

MANAGEMENT RESPONSE SUMMARY

ABORIGINAL RESEARCH PILOT PROGRAM

Context

In 2003, SSHRC's Council approved a recommendation by the Standing Committee on Research Support to develop a pilot program in Aboriginal Research. The program description launched in 2004 included the following key features:

- research designed and conducted within an Aboriginal paradigm - research guided by Indigenous knowledge, experience and traditions
- research on policy-related issues of concern to Canada's Aboriginal peoples and communities
- maximum Aboriginal leadership in the research
- cultivation of respectful research partnerships involving both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal perspectives drawn from both Aboriginal communities and post-secondary institutions
- advancement of Aboriginal scholars' research careers
- significant training opportunities for Aboriginal students - as well as training opportunities generally for any students interested in research within an Aboriginal paradigm
- a relevance committee comprising a majority of Aboriginal people from First Nation, Métis and Inuit traditions, designed to ensure that the program's key objectives are engaged
- an interdisciplinary adjudication committee involving Aboriginal researchers and experts wherever possible
- eligibility provisions allowing principal applicants from Aboriginal organizations as well as Canadian post-secondary institutions
- broader evaluation criteria (e.g., applied methodologies, collaborative relationships and permissions, cultural and community-based qualifications)
- development grants to permit preparatory work on community-university research partnerships and protocols (up to \$25,000 for up to 2 years), as well as full research grants (up to \$250,000 over 3 years)

The driving principle of the program was to open up and sustain research *by* and *with* Aboriginal peoples (scholars and communities) as opposed to research *for* and *on* Aboriginal peoples.

An evaluation of this Aboriginal Research Pilot program was included in SSHRC's Risk-based Evaluation Plan for 2006-2007 - 2008-09 in order to provide SSHRC senior management and the Council with evidence to support decision-making with regards to the renewal of the program once the 3 year competition pilot phase had ended. The level of risk for this program was considered relatively high given its innovative character and its goal of integrating Aboriginal communities, a new clientele for SSHRC, both as research partners and participants in the program.

This evaluation produced several recommendations as well as a number of suggestions to improve the program's efficiency.

On the basis of these, SSHRC management agreed to several changes, improvements and enhancements detailed in the management response summary found below:

For each formal recommendation...

Recommendation	Management Response	Decision / Action
1. The evaluation results clearly support the continued offering of an Aboriginal Research program, in the intent and spirit of the current program.	SSHRC plans to offer the program as follows: a) a competition will be held in 2009-10 b) a decision on a longer-term approach will depend on the development and approval of a long-term integrated Aboriginal Research Strategy and associated appropriate policy and program structures. It could include best practices guidelines for research by, with and on Aboriginal peoples applicable across all SSHRC programs. The development of such a strategy is contingent upon available financial resources and human resources.	Subject to availability of funds, a call will be announced in 2009.
2. a) Most of the program's existing design features should be retained, including the two-stage adjudication process, the review committee composition, and the division into development and research grants. b) Communications about the program should stress that grants of various sizes are eligible for the research grants category. c) The adjudication process	a) Minor adjustments to program design will be made for 2009-10 competition. b) Communication surrounding grant size and the nature of development grants will be made clearer in the program materials. c) Communication	a) April 2009. b) April 2009. c) April 2009.

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<p>should reserve development grants for work that is truly developmental in nature (even if submitted by mature scholars, that it represent a development in their Aboriginal research capacity)</p> <p>d) The adjudication process should be enhanced to allow additional, individualized capacity-developing feedback to successful and unsuccessful applicants.</p>	<p>surrounding the nature of development grants will be made clearer in the program materials.</p> <p>d) Minutes, as for other SPJI programs, are provided. SSHRC will explore new ways of providing more useful feedback to successful and unsuccessful applicants.</p>	<p>d) Implement, as appropriate in 2010-2011.</p>
<p>3. Ongoing reflection and development should continue on conditions of institutional eligibility as they relate to non-university organizations and in particular to Aboriginal organizations, so that mutually appropriate conditions of partnership can more easily be negotiated. This work could draw on learning and opportunities from other SSHRC programs, including CURA and the Northern Research Development Program.</p>	<p>SSHRC is currently reviewing ways to render our institutional eligibility process and policies clearer for potential applicants in this program, as well as others that involve researchers and collaborators from non-academic sectors.</p>	<p>March 2010.</p>
<p>4. While generally highly successful in ensuring that the program's intents were actualized in the grants selected for funding, application and C.V. requirements, review criteria and adjudication committees' approaches should be adjusted to allow more flexibility and inclusively in two areas: the nature of partnerships considered to be eligible,</p>	<p>Program materials, application instructions and adjudication criteria will be modified to allow applicants to describe partnerships and the role of traditional knowledge, while adhering to SSHRC's mandate and its policies with regards to institutional eligibility and the financial management of grant funds.</p>	<p>March 2010.</p>

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and the types of knowledge, research experiences and other experiences (such as working with Elders) considered to be valued by SSHRC and by the peer reviewers.		
<p>5. a) Some clarification and flexibility of program objectives is needed, in the following two areas:</p> <p>b) We recommend that the requirement that funded projects bridge Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal research be rendered more flexible to allow balance between the desire to foster dialogue between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal ways of knowing, and the need to allow space for the advancement of Aboriginal knowledge through its own paradigms. This will ensure that Aboriginal knowledge is considered on its own terms, and that safeguards to protect traditional "sacred knowledge" are respected.</p> <p>c) Intents of the program with respect to research on non-Canadian Aboriginal peoples need to be clarified.</p>	<p>a) Existing program guidelines will continue to be flexible to ensure appropriate consideration and promotion of Aboriginal knowledge.</p> <p>b) The focus of the pilot program was Canadian Aboriginal issues. However, proposals with inclusion of non-Canadian Aboriginal peoples but within a Canadian research context will be considered for the next round.</p>	<p>b) March 2010.</p>
6. It is difficult to formulate a recommendation on the size of the program budget, but it seems likely that as both awareness of the program and Aboriginal research capacity increase, future funding levels may need to be increased to accommodate growing Aboriginal research capacity	a) The program budget will depend on SSHRC's ongoing and emerging priorities. Partnerships with other government departments, Aboriginal private sector and non-governmental organizations will be included in a longer-term strategy.	a) Longer term approach will be developed by March 2010.

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in Canada.		
7. Ongoing performance measurement of the Aboriginal Research Pilot Program should continue, with a focus on capturing the results of the above proposed improvements to program design and delivery. In addition, a summative evaluation should be conducted to assess the achievement of longer-term outcomes in capacity development, knowledge production and knowledge mobilization.	a) A performance measurement framework and summative evaluation will also be developed.	a) Performance measurement framework done by December 2009. Summative evaluation will follow in 2011.
8. a) Following on the ideas in the original discussion documents, SSHRC should consider developing a more fully articulated Aboriginal Research Strategy, including and extending the Aboriginal Research program. This strategy should include opening and linking other SSHRC programs to Aboriginal Research, so that it eventually becomes interwoven throughout its entire mission. b) The Aboriginal Research Strategy could include a pre-proposal capacity development component, offering targeted communications, outreach and support to potential applicants.	a) SSHRC, in collaboration with Aboriginal research communities and their partners will develop an Aboriginal Research Strategy, in light of other SSHRC and government priorities. It will include linking to other SSHRC programs especially the fellowships program. The development of such a strategy is contingent on human and financial resources. b) SSHRC already allows for a development stage in the program and does not offer specific training in grantsmanship or pre-proposal capacity development.	a) By March 2010, implementation and development resource dependent.
9. The Strategy should continue to reserve a central place for students, in	a) Post-secondary student participation is highly encouraged and valued as a	a) Consultations in 2009-2010. Implementation as resources allow.

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particular Aboriginal students. Additional supports and incentives should be developed to ensure high levels of Aboriginal student participation in the program, in particular developing strategies to engage and value the contributions of undergraduate, college and high school students, and learners of all ages. Additional forms of support such as scholarships and fellowships, accompanying and integrated with the research grants program, should also be considered. As important, measures should be developed, perhaps through program requirements, to ensure that Aboriginal students are supported and mentored as they face systemic barriers and challenges.	part of the existing research programs. Possibility of separate fellowships and scholarships for students building careers and skills in Aboriginal research will also be considered within SSHRC's ongoing priorities and operational planning.	
10. Sharing of knowledge gained through Aboriginal research should receive particular attention in this Strategy, so that not only the communities who were directly involved in the funded projects but also other Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities may benefit. SSHRC could, for example, consider special knowledge mobilization initiatives, perhaps in partnership, to allow honouring and sharing of research accomplishments through the program, as well as ongoing dialogue about advances in ways of knowing. This should be understood as	a) Knowledge mobilization is a SSHRC core priority. Special efforts in the area of Aboriginal research will be explored. The results of the evaluation and lessons learned will be presented at upcoming conferences. Ongoing dialogues with stakeholders in Aboriginal research will also be held.	a) Consultations in 2009-2010. Implementation as resources allow.

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part of SSHRC's ongoing commitment to dialogue with the Aboriginal research community, so that results of knowledge mobilization may inform future planning.		
11. In the longer term, SSHRC should draw lessons from this evaluation as well as future evaluations of the program in considering the mainstreaming of this approach to Aboriginal research into its other research granting programs. Such mainstreaming would entail changes in SSHRC's organizational culture and important capacity development in SSHRC staff and peer review committees. SSHRC should use this and future evaluations of the Aboriginal Research Pilot Program as a means of promoting such organizational change.	a) Mainstreaming this approach to Aboriginal research is an important consideration and an important aspect of SSHRC's continuous program improvement initiative. It will be done taking into consideration the evaluations of other SSHRC programs as well as the review of the overall programs offered.	a) March 2011.

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