Computing, Internet of Things, Metaverse, Virtual Realities, Xtended Realities, 360-degree video streaming	Digitalization, Industry 4.0, Lifelong Learning, Quantum Internet
New Mexico State University	Computer Science	Paired Teams, Challenges, Open Ideas	5/6G, Artificial Intelligence, Big Data, Blockchain, Cloud and Edge Computing, Cybersecurity, Decentralized Internet, Internet of Things, Quantum Computing and Algorithms, Trust, Virtual Realities, Web 3.0, Xtended Realities, Advanced Manufacturing	Autonomous V2X, Energy Transition, Environment, Health, Industry 4.0
Rochester Institute of Technology	Office of International Education and Global Programs	Open Ideas	Artificial Intelligence, Big Data, Blockchain, Cybersecurity, the Internet of Things, Quantum Computing and Algorithms	Autonomous V2X, Digitalization, E-mobility, Energy Transition, Environment, Health, Inclusiveness, Industry 4.0
Saint Louis University	Computer Science	Paired Teams, Open Ideas	5/6G, Artificial Intelligence, Big Data, Cloud and Edge Computing, Cybersecurity, Decentralized Internet, Greening of ICT, Internet of Things, Metaverse, Trust, Virtual Realities, Web 3.0, Xtended Realities, We are open to matching any good idea to the research of any of our faculty members	Digitalization
Santa Clara University	Computer Science and Engineering	Paired Teams, Challenges, Open Ideas	5/6G, Cloud and Edge Computing, Cybersecurity, Decentralized Internet, Greening of ICT, Internet of Things	Digitalization, Industry 4.0, Communication
Sonoma State University	Farid Farahmand	Paired Teams, Challenges	Cybersecurity, Decentralized Internet, Internet of Things	Autonomous V2X, Environment, Health, Immersive Environment, Intuitive User Experience
Stony Brook University	Aruna Balasubramanian	Paired Teams, Open Ideas	Artificial Intelligence, Cloud and Edge Computing, Decentralized Internet, Internet of Things, Web 3.0	Inclusiveness, Industry 4.0, Impact of technology on social in/exclusion; politics of technologies
The Pennsylvania State University	The College of Information Sciences and Technology	Paired Teams, Challenges, Open Ideas	Artificial Intelligence, Big Data, Cybersecurity, Data Sovereignty, Digital Commons, Metaverse, Quantum Computing and Algorithms, Trust	Autonomous V2X, E-mobility, Energy Transition
University of Colorado, Boulder	Electrical, Computer, and Energy	Challenges, Open Ideas	5/6G, Big Data, Blockchain, Cloud and Edge Computing, Cybersecurity	Anything related to quantum communication

	Engineering. (also Computer Science)			
University of Houston	The IUCRC BRAIN Center	Paired Teams, Challenges, Open Ideas	Artificial Intelligence, Big Data, Internet of Things, Metaverse, Virtual Realities, Xtended Realities	Health, Immersive Environment, Inclusiveness, Intuitive User Experience, Lifelong Learning
University of Illinois at Urbana Champaign	School of Information Sciences	Challenges, Open Ideas	Artificial Intelligence, Big Data, Cybersecurity, Data Sovereignty, Digital Commons, Any advanced research that resides at the interdisciplinary intersection of people, information and technology	Autonomous V2X, Health, Immersive Environment, Industry 4.0
University of Iowa	University of Iowa Hydroinformatics Lab	Challenges, Open Ideas	Artificial Intelligence, Big Data, Cloud and Edge Computing, Internet of Things	Environment, Health, Industry 4.0, Lifelong Learning, Robotics Manipulation, Flexible Assembly Lines, Personal Robotic Assistant
University of Iowa	Ibrahim Demir	Challenges, Open Ideas	Artificial Intelligence, Big Data, Metaverse, Virtual Realities, Web 3.0, Xtended Realities	Autonomous V2X, Energy Transition, Environment, Health, Industry 4.0, Lifelong Learning
University of Maryland, Baltimore County	Department of Information Systems/SONG Lab	Paired Teams, Challenges, Open Ideas	5/6G, Artificial Intelligence, Big Data, Blockchain, Cloud and Edge Computing, Cybersecurity, Internet of Things, Metaverse, Quantum Computing and Algorithms, Trust	Autonomous V2X, Environment, Health, Immersive Environment, Intuitive User Experience
University of Michigan	Electrical Engineering and Computer Science	Paired Teams	Cybersecurity, Data Sovereignty, Decentralized Internet	Immersive Environment, Intuitive User Experience, Education, Digital Wellbeing
University of Minnesota Twin Cities	Computer Science and Engineering (CS&E), Minnesota Robotics Institute (MnRI)	Challenges	Artificial Intelligence, Robotics, Computer Vision, 3D Vision, Deep Learning	Energy Transition, Environment, Health, Industry 4.0
University of Nevada-Reno	Computer Science and engineering	Open Ideas	Artificial Intelligence, Big Data, Cybersecurity, Virtual Realities	Education

University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill	RENCI	Open Ideas	5/6G, Artificial Intelligence, Big Data, Cloud and Edge Computing, Cybersecurity, Internet of Things	Inclusiveness, Intuitive User Experience, Information access and services for all
University of Oregon	Department of Computer Science	Paired Teams, Challenges	5/6G, Artificial Intelligence, Cloud and Edge Computing, Decentralized Internet, Greening of ICT, Internet of Things, Metaverse, Virtual Realities	Digitalization, Industry 4.0, Nondestructive Evaluation 4.0
University of Santa Cruz	Survey sent waiting for reply	Survey sent waiting for reply	Survey sent waiting for reply	Survey sent waiting for reply
University of South Carolina	Mechanical Engineering	Paired Teams, Open Ideas	Artificial Intelligence, Big Data, Cloud and Edge Computing, Internet of Things	Autonomous V2X, Digitalization, Energy Transition, Environment, Intuitive User Experience
University of Tennessee at Chattanooga	Center for Urban Informatics and Progress	Open Ideas	Artificial Intelligence, Big Data, Cloud and Edge Computing, Internet of Things, Quantum Computing and Algorithms	Digitalization, E-mobility, Energy Transition, Immersive Environment, Inclusiveness, Industry 4.0, Intuitive User Experience, Lifelong Learning

● MOUS SIGNED BY CANADIAN UNIVERSITIES

Name of the organisation	Name of the Department	Track(s) interested	Focus Areas?	Key Application Domain?
Brandon University	Office of Research Services	Paired Teams	5/6G, Artificial Intelligence, Big Data, Blockchain, Cloud and Edge Computing, Cybersecurity, Decentralized Internet, Internet of Things, Quantum Computing and Algorithms, Trust	Autonomous V2X, Environment, Health, Immersive Environment, Inclusiveness, Industry 4.0
University of Ottawa	Melike Erol-Kantarci	Paired Teams	5/6G, Artificial Intelligence, Cloud and Edge Computing, Greening of ICT, Metaverse, digital twin	Digitalization
Mitacs	Bernard Duval	Challenges, Open Ideas	5/6G, Artificial Intelligence, Big Data, Blockchain, Cloud and Edge Computing, Cybersecurity, Data Sovereignty, Decentralized Internet, Digital Commons, Greening of ICT, Internet of Things, Metaverse, Quantum Computing and Algorithms, Trust, Virtual Realities, Web 3.0, Xtended Realities	Digitalization, E-mobility, Environment, Health, Inclusiveness, Industry 4.0, Aerospace. Transportation.
Numana	François Borrelli	Open Ideas	Quantum communications networks	Anything related to quantum communication