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Summative Cluster Evaluation of the SSHRC Institutional Grants (SIG) and Aid to Small Universities (ASU) Programs Final Report

Evaluation report prepared for the Social Sciences
and Humanities Research Council of Canada
(SSHRC) by Government Consulting Services
(GCS)

Evaluation undertaken by GCS and SSHRC's
Corporate Performance and Evaluation Division

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Executive Summary

This report presents the findings of the evaluation of the SSHRC Institutional Grants (SIG) and Aid to Small Universities (ASU) Programs. The evaluation was undertaken for the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) by Government Consulting Services (GCS) and SSHRC's Corporate Performance and Evaluation Division between May and September 2010.

Evaluation Context

The evaluation was undertaken in response to a 2006 program management recommendation and the Treasury Board Secretariat's program evaluation policy. Evaluation results will support senior management planning regarding future programming and renewal decisions. It is also expected that results will inform SSHRC's current revision of its Program Activity (PA) and will provide program management and staff needed information related to program performance and delivery. As both the SIG and ASU Programs have similar objectives, SSHRC decided to pursue evaluating the two programs through a single (cluster) evaluation.

This evaluation marks the first evaluation of either program in over a decade. The SIG Program was evaluated in 1984, and again in 1995. The ASU Program was the subject of a previous evaluation in 1989.

SIG Program Profile

The SIG Program is designed to help eligible Canadian postsecondary institutions fund small-scale research activities by their faculty in the social sciences and humanities. The objectives of the SIG Program are to assist Canadian universities to:

- develop, increase or strengthen research excellence in the social sciences and humanities;
- assist, in particular, researchers embarking on their research career to become competitive in grants competitions at the national level;
- assist established researchers with modest funding requirements or those wishing to reorient and strengthen their research programs; and
- support national and international dissemination and collaboration.

SSHRC provides eligible institutions with annual block grants for a three-year term. SSHRC awards SIG grants to institutions according to a formula based on the number of faculty members in the social sciences and humanities, and on the university's average performance over the previous three years of competitions in all SSHRC research support programs.

Institutions then use these funds to award individual grants of less than \$7,000 per annum to researchers to support small-scale research activities. Institutions administer their own competitive processes and establish for themselves the application procedures, including the number of competitions per year and the deadlines of competitions. Grants are intended to fund activities such as small research projects, travel for research-related conferences, and research seminars.

The SIG Program has an annual budget of \$5.2 million and, in 2008-2009, provided grants to 72 universities. The program is managed by SSHRC's Research and Dissemination Grants Division, within the Grants and Fellowship Directorate.

ASU Program Profile

The objective of the ASU Program is to enable small universities to develop and strengthen focused research capacity. SSHRC awards ASU Program grants to institutions for a three-year period. To be eligible for the program, an institution must have fewer than 250 full-time faculty members in the social sciences and humanities.

The maximum value of a grant is \$30,000 per year for three years. Each university must justify its grant request, and the request is subject to review by SSHRC. SSHRC awards all available funds through a review committee of scholars that evaluates each institution's application. Grants are awarded based on an assessment of the institution's research development plan, including its ability to concentrate research in specific areas at the university (such as through research centres).

In 2008-2009, 22 institutions received ASU Program grants. Grants to individual institutions for that year ranged from \$15,000 to the maximum of \$30,000, and averaged \$27,500. The annual budget for the ASU Program is \$600,000.

The success rate for institutions applying for ASU Program funding was 69% when averaging across the 1999, 2002 and 2005 competition years. According to SSHRC, the success rate in the 2008 competition was lower, at 55%, as a result of a recent increase in the number of small universities in Canada.

As with the SIG Program, the program is managed by SSHRC's Research and Dissemination Grants Division.

Evaluation Issues, Approach and Methodology

SSHRC's Corporate Performance and Evaluation Division prepared an Evaluation Design report in advance of the evaluation, which outlined the scope and approach of the evaluation. The evaluation examined the relevance, delivery and performance of the two programs. The evaluation focused on examining the programs' outcomes in the period from 1998 to 2008.

The evaluation design involved examining the delivery and results of the SIG and ASU Programs at a convenient sample of institutions. SSHRC selected six universities in receipt of SIG Program funding, and four universities in receipt of ASU Program funding. Universities were selected based on criteria that included size of institution, geographical region, and languages of instruction, as well as the availability of activity reports from the institutions. As part of the evaluation's comparative approach, SSHRC also selected a sample of four small universities that had not received ASU Program funding.

A key strength of the evaluation methodology was the survey of university researchers (professors). Four different survey cohort groups were surveyed:

- SIG recipients from the six sampled universities (201 survey respondents);
- a comparison group of researchers not in receipt of SIG from the six sampled institutions (459);
- ASU recipients from the sample of four small universities that received ASU grants (51); and
- A comparison group of researchers not in receipt of ASU funding from: i) four small universities that received ASU grants and ii) from four small universities that did not receive ASU grants (233 respondents in total).

SSHRC identified, based on information from institutional activity reports, a list of researchers who had been in receipt of SIG and ASU Program funding. In addition, the surveys also allowed researchers to self-identify as recipients of SIG and ASU Program funding (during the period under examination, 1998 to 2008). The use of a participant and comparison group approach afforded the ability to look at key differences between the two groups in order to help determine the incremental impact of the programs.

Other sources of data included:

- A document review, which examined corporate, program and Government of Canada documents of relevance;
- Review of previous evaluation reports;
- Fifteen (15) interviews, including a representative of the research offices that administer the grants (i.e., research officers) from each of the 10 sampled institutions in receipt of SIG and ASU Program funding, two staff and managers at SSHRC, and three external stakeholders;
- Activity reports from the sampled institutions, which were examined by SSHRC to support the assessment of program outcomes;
- Analysis of administrative data by SSHRC, to examine the competitiveness of SIG recipients in other SSHRC grant competitions; and
- Analysis of administrative financial data by SSHRC, in order to examine the cost-efficiency of the programs' delivery.

As institutions sometimes combine the SIG and / or ASU Program funding with other institutional funding, and due to the low level of visibility of the programs, there was limited awareness of the programs among researchers. As a result, it was difficult to determine the specific impact of these programs. Further, the quality of data submitted by funded institutions varied considerably. However, the evaluation benefited from the use of the comparison group approach, and from the availability of multiple data sources, including previous evaluations of the programs.

Evaluation Findings – SIG Program

Relevance of the SIG Program

Researchers and research officers strongly believe that there is a continued need for SSHRC to support small-scale research activities. In particular, researchers indicated there is a need for SSHRC to provide funding to develop and strengthen research capacity, and to support collaborative research and the development of research partnerships. Universities generally view the funding support from the SIG Program as critical to their institutional research funding. Some (smaller) institutions are, however, receiving grants that are too small to address any significant institutional need. The vast majority of SIG Program recipients indicated their funded research activities would have proceeded with a smaller scope, or not at all, in the absence of SIG Program funding.

The SIG Program is the only SSHRC program that provides funding support to all sizes of universities for small-scale research activities. Some small institutions also receive ASU Program funding, but this funding is not provided to all small universities, and it is often targeted to focused research activities, such as research centres. There is some overlap of the SIG Program's objectives and those of SSHRC's Research Development Initiatives program and the planned Research Development Grants program of the new PA, as these programs are also intended to support the development / formulation of new research areas / projects.

As with all of SSHRC's research funding programs, the SIG Program is aligned with Government of Canada outcomes. The SIG Program is only moderately well aligned with SSHRC's Strategic Outcome of "Research – New knowledge based on excellent research in the social sciences and humanities", as the program does not generally, in itself, fund excellent research. However, the SIG Program is aligned with the three elements of SSHRC's vision: quality, connections and impact. The SIG Program's objectives appear to cross over two major umbrella programs, Insight and Connection, in SSHRC's new PA.

Delivery of the SIG Program

There is insufficient evidence to conclude on the extent to which institutions are consistently meeting SSHRC requirements related to their SIG grants. Interviews and activity reports illustrate that many institutions have formal processes in place to allocate funding among their researchers, including formal review committees and selection criteria. However, some instances were noted in which institutions funded activities that are not allowable under the terms of the grant or to researchers outside the social sciences and humanities.

Reporting and monitoring have long been recognized as a weakness of the SIG Program's delivery. The information requested from institutions is not appropriate for performance measurement, and compliance with reporting by the institutions has been variable. SSHRC has not undertaken sufficient follow-up to ensure full compliance with reporting requirements or with program guidelines and rules.

The evaluation also noted that the long-standing issue of program visibility has not been addressed: many researchers are unaware of the program, even when they have been recipients of SIG Program funding from their institutions.

The SIG Program's formula for determining the value of its grants to institutions favours a small number of large universities with well-established research programs. The assumption is therefore that the program is designed to reward past research activities and research excellence. However, this runs counter to the apparent goal of the program of developing research capacity.

Notwithstanding these issues, surveyed SIG recipients demonstrated a high degree of satisfaction with their grants.

Performance of the SIG Program

The objectives of the SIG Program, while praised by research officers for being inclusive, are very broad given the limited size of both the program's funding envelope and of the grants provided to individual researchers. The objectives also lack specificity, and so do not clearly articulate the results of the program.

The SIG Program appears to have generally funded activities that are aligned with SSHRC's (broad) intentions for the program. SIG funding is most commonly used to cover researcher travel costs, and was also used for small research projects, student salaries, and other small-scale research activities. In medium-sized universities, these activities were mostly dedicated to assisting new scholars in starting their careers. Small universities focused their activities on enhancing national and international dissemination and collaboration, whereas large universities focused on assisting researchers in reorienting and strengthening their careers.

Analysis of administrative data did not provide conclusive evidence that receiving a SIG was associated with increased competitiveness in SRG competitions. The program is, however, perceived by researchers and research officers as having been successful in increasing the competitiveness of researchers in national grant competitions.

SIG-funded activities can reasonably be inferred to have increased research capacity at many institutions. This includes through its support for dissemination of research findings, and through seed funding to develop research projects. Limited funding amounts from the program were felt to have been a barrier to increasing research capacity at some institutions.

SSHRC has administered 43 SIG applications and 42 SIG awards per \$10,000 of administrative costs. As a result of the co-delivery of the program with institutions, the proportion of SSHRC administrative costs to grant expenditures is lower than that of other programs examined (e.g. the Indirect Costs Program).

Evaluation Findings – ASU Program

Relevance

There is a perceived need among researchers, research officers, and other stakeholders for research funding support targeted to small universities. Small universities face barriers to research not experienced by larger universities, such as higher teaching loads, a smaller pool of graduate students, and, frequently, greater geographic distances from other researchers. They also tend to be disfavoured by the formula-based SIG Program. The ASU Program helps to mitigate these barriers. There were no other programs that appeared to duplicate the ASU Program's objectives.

The ASU Program is aligned with Government of Canada outcomes. The program, with its focus on building research capacity, aligns only moderately well with SSHRC's strategic outcome of "Research – New knowledge based on excellent research in the social sciences and humanities". It is not clearly aligned with operational priorities, which include "ensuring the world-class excellence of SSHRC funded research, and promoting new knowledge in priority areas, through research and training"¹.

Delivery

Unlike for the SIG Program, SSHRC undertakes the peer review process for the ASU Program's funding competitions. While no specific issues were identified by SSHRC or research officers with respect to SSHRC's process for allocating ASU funding to institutions, related opinions among ASU recipients were mixed.

Institutional reporting and program monitoring have been weak for the ASU Program (though SSHRC staff indicated they have been better than for the SIG Program). The lack of consistency in the information provided by the institutions, the lack of appropriate information being required in activity reports, and varying levels of compliance by institutions in reporting make it impossible to gather program-wide information on activities funded or on attainment of expected outcomes.

ASU Program funding is often combined with other sources of institutional funding, or is delivered to researchers under the different names used by institutions for their grants. As a result, there appears to be inconsistent awareness of the program, even among ASU recipients.

The vast majority of surveyed ASU funding recipients indicated that they were satisfied or very satisfied with their grant.

Performance

The objective of the ASU Program ("to enable small universities to develop and strengthen focused research capacity") is broad, and lacks clarity and precision. Partly as a result, the expected outcomes of the program are similarly broad and ill-defined.

¹ SSHRC. Report on Plans and Priorities 2009-2010.

The ASU grants appear to have been invested in activities that are aligned with the intentions of the program. This includes supporting national / international dissemination of research, colloquia / symposia, and seed funding for activities leading to the development of an application for research funding. The ASU Program has increased focused research capacity at small universities. For example, the evaluation noted many examples of small universities having developed or supported research centres in a variety of research areas with ASU Program funding.

It is not clear whether, or to what extent, the ASU Program has increased the competitiveness of funded researchers in grant competitions, although it is perceived as having been beneficial.

SSHRC has administered 34 ASU Program applications and 22 awards per \$10,000 of administrative costs. These administrative costs per application and award are higher than for the SIG Program, as a result of SSHRC having delegated to the institutions the responsibility for allocating the SIG Program grants to individual researchers. A comparison of administrative costs per grant expenditures with other programs, e.g. the Indirect Costs Program, suggests that the ASU Program has been delivered in a cost-efficient manner, however.

Overall Conclusions of the Cluster Evaluation

Undertaking the evaluation of the two programs through the use of a cluster approach has highlighted many commonalities between SIG, a formula-based program, and ASU, a competition-based program. It has also pointed to the need for decision-making on the future of the programs to examine both programs in tandem.

Overall, as per the surveys and interviews, the evaluation findings suggest that there is strong support from researchers, research officers and other stakeholders for continued SSHRC funding to support dissemination, collaboration and small-scale research projects. There is some ambiguity, however, regarding whether SSHRC sees itself having a role in developing research capacity at the institutional level.

The lack of clear and precise objectives for either the SIG or the ASU Programs has meant that the programs, while complementary, are not clearly defined or differentiated. The ASU Program appears to sometimes be perceived as helping to address the inequities of the SIG Program's formula-based funding for small universities. However, it cannot be successful in this regard because not all small universities receive ASU Program funding and because the ASU Program is also designed to build research capacity in focused areas, which would exclude some researchers. While the two programs have very different grant sizes, there is also some overlap with the RDI Program objectives that should be addressed through a clearer differentiation of SSHRC funding programs intended to support research development.

The SIG and ASU Programs both suffer from similar flaws in program delivery. Both programs lack user-friendly reporting systems for funded institutions, and have poor reporting templates that do not ask institutions to provide appropriate information on the use and results of the grants. There has been limited monitoring and follow-up from SSHRC on either program,

although the management by SSHRC of the ASU Program's peer review process has allowed closer management of that program. While both programs have been relatively cost-efficient, this may be as much a result of the low level of oversight and interest in the programs within SSHRC as any particular design or delivery characteristics of the two programs.

Notwithstanding these issues, there have been clear benefits from the programs and both institutions and researchers demonstrated a high degree of satisfaction with the two programs. The wide range of activities funded by the programs speaks to the broad objectives of the programs, and to the flexibility afforded by institutions in addressing their own priorities and needs. At the same time, a more clearly defined focus and purpose for SSHRC institutional funding may provide more targeted results in the future.

Options and Recommendations

Recommendation #1: The evaluation first and foremost recommends that SSHRC should develop a clear statement and policy with regard to its role in institutional capacity building as a precursor to any significant changes to the SIG and ASU Programs.

Three basic options exist for SSHRC with respect to the future of the two institutional research programs. In light of a need for further clarity in policy direction and priorities from SSHRC, the report does not recommend a particular option but provides some recommendations and potential implications, based on the findings and discussions of the evaluation. These three options are briefly summarized as follows.

Option #1: Retain, but Modify, the Existing Two Programs

The evaluation identified positive impacts from both programs. SSHRC could, therefore, decide to keep both the SIG and ASU Programs as part of its suite of research support programs.

However, the evaluation did identify significant shortcomings in the programs' design and delivery that require modification if the programs are to continue. As a result, the following recommendations are proposed should SSHRC decide to selection Option #1.

- Recommendation #1.1: SSHRC should re-develop its objectives and expected outcomes for the two programs.
- Recommendation #1.2: Ensure that the design of the programs, including the funding formula, follows logically from the revised program objectives.
- Recommendation #1.3: Revise reporting templates to collect consistent, precise information from institutions related to program objectives / expected outcomes and funding allocation processes. Revise systems to make reporting and monitoring accessible and user-friendly.
- Recommendation #1.4: For the SIG Program, ensure that SSHRC is an active partner with institutions in the management of the funding. This should include undertaking consistent and timely monitoring of institutional practices and undertaking immediate and appropriate follow-up, in cases where institutional practices or uses of grant funding are not consistent with the programs' terms or expectations.

- Recommendation #1.5: Examine how SSHRC can increase the visibility of the two programs among researchers and other stakeholders.

Should SSHRC choose Option #1, some potential positive implications would include:

- Addressing the design and delivery shortcomings in the two programs will strengthen the two programs.
- Maintaining the two programs, while addressing their weaknesses, will better facilitate achieving the (current) objectives of the programs.
- While design modifications will result in some changes in the size of the institutional grants, compared with the other options, this option will likely generate the least negative reaction from the institutions, many of whom have come to depend on these funding to further their research programs.

Negative implications may include:

- The required modification of the programs' design and delivery, and increased monitoring and management in the future, will entail significant additional SSHRC resources.
- If the funding formula is changed, some institutions may see their institutional grants decrease in value, which may cause a negative reaction.
- Maintaining two relatively small institutional programs is not aligned with the current redevelopment of the SSHRC PA and the move to rationalize / streamline SSHRC's program offerings.
- Responsibility for the allocation of SIG Program funding to individual researchers will remain with the institutions, which continues to present a risk in terms of the accountability for these funds.

Option #2: Create a New Program

The second option would be for SSHRC to end both the SIG and ASU Program and create a single, new program that, by itself, meets all of SSHRC's objectives for institutional funding. The following recommendations should be considered in pursuing this option:

- Recommendation #2.1: As part of the design of a new program, SSHRC should undertake a comprehensive, inclusive and formal consultation process with institutional administrators and researchers, and within SSHRC management, in order to identify program needs, priorities, and design / delivery options.
- Recommendation #2.2: SSHRC should ensure that the design of any new institutional funding program carefully balances the needs of institutions of different sizes.
- Recommendation #2.3: SSHRC should launch a new communications strategy to coincide with a new program, in order to increase the visibility of its institutional research funding.

Some potential positive implications of Option #2 include:

- The ASU Program is sometimes perceived as acting as a supplement to the SIG Program, in that it can help to address some of the limitations of the SIG Program in adequately addressing small universities' needs. Developing a single, new institutional program would allow SSHRC to address these shortcomings more effectively through a single program.
- This option would effectively allow SSHRC to go "back to the drawing board" in order to develop a new program based on clearly defined goals and principles that are feasible given the length of the term and amount of the grant.
- Reducing the number of programs would help to streamline and simplify SSHRC's program offerings. This would improve the coherency of SSHRC's research program, which is aligned with the intentions of the current PA redevelopment at the Council.
- One program would reduce the amount of administration required on the part of SSHRC (for program monitoring and administration) and small universities that would receive both grants (for applications, reporting).
- The launch of a new program could provide SSHRC a good opportunity to address the low level of visibility of SSHRC institutional funding among researchers.

The potential negative implications include:

- There may be institutions that see a decrease in the value of their institutional funding from SSHRC, or, potentially, that would no longer be eligible for institutional funding. This would likely reduce some institutions' ability to carry out their usual research activities. This would also likely generate a negative reaction from these institutions, many of whom have come to depend on these funding to further their research programs.
- This would require SSHRC to expend significantly more resources towards the design and implementation of a new program (though perhaps not more than would be expended for the major changes required in option #1).

Option #3: Eliminate One or Both Programs

The third option is to eliminate SSHRC institutional funding altogether, or, at least, to eliminate one of the programs. This is obviously the most radical option, but it is not without precedent: the Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council (NSERC) eliminated its institutional funding support program when the General Research Fund was created in 1992.

As previously stated, SSHRC must look at its overall priorities and clarify its future role in institutional funding.

The evaluation findings have shown that both programs have been beneficial to institutions, and the elimination of institutional funding would have some impact on the amount of research-related activities at universities.

Some measures may be considered in order to fill the gaps left by eliminating one or both the programs, including special considerations of small universities in other funding opportunities at SSHRC (if the ASU Program is to be eliminated), expansion of the Research Development and Partnership Development grants funding opportunities, or others. Eliminating one of the

programs would require further examination of the impact of such a change. SSHRC would need to explore whether there are other means to provide similar support to researchers.

If SSHRC eliminated the SIG Program and retained the ASU Program, this would signal that SSHRC sees a stronger need to support smaller universities. Conversely, eliminating the ASU Program and retaining the SIG Program would signal that SSHRC sees a stronger need to support medium and large universities. The findings of this evaluation provide limited evidence in support of either of these directions.

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List of Acronyms

AMIS	Awards Management Information System
ANOVA	Analysis of Variance
ASU	Aid to Small Universities
AUCC	Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada
CIHR	Canadian Institutes of Health Research
GCS	Government Consulting Services
GoC	Government of Canada
GRF	General Research Fund
INE	Initiative on the New Economy
NSERC	Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada
PA	Program Activity
PAA	Program Activity Architecture
PWGSC	Public Works and Government Services Canada
RDG	Research Development Grants
RDI	Research Development Initiatives
RPP	Report on Plans and Priorities
SIG	SSHRC Institutional Grants
SMART	Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Realistic and Time-bound
SPSS	Statistical Package for the Social Sciences
SRG	Standard Research Grants
SSHRC	Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada

1. Introduction and Evaluation Context

1.1 Introduction

This report presents the findings of the summative cluster evaluation of the SSHRC Institutional Grants (SIG) Program and the Aid to Small Universities (ASU) Program. The report was prepared by Government Consulting Services (GCS) for the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC). The evaluation was carried out by GCS and SSHRC's Corporate Performance and Evaluation Division.

The report is organized as follows:

- Section 1 presents the introduction and evaluation context;
- Section 2 presents a profile of the programs;
- Section 3 presents the evaluation issues, approach and methodology;
- Section 4 presents the findings related to the SIG Program;
- Section 5 presents the findings related to the ASU Program; and
- Section 6 presents the overall conclusions and recommendations for the two programs.

1.2 Evaluation Context

The evaluation was undertaken in response to a 2006 program management recommendation and the Treasury Board Secretariat's program evaluation policy. Evaluation results are intended to support organizational planning regarding future programming and renewal decisions. It is also expected that results will inform SSHRC's current revision of its Program Activity Architecture (PAA) and will provide program management and staff needed information related to program delivery.

The evaluation was undertaken jointly by Government Consulting Services and SSHRC's Corporate Performance and Evaluation Division. The audience for the evaluation includes SSHRC senior management and SSHRC's Research and Dissemination Grants Division (within the Grants and Fellowships Directorate), which is responsible for the management of the two programs. Institutions and researchers in Canada are also key stakeholders for evaluation results.

As both the SIG and ASU Programs have similar objectives, SSHRC decided to pursue evaluating the two programs through a single (cluster) evaluation. This evaluation marks the first evaluation of either program in over a decade. As the SIG Program was last evaluated in 1995 and subsequent changes were made to the program after that time, the Evaluation Design recommended that the evaluation examine program outcomes during the period from 1998 to 2008.

The evaluation was carried out between May and September 2010, following an evaluation planning phase that was undertaken by SSHRC between January and April 2010.

2. Profile of the Programs

2.1 Description of the SIG Program

The [SIG Program](#) is designed to help eligible Canadian postsecondary institutions fund small-scale research activities by their faculty in the social sciences and humanities². The objectives of the SIG Program are to assist Canadian universities to:

- develop, increase or strengthen research excellence in the social sciences and humanities;
- assist, in particular, researchers embarking on their research career to become competitive in grants competitions at the national level;
- assist established researchers with modest funding requirements or those wishing to reorient and strengthen their research programs; and
- support national and international dissemination and collaboration.

The logic model for the SIG and ASU Programs is included in Annex A of this report.

SSHRC provides eligible institutions with annual block grants for three-year terms. To be eligible, an institution must:

- be an institutional member of the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC) and have degree-granting status in at least one of the social sciences and humanities disciplines; or
- be a member of AUCC and affiliated or federated with an eligible institution but grant their own degrees, receive their own operating budget directly from the provincial government and have their own board of directors and offer programs in at least one of the social sciences and humanities disciplines.

SSHRC awards SIG grants to institutions according to the following formula:

- \$50 for each faculty member whose discipline falls within SSHRC's mandate; and
- a payment based on the university's average performance in all SSHRC research support programs in the previous three years of competitions, and calculated at the rate of:
 - 23 per cent of the first \$100,000 awarded;
 - 20 per cent of the next \$400,000 awarded; and
 - 14 per cent of the remainder.

Institutions then use these funds to award individual grants of less than \$7,000 per annum to researchers to support small-scale research activities. Institutions administer their own competitive processes and establish for themselves the application procedures, including the number of competitions per year and the deadlines of competitions. Grants are intended to fund activities such as small research projects, travel for research-related conferences, and research seminars.

² More information is available on the SIG Program at: http://www.sshrc-crsh.gc.ca/funding-financement/programmes-programmes/institutional_grants-subventions_institutionnelles-eng.aspx

The SIG Program has an annual budget of \$5.2 million and, in 2008-2009, provided grants to 72 universities. The program is managed by SSHRC's Research and Dissemination Grants Division.

2.2 Background to the SIG Program

The SIG Program was launched in 1974 under the name of the General Research Grants (GRG) program, with the objective to "provide the universities with additional means to meet, according to their own policy and priorities, certain very modest requirements of their staff, such as travel and small research expenses"³.

The program was first evaluated in 1984. The 1984 evaluation found that the size of individual grants to researchers was, at that time, too small to allow universities to adequately fund meritorious applications, and that grant ceilings of less than \$2,500 had come into practice. It recommended that SSHRC increase the size of the block grants across the board, as well as provide proportionately more grant funding for medium and large universities. Other recommendations from the report included harmonizing the grants with those of the ASU Program, earmarking a portion of the grants for new scholars, as well as more minor suggestions related to program administration.

The program was subsequently reviewed as part of a policy review conducted by SSHRC in 1985. This review recommended, among other things, that the maximum grant to individual researchers be increased to \$5,000, that the budget for the program be increased by one million dollars a year, and that the size of grants be determined based on institutional success in previous national research competitions (on top of a base amount of funding)⁴. Overall, SSHRC accepted the recommendations of the review, but, following another review of research grants at SSHRC, the formula for calculating grants was again revised in April 1990 to take into consideration the size of an institution (based on number of faculty in social sciences and humanities) in addition to success in previous grant competitions. SSHRC's Travel Grants for International Scholarly Conferences program was also merged with the GRG Program at this time.

In 1995, the GRG Program was formally evaluated for a second time. The evaluation concluded that the GRG was serving an important role in assisting universities to undertake research, but that, due to a lack of clearly stated objectives and weak performance data, the impact of the program was not fully known. The evaluation also found issues with respect to low program visibility. In 1998, the program name was changed to the SSHRC Institutional Grants program.

³ McFarlane, Bruce A. Report of the SSHRC General Research Grants Program Evaluation Project. 30 March 1984. 1.

⁴ SSHRC. Evaluation of the General Research Grants Program – Final Report. 1995.

2.3 Description of the ASU Program

The objective of the [ASU Program](#) is to enable small universities to develop and strengthen focused research capacity⁵.

ASU Program grants are awarded on a competitive basis for a three-year period. Examples of activities that the ASU program supports include:

- start-up costs / partial funding of research centres;
- stipends to doctoral students, provided the program of studies is related to the ASU grant;
- agenda-setting seminars;
- visiting scholars (travel and stipend);
- organization of colloquia or symposia; and
- seed funding for collaborative research or the development of partnerships.

The logic model for the ASU and SIG Programs is included in Annex A of this report.

SSHRC awards ASU Program grants to institutions for a three-year period. To be eligible for the program, an institution must meet the following criteria:

- be an institutional member of the AUCC, or b) be an institutional member of the AUCC, and be affiliated with an institution itself too large to be eligible for the ASU Program, and operate in a cultural environment substantially different from that of the larger parent institution;
- have active degree-granting status for social sciences and humanities disciplines at the undergraduate level or beyond;
- have fewer than 250 full-time faculty in SSHRC fields; and
- be independent of the federal government for the purpose of faculty employment status.

The maximum value of a grant is \$30,000 per year for three years. The ASU Program is not intended to provide ongoing support to sustain institutions and limits support of research infrastructure, such as research centres and institutes, to six years.

Each university must justify its grant request, and the request is subject to review by SSHRC. SSHRC awards all available funds through a review committee of scholars that evaluates each institution's application. Grants are awarded based on an assessment of the institution's development plan and its inclusion of the following elements:

1. Research concentration — a review and assessment of:

- the most promising areas of concentration;
- options for new areas of concentration;
- areas already selected and supported with ASU funds;
- the continuing needs of these areas; and

⁵ More information on the ASU Program is available at: http://www.sshrc-crsh.gc.ca/funding-financement/programmes-programmes/aid_small_universities-aide_petites_universites-eng.aspx

- the expected time frame for autonomy from ASU support.
2. Strategies (funding opportunities) — details on the various strategies that will be used to strengthen research capacities in the selected areas of concentration.
 3. Focus points or research centres — where appropriate, a review and assessment of:
 - plans to support focus points or research centres; and
 - milestones in the movement of these toward their potential as areas of research concentration.
 4. Appropriateness of funds requested from SSHRC.

All applicants and grant holders must comply with the regulations governing grant applications and with the regulations set out in the Grant Holder's Guide.

In 2008-2009, 22 institutions received ASU Program grants. Grants to individual institutions for that year ranged from \$15,000 to the maximum of \$30,000, and averaged \$27,500.

As shown in Table 1, the success rate for institutions applying for ASU Program funding was 69% when averaging across the 1999, 2002 and 2005 competition years. According to SSHRC, the success rate in the 2008 competition was lower, at 55%. This was said to have resulted from a recent increase in the number of small universities in Canada.

Table 1: ASU Program Application, Awards and Payment Amounts by Competition, 1999-2005

Application/Award	1999	2002	2005	Total
Application	39	36	34	109
Award	30	23	22	75
Success rate (%)	77	64	65	69
Total Payment Amount (\$)	1,839,511	1,748,548	1,783,682	5,371,741

Source: SSHRC Awards Management Information System (AMIS) database

2.4 Background to the ASU Program

In 1977, the Canada Council published a report, "Needs of Scholars at Small Universities", that outlined the problems faced by researchers at small universities, and recommended strategies to address these problems⁶. In response, SSHRC launched the Aid to Small University Program in 1981, under its original name, the Strategic Infrastructure Program.

⁶ Hanson, Robert. Report to the SSHRC on the Evaluation Study of the Aid to Small Universities Program. October 1989.

The ASU Program was evaluated in 1989 by Robert Hanson. The evaluation concluded that there continued to be a need for funding targeted to small universities, although the ASU Program, with its wide range of eligible expenses, showed some degree of duplication with other SSHRC programs, including the Canadian Studies Research Tools and Specialized Collections programs. The evaluation also found that the ASU Program was highly valued by institutions and had assisted in building research capacity, although the evaluator found no strong evidence of the program having increased researchers' participation and success in SSHRC grant competitions. Hanson also concluded that the program had been administered in an economical way by SSHRC, although he found inconsistencies and limitations in the data available for performance measurement and overall program management. The evaluation recommended that the program review how it determined institutional eligibility, which at that time was based on the number of full-time students (i.e., eligible universities had 4,000 full-time students or fewer). It also suggested that the bloc-grant approach of the program, in which participating institutions were all provided grants of \$25,000 each, was not sufficiently flexible to respond to the particular needs of different institutions.

3. Evaluation Issues, Approach and Methodology

The scope and approach for the summative cluster evaluation of the SIG and ASU Programs were guided by an Evaluation Design report completed by SSHRC prior to the conduct of the evaluation.

The following section outlines the evaluation issues / questions, the approach of the evaluation, data collection methods, and methodological considerations.

3.1 Evaluation Issues

The evaluation examined issues relating to program relevance, delivery, and performance. Table 2 provides a summary of the evaluation issues and questions addressed in the evaluation. Please see Annex B for the complete evaluation matrix, which also includes specific indicators and data sources for each evaluation question.

Table 2: Summary of Evaluation Issues and Questions

Evaluation Issue	Evaluation Question
Relevance	
Continued Need	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> What is the rationale for supporting the SIG and ASU Programs given the current level of the institutions' needs?
Alignment with Federal Government and SSHRC Priorities and Policies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Are the SIG and ASU Program objectives aligned with the Federal Government's Framework and SSHRC Strategic Plan and PAA?
Delivery	
Institution Peer Review Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent is the peer review process in participating universities meeting accountability requirements? To what extent has the universities' internal competition process enabled the intended researchers to access the SIG grants?
Reporting and Monitoring	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> How relevant and effective is the reporting and monitoring of SIG and ASU?
Performance	
Effectiveness of the Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> To what extent are the SIG and ASU Program objectives specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bound? To what extent have the SIG grants been invested in the intended activities? To what extent have the ASU grants been invested in the intended activities? To what extent have the intended researchers increased their competitiveness in SSHRC grant competitions? To what extent have the SIG and ASU helped participating universities increase their (focused) research capacity?
Cost-Efficiency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have the SIG and ASU Programs been delivered in a cost-efficient manner?

3.2 Evaluation Approach

The Evaluation Design for the SIG and ASU Programs outlined the approach for the evaluation. Due to time and resource constraints, the evaluation examined primary and secondary data from a sample of universities only.

For the SIG Program, six universities in receipt of SIG Program funding were sampled. SSHRC selected the convenient sample of universities primarily based on institution size, in order to include small, medium and large institutions. (A large university has more than 500 faculty members, a medium has more than 250 but less than 500, and a small has less than 250.) Additional criteria included geographic distribution, language of instruction and the availability of activity reports (i.e., all the sampled institutions had submitted activity reports for the period under examination). Table 3 illustrates the characteristics of a sample of institutions selected for the SIG Program evaluation.

Table 3: Sample of Institutions for SIG Program Evaluation

Participating University	Size	Language	Province
University of Calgary	Large	English	Alberta
University of Ottawa	Large	English/French	Ontario
Dalhousie University	Medium	English	Nova Scotia
Université de Sherbrooke	Medium	English/French	Quebec
Vancouver Island University	Small	English	British Columbia
Université du Québec à Rimouski	Small	French	Quebec

SSHRC also set out a sampling plan for the evaluation of the ASU Program. For the ASU Program, four participating universities were sampled, as illustrated in Table 4. SSHRC selected the convenient sample of universities based on institution size, in order to include a range of different size small universities. Additional criteria included geographic distribution, language and the availability of activity reports (i.e., all the sampled institutions had submitted activity reports for the period under examination). As shown, all four also received SIG Program funding. Research officers from these institutions were interviewed about both the ASU and the SIG Programs.

Table 4: Sample of Institutions for ASU Program Evaluation

Participating University	Type	Size	Province
Trent University	ASU & SIG	>200 Faculty	Ontario
University of Northern British Columbia	ASU & SIG	More than or equal 50, less than or equal 200	British Columbia
The University of Winnipeg	ASU & SIG	More than or equal 50, less than or equal 200	Manitoba
Saint Mary's University	ASU & SIG	More than or equal 50, less than or equal 200	Nova Scotia

For comparative purposes, SSHRC also sampled a selection of institutions that shared similar characteristics with the sample of institutions in receipt of ASU grants, but which did not receive ASU Program funding. These institutions are shown in Table 5. (These institutions also received SIG funding.)

Table 5: Sample of Comparison Institutions for ASU Program Evaluation

Participating University	Size	Province
Laurentian University	>200 Faculty	Ontario
Trinity Western University	More than or equal 50, less than or equal 200	British Columbia
Athabasca University	More than or equal 50, less than or equal 200	Alberta
Acadia University	More than or equal 50, less than or equal 200	Nova Scotia

3.3 Data Collection Methods

The following methods were used to gather data for the evaluation:

- document review;
- interviews;
- survey of researchers;
- activity reports review;
- analysis of administrative data to examine the competitiveness of SIG recipients in other SSHRC grant competitions; and
- analysis of administrative financial data.

Each of these methods is described in more detail as follows.

3.3.1 Document Review

A document review was completed to develop an understanding of the programs, to identify issues from previous evaluations of the programs, and to collect information related to program

relevance. GCS reviewed documents identified and provided by SSHRC and listed in the Evaluation Design report. Documents reviewed by GCS included:

- Corporate documents including SSHRC's PAA, strategic plan and its "The Year in Numbers" report;
- Program documentation including previous evaluation reports and program descriptions; and
- Government of Canada documents including the Whole-of-Government Framework and Mobilizing Science and Technology to Canada's Advantage.

Annex C contains a full list of documents reviewed.

3.3.2 Interviews

A total of 15 interviews were completed for the evaluation. Interviews were undertaken with SSHRC managers and staff, external stakeholders (from universities and from the Canadian Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences), and research officers at a sample of universities across Canada. Research officers (sometimes referred to as grant officers or by other titles, depending on the university) are responsible for the administration of research funding at universities, and act as SSHRC's point-of-contact, in the institutions, for the programs. The number of interviews completed for each interview group is illustrated in Table 6.

Table 6: List of Interviews by Interview Group

Interview Group	Number of Interviews Conducted
SSHRC Managers / Staff	2
External Key Informants	3
Research Officers from universities	10
Total	15

Different interview guides were developed and used for each of the interview groups (see Annex D for the interview questions used). Interviews were conducted both in-person (with SSHRC managers and staff and with an external key informant located in Ottawa) and by telephone.

3.3.3 Survey of Researchers

Surveys were undertaken with four groups of university researchers:

- SIG recipients from the six sampled universities;
- a comparison group of researchers not in receipt of SIG from the six sampled institutions;
- ASU recipients from a sample of four small universities that received ASU grants; and
- A comparison group of researchers not in receipt of ASU funding from: i) four small universities that received ASU grants and ii) from four small universities that did not receive ASU grants.

For the SIG Program evaluation, SSHRC developed a list of researchers at the six sampled universities, and identified, from this list, those researchers in receipt of SIG grants based on the information contained in the available activity reports submitted by institutions. In addition, for those researchers not identified as having received SIG grants from the six institutions, the survey asked whether they received a SIG grant during the 1998 to 2008 period. If yes, these researchers were asked the SIG recipient survey questions and were then considered part of this (SIG participant / recipient) survey cohort during the analysis. The others were considered part of the comparison group.

Similarly, for the ASU Program, SSHRC developed a list of all social sciences and humanities researchers at the eight universities sampled for this program evaluation. From this list, those researchers in receipt of ASU grants were identified based on information contained in the available activity reports of the four universities that received ASU funding. In addition, for those researchers not identified as having received ASU grants, the survey questionnaire asked whether they received an ASU grant during the period from 1998 to 2008. If yes, these researchers were asked the ASU recipient survey questions and were considered part of this (ASU participant / recipient) survey cohort during the analysis. All other researchers from the eight universities were considered part of the ASU comparison group.

In consultation with SSHRC, GCS developed questionnaires for the surveys (see Annex E) designed to address the research issues identified in the evaluation matrix. The questionnaires were reviewed by SSHRC's Evaluation Advisory Committee. Following this review, GCS pre-tested the surveys with a sample of researchers. During full survey administration, potential survey respondents were sent an e-mail invitation inviting them to participate in the survey. To help increase the response rate, two reminder e-mails were sent to those who had not responded to the survey. The survey was open from June 25th to July 19th, 2010.

Table 7 presents the response to the survey, based on the original sample provided by SSHRC.

Table 7: Survey Response (Based on Original Sample Identified by SSHRC)

	SIG Participant	SIG Comparison	ASU Participant	ASU Comparison
Total Sample	589	2,240	101	1,170
Undeliverable Emails	22	149	2	51
Valid Email sample	567	2,049	99	1,119
Out of Office Replies	51	142	4	81
Refused	4	15	1	5
Survey Respondents	179	481	20	264
Valid Response Rate	32%	23%	20%	24%

Because the overall population of SIG and ASU Program recipients and non-recipients at the sampled institutions is not known, the margin of error could not be calculated.

When including those researchers who were originally included in the comparison group, but who self-identified in the survey as having received SIG or ASU Program funds from 1998 to 2008, the number of SIG recipient survey respondents was 201, the number of SIG comparison group respondents was 459, the number of ASU recipient survey respondents was 51, and the number of ASU comparison group respondents was 233.

Table 8 provides a profile of survey respondents.

Table 8: Profile of Survey Respondents⁷

	SIG Recipient Respondents	SIG Non-respondents	ASU Recipient Respondents	ASU Non-respondents
Total Sample Size	201 (100%)	459 (100%)	51 (100%)	233 (100%)
Full Professor	74 (45%)	132 (36%)	20 (43%)	40 (19%)
Associate Professor	70 (42%)	150 (41%)	22 (47%)	101 (48%)
Assistant Professor	20 (12%)	87 (24%)	5 (11%)	69 (33%)
Student	1 (1%)	1 (0%)	0	2 (1%)
Social Sciences	70 (39%)	189 (45%)	23 (50%)	101 (46%)
Humanities	69 (38%)	124 (29%)	13 (28%)	71 (32%)
Interdisciplinary	41 (23%)	110 (26%)	10 (22%)	49 (22%)

Source: SIG and ASU Surveys

Survey data were analyzed using MS Excel and the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). A combination of descriptive and univariate (e.g., Pearson Product Moment Correlation Coefficient, Analysis of Variance (ANOVA), etc.) analyses of researchers' survey responses were undertaken.

3.3.4 Activity Reports Review

SSHRC undertook a review of institutional activity reports from the sampled universities in order to gather available information to address the evaluation questions. For the SIG Program, SSHRC examined 12 activity reports (an activity report for the 2002 and for the 2005 competition year grants, for each of the six universities sampled). For the ASU Program, SSHRC examined eight activity reports, from the 1999, 2002 and 2005 competition years.

3.3.5 Analysis of Administrative Data on Competitiveness of SIG Recipients in Other Research Grants Competitions

SSHRC undertook an analysis of its administrative data to examine to what extent recipients of SIG Program grants were more competitive in other SSHRC grant competitions as a result of their grant (one of the expected outcomes of the program). The analysis was intended to examine the competitiveness of researchers who had applied for a Standard Research Grant

⁷ Note: In some cases, respondents opted to skip some survey questions. As a result, sub-group percentages do not always sum to 100%.

(SRG) but had not received one, then received a SIG grant, and subsequently reapplied for an SRG.

Using its own database of grant applicants, SSHRC developed a list of researchers at the six sampled universities who had applied for a SRG from 2002 to 2010. This list was then cross-referenced with the list of SIG recipients from 2005-2008 identified from the institutional activity reports. Through a matching process, SSHRC then identified the researchers who were deemed by SSHRC to have been categorized as “4A” (i.e., successful but not funded) or as “unsuccessful” in the 2002-2005 SRG grant competitions and who subsequently received a SIG grant in 2005-2008. In total, there were 26 and 28 researchers identified in the two respective groups.

Another process of matching was undertaken that cross-referenced these 54 researchers with the list of those who had applied for a SRG grant in 2006-2010. In cases where a researcher applied multiple times for an SRG grant, only the most positive competition result was taken into consideration. In the end, there were 20 SRG applicants who had previously been categorized as “4A” and 21 SRG applicants who had previously been deemed “unsuccessful”.

Finally, SSHRC also analyzed administrative data on researchers who were not funded for their applications in the 2002-2005 SRG grant competitions, did not receive a SIG grant, and then applied again for a SRG grant in 2006-2010. This group of non-recipients acted as a comparison group with the SIG recipient groups in the analysis.

In the end, this analysis allowed the evaluation to examine, using a small sample of researchers, whether previously unfunded SRG applicants were more successful in their applications to SRGs after receiving a SIG grant. It also allowed a comparison of the competitiveness of SIG recipients who applied for SRGs compared with that of SIG non-recipients.

3.3.6 Analysis of Administrative Financial Data

Financial information from the SIG and ASU Programs was analyzed by SSHRC to help to assess the cost-efficiency of the programs. This information was compared with similar data from recent evaluations of other SSHRC grant programs.

3.4 Limitations and Considerations

Methodological limitations and considerations that should be noted include the following:

- Based on comments and responses in the surveys, it is clear that not all survey respondents, including SIG and ASU recipients, had a high degree of familiarity with the programs.
- SSHRC did not have a comprehensive list of researchers who have received SIG or ASU grants or who may have directly benefited from ASU Program grants at their institutions. As a result, it is possible that there may have been some researchers who completed the comparison (i.e., non-recipient) survey but who had actually been in receipt of SIG or ASU funding.

- Some institutions combine different social sciences and humanities research funding from different sources into one common pool. As a result, it is difficult for stakeholders, including both research officers and researchers, to isolate and identify the specific impact of the SIG and ASU Programs.
- The evaluation made use of a sample approach, in which only a small number of institutions were included in the primary data collection. As noted earlier, all of the sampled institutions had submitted activity reports. Although the information contained within the activity reports was required in order to conduct this evaluation, it is possible that institutions completing activity report are not representative of the population of institutions in receipt of funding. Further, only a portion of researchers completed the survey within each of the sampled institutions. As a result, it is not known to what extent the results of sampled recipients are generalizable to the population of SIG and ASU recipient researchers, nor is it known whether the results are generalizable to the population of university researchers in the social sciences and humanities.
- Institutions' activity reports are intended to be a source of data for performance measurement. However, as will be discussed later in more detail, the quality and quantity of these reports vary by institution, and the reports do not provide comprehensive and appropriate information on program impacts. The survey of researchers was undertaken in part to help to address this gap in information.

Despite these methodological considerations, the evaluation's methodology included some significant strengths:

- The use of a comparison group methodology allowed the evaluation to benefit from comparisons between those researchers who had received the funding and those who had not, in order to try to determine, to the extent possible, the incremental impact of the program. This evaluation marked the first time this type of quasi-experimental design has been employed to examine the success of the program.
- The use of four data collection methods allowed the evaluation team to triangulate findings across data sources, which helped to ensure the validity of the conclusions and recommendations.
- Research officers from all of the sampled institutions participated in key informant interviews, ensuring that input was obtained from all of the selected universities.
- The evaluation team had the opportunity to compare the findings of the current evaluation with previous evaluations undertaken for both the SIG and ASU Programs, as well as with other comparable metrics from a variety of SSHRC programs.

Overall, the evaluation approach and methods allow the evaluation team to make conclusions about the relevance, delivery and performance of the program and recommendations for the future of the program.

4. Evaluation Findings – SIG Program

This section presents the findings of the SIG Program evaluation, organized by the three major evaluation areas: relevance, delivery, and performance.

4.1 Relevance

4.1.1 Continued Need

Question 1. What is the rationale for supporting SIG given the current level of institutions' needs?

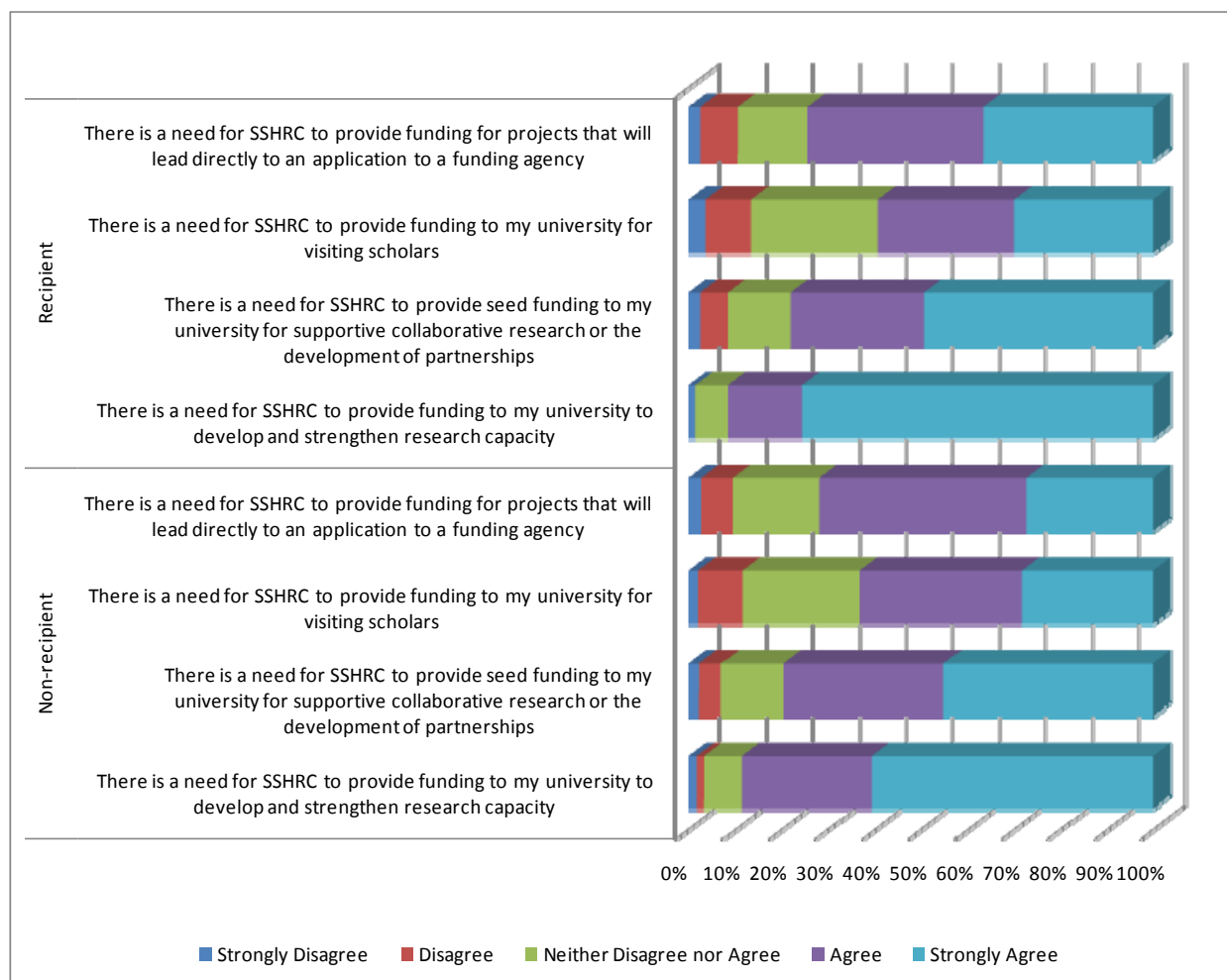
Finding: *Researchers and university research officers strongly believe that there is a continued need for SSHRC to support small-scale research activities. Some (smaller) institutions are, however, receiving grants that are too small to address any significant institutional need. There is some overlap of the SIG Program's objectives and those of SSHRC's Research Development Initiatives and the planned Research Development Grants⁸, as these programs are also intended to support the development / formulation of new research areas / projects.*

Perceptions of Researchers

Surveyed researchers indicated they perceived a continued need for SSHRC to provide funding to support a range of small-scale research activities at their university. Across a set of questions related to the perceived need for funding for activities supported by the SIG Program, the majority of surveyed researchers agreed or strongly agreed that SSHRC has an important role in addressing researchers' needs. As demonstrated in Figure 1, researchers felt particularly strongly regarding the need for SSHRC to provide seed funding to their universities to support collaborative research or the development of partnerships, and the need for SSHRC to provide funding to their universities to develop and strengthen research capacity.

⁸ Planned in the renewed SSHRC's PAA

Figure 1: Researchers' Agreement on Need for SSHRC Funding for Research Activities



Source: Survey of SIG Recipients (n = 187-192) and Non-recipients (n = 425-436)

Some surveyed researchers noted that institutional grant funding from SSHRC was critical to developing research. It was argued by both research officers and researchers that, as research in the social science and humanities does not generally require expensive equipment or infrastructure, small sums of money can often have a significant impact on moving forward research projects.

Surveyed researchers also indicated that they have personally experienced the need for funding to support a range of research activities at their university (Mean = 4.0, where 1 = “Strongly Disagree [with need for funding] and 5 = “Strongly Agree [with need for funding]”).

To examine whether need for funding to support a range of research activities differed across group (SIG recipients vs. non-recipients) or university size (small vs. medium vs. large), a 2 X 3 Factorial Analysis of Variance (ANOVA) was conducted. This analysis demonstrated that neither the main effects nor the interaction were significant. That is, need for funding did not differ significantly between SIG recipients (Mean = 4.1) and non-recipients (Mean = 3.9), $F_{(1, 482)}$

= 3.8, $p > 0.05$ or between small (Mean = 3.9), medium (Mean = 4.0) and large (Mean = 4.0) universities, $F_{(2,482)} = 0.3$, $p > 0.05$. Further, need for funding among SIG recipients and non-recipients did not differ by university size (i.e., small, medium or large), $F_{(2,482)} = 2.1$, $p > 0.05$. Taken together, these results demonstrate that researchers' perceived need for funding to support research activities appears to be equivalent regardless of the size of the university at which they are employed or whether they had received SIG funding.

Surveyed SIG recipients also indicated that the SIG Program has been critical to undertaking their own research activities in the past. The vast majority of SIG recipients acknowledged that their research activities would have proceeded with a smaller scope (53%) or not at all (28%) in the absence of SIG funding. Only 5% said that the planned activities would have proceeded the same without SIG funding (the remaining 14% said they did not know or provided another response that did not fall into these categories).

This is consistent with the need for SSHRC funding indicated in past surveys of research funding recipients. In a recent evaluation of SSHRC's Initiative on the New Economy (INE)⁹, 73% of researchers whose projects were funded by the INE indicated that, in the absence of the SSHRC funding, their funded project would not have proceeded at all, while 22% indicated that the scope of the project would have changed. As with ASU Program funding recipients, only 3% of INE-funded researchers indicated that their project would have proceeded as proposed without the SSHRC funding.

Perceptions of Research Officers and Other Stakeholders

All interviewed university research officers felt strongly that there was a continued need for SSHRC to fund small-scale research activities in the social sciences and humanities. Other external key informants also felt that the funding was necessary. The most common reasons provided included:

- SSHRC's funding provides support for new researchers and is important for their development as researchers;
- It is critical for new research enquiries - the funding can act as seed funding (such as for pilot projects) or helps in the initial stages of research development;
- The funding provided by these programs was a critical amount of support for an institution's research program in the social sciences and humanities, and there is little funding available to support research in the social sciences and humanities compared to other fields like technology and natural sciences; and
- The funding is especially critical for small universities as there is comparatively little funding available for this group.

Other reasons given included: this funding is critical for institutions in a period of transition (i.e., those moving from college to university status) to start to develop a research program; it allows faculty to pursue collaborative research and to disseminate their results internationally; there is an increasing number of researchers competing for research dollars; it helps more remote

⁹ SSHRC. Evaluation of the Initiative on the New Economy – Final Report. August, 2009. Accessed online July 29th, 2010 at: http://www.sshrc-crsh.gc.ca/about-au_sujet/publications/INE_Final_Report_FinalE.pdf.

universities that have higher costs associated with travel to conferences; and many institutions use these SSHRC funds to hire students, so benefits extend to students as well.

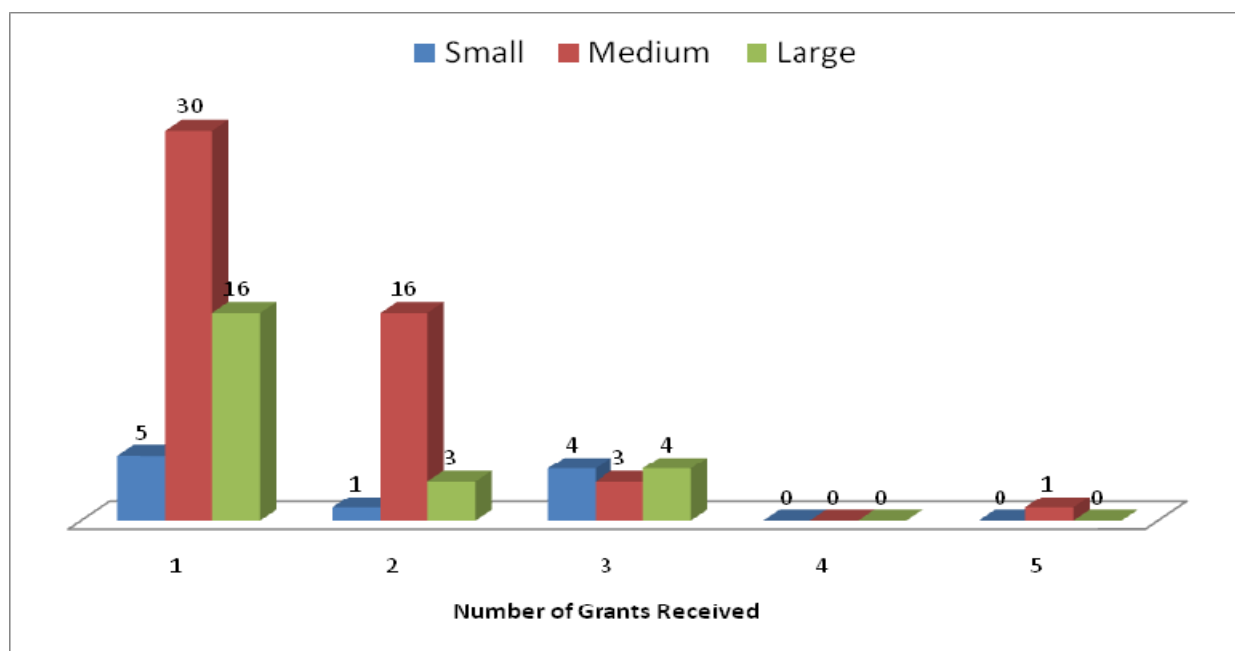
Trend in Number of SIG Grants and Amount of SIG Funding

The budget for the SIG Program has remained constant at \$5.2 million since 1998-1999. The number of institutions being funded has also remained fairly consistent, as some institutions have merged while new institutions have been created. In 2002, there were 75 institutions being funded through the program, while 2008-2009 saw 72 institutions receive funding. (The GRG program provided funding to 85 institutions in 1995.) According to SSHRC, in a 1990 budget decision the SSHRC Council recommended that the SIG Program budget remain equal to 17% of the budget of the SRG Program. This has not happened: 17% of the 2008-2009 SRG budget would be nearly \$13 million, more than double the current SIG Program budget¹⁰.

The formula used to calculate the amount of each institution's SIG grant has also resulted in some institutions receiving very small amounts through the program. As will be discussed in more detail later in the report, 17 institutions received less than \$10,000 each in 2008-2009, and nine institutions received only the minimum amount of \$5,000. Clearly, these small grants are not sufficient to address any significant needs at these institutions.

Most surveyed SIG recipients indicated they had received one grant between the 2005-2008 period (see Figure 2).

Figure 2: Tally of Surveyed SIG Recipients Receiving Various Numbers of SIG Grants by University Size (2005-2008)



Source: Survey of SIG Recipients, n=83

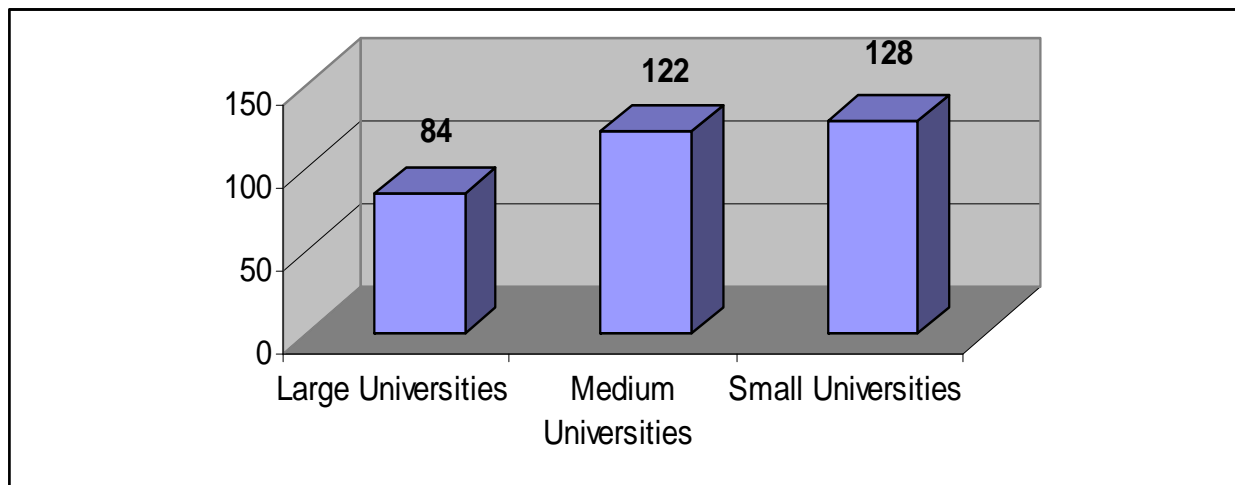
¹⁰ SSHRC. The Year in Numbers. September 2009.

When examining the total amount of funding that survey recipients had reported receiving from a SIG between 2005-2008, there were a number of responses that were higher than that which can be allotted according to the funding terms (i.e., greater than \$7,000 per year, or \$28,000 for the four-year period). This would suggest that some recipients may have been uncertain about which of the funds they have received were provided through the SIG program. These responses (n = 6) were removed from an analysis of the amount of SIG funding received between 2005-08. Among the remaining 64 SIG recipients who provided estimates of the funds they received from SIG between 2005-2008, a total of \$412,450 was received. The majority of these funds were distributed to medium-sized universities (\$231,333), followed by large (\$114,023) and small universities (\$67,094). On average (mean) \$6,444 was received per grant (\$9,585 for small universities, \$5,783 for medium universities and \$6,707 for large universities). These results should, however, be interpreted cautiously as many researchers indicated a lack of confidence in their funding estimates and their certainty that funds originated from the SIG Program.

Level of Usage of Grants at Institutions

Following an examination of Statement of Account reports, SSHRC noted uneven spending patterns during the tenure of the grant¹¹. However, during SSHRC's review of activity reports from the sample of six universities, it was found that five out of six universities had spent all the SIG funding provided by SSHRC. As shown in Figure 3, institutions often actually reported spending more on SIG-funded activities than they were allocated through the program, presumably through using other institutional research funds to supplement their SIG funding.

Figure 3: SIG-related Expenditures as a Percentage of Institutions' SIG Grants



Source: SSHRC Activity Reports

¹¹ SSHRC Research and Dissemination Grants Division. Memo October 21, 2009 "SSHRC's Institutional Grants (SIG and Aid to Small Universities Grants (ASU))".

Distinctiveness Vis-à-vis Other Sources of Funding

The SIG Program is unique among SSHRC programs in terms of the size of its individual grants to researchers—SRGs are a minimum of \$7,000 per grant. In addition, there are no other small-scale research grants available for all sizes of institutions. Small universities (institutions with fewer than 250 full-time faculty in social sciences and humanities fields) may also receive ASU Program funding. In those cases, the funding from the two programs can serve similar functions, although only 55% of small universities that applied for ASU funding in 2008 were funded by the program, and the overall budget for ASU Program is limited (\$600,000 per year in total). Furthermore, much of the ASU Program's funding is directed to specific research centres, and may not necessarily be accessible to all researchers to meet their needs for funding for small-scale research activities.

The SSHRC Research Development Initiatives (RDI) Program is another SSHRC program that provides funding to support research in its early stages. The objectives of the RDI Program are to help researchers to develop new research questions; explore methodological and conceptual perspectives and direction; and to critically analyze and assess research. While individual RDI grants can be considerably larger than SIG grants (RDI grants can be as high as \$40,000 over two years, compared to \$7,000 per year for SIG grants), both programs are used to support activities that will help researchers to develop research ideas / projects. In the case of the RDI Program, there is a clear and explicit expectation that funded activities will lead to the development of research funding proposals (whether to SSHRC competitions or others), while, in the case of the SIG Program, funded activities may not necessarily lead to such a proposal (at least directly). However, there are clear commonalities in the two programs' objectives.

It should be noted that, at the time of the evaluation, SSHRC was planning to replace the RDI Program with a new Research Development Grants (RDG) Program, currently under development. The RDG Program appears to have similar objectives as the RDI.

The SSHRC General Research Fund (GRF) was identified as a complementary source of funding. However, research officers noted that, as GRF dollars are residual funds left over at the end of a SSHRC grant term, whether, and to what extent, institutions will have access to GRF funds varies by year, and this source of funding is not predictable. As a result, institutions appear to see this as supplementary funding, rather than as a major and primary source of funding. Furthermore, it was indicated that this funding can be very limited, particularly at smaller universities. It should be noted that the evaluation did not include a comprehensive comparison of the SIG and GRF, so the extent of overlap between the two sources of funding is not known.

Table 9 presents a summary of the main features of each of the SSHRC programs most similar to the SIG Program. No other similar funding programs were identified in interviews or document review. In summary, it would appear that the SIG Program, insofar as it is intended to fund the development of new research projects, demonstrates a high degree of duplication with SSHRC's RDI Program.

Table 9: Main Features of Comparable SSHRC Funding Programs

Program	Type of Applicant	Type of Research	Annual Budget \$	Grant Duration	Amount of Grant \$	Success rate % (applications / awards)
SIG	Institution	Research Excellence & Research Capacity Development	5.2 M	3 years	Minimum of 5,000 per year	98
ASU	Institution	Research Capacity Development	600,000	3 years	Maximum of 30,000 per year	69
RDI	Institution & Individual or Group of Researchers	Research Capacity Development & Innovation	1.9 M	2 years	Up to 40,000 over two years	32
GRF ¹²	Institution	Research	-	NA	-	-

Based on a review of SSHRC funding¹³ to the institutions examined in the evaluation, SIG Program funding made up between 3% and 15% of the total SSHRC funding provided to the universities, depending on the institution.

The Indirect Costs Program, which is also a formula-driven support program, funds facilities, equipment and administrative support. However, the SIG Program is different in that it is not intended to fund indirect costs.

The funding from these programs is complemented by the general institutional funding available for social sciences and humanities research, which varies according to the budgets and priorities of each institution. This funding is part of the operational budget for the university, which is derived from provincial funding, alumni support and private donors.

It was noted that neither Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada (NSERC) nor the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) have comparable institutional grants. According to SSHRC, NSERC abolished its institutional grants program in 1992¹⁴.

¹² The GRF is not a program *per se*; it is formed by residual money from various grants. The amount of the fund is variable and is not well documented.

¹³ Includes funding from the ASU, SIG, SRG and Community-University Research Alliances.

¹⁴ SSHRC Research and Dissemination Grants Division. Memo October 21, 2009 "SSHRC's Institutional Grants (SIG and Aid to Small Universities Grants (ASU))".

4.1.2 Alignment with Government Priorities

Question 2. Are the SIG and ASU Program objectives aligned with the Federal Government's Framework and SSHRC's Strategic Plan and PAA?

Finding: *As with all of SSHRC's research funding programs, the SIG Program is aligned with Government of Canada outcomes. The SIG Program is only moderately well aligned with SSHRC's Strategic Outcome of "Research – New knowledge based on excellent research in the social sciences and humanities", as the program does not generally, in itself, fund (excellent) research. However, the SIG Program is aligned with the three elements of SSHRC's vision: quality, connections and impact. The SIG Program appears to cross over two major umbrella programs, Insight and Connection, in SSHRC's new PA.*

Alignment with Government of Canada Framework

The Federal Government's Whole-of-Government Framework was designed to map the contributions of departments, agencies, and Crown corporations to a set of 13 high-level Government of Canada outcome areas within four spending areas. The framework is intended to inform the development of departments' and agencies' PAAs, and departments and agencies are to indicate in their Report on Plans and Priorities (RPP) and Departmental Performance Report the alignment of program activities to Government of Canada outcome areas.

In SSHRC's RPP, the linkage is made between all of SSHRC research programs and the Government of Canada outcome area of "an innovative and knowledge-based economy"¹⁵. This is likely the result of the outcome's explicit focus on research and development activities. However, given the wide range of potential topics in social sciences and humanities research in general, the SIG Program could have direct and indirect impacts applicable to many of the Government of Canada outcome areas, including, for example, "a vibrant Canadian culture and heritage", and "a diverse society that promotes linguistic duality and social inclusion".

SSHRC has also drawn explicit linkages between its programs and elements of the Government of Canada's science and technology strategy "Mobilizing Science and Technology to Canada's Advantage" (2007). As with much of SSHRC's research funding, the SIG Program can be linked to the "knowledge advantage" emphasized in the strategy, as it generates new ideas and helps to achieve research excellence¹⁶. The strategy also emphasizes the need for the federal government to assist in training the next generation of researchers, which is aligned with the SIG Program's activities in supporting new research and new researchers.

Alignment with SSHRC Priorities and Policies

SSHRC's PA is currently in the process of being revised. In the current PAA (2009-2010), the SIG Program is grouped with other research funding programs under the Program Activity of

¹⁵ SSHRC. Report on Plans and Priorities 2009-2010. Accessed online July 8, 2010 at: http://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/rpp/2009-2010/inst/ssh/ssh01-eng.asp#a1_3

¹⁶ Government of Canada. Mobilizing Science and Technology to Canada's Advantage – Summary. 2007. 4.

“Strategic Research Development”. This Program Activity is expected to contribute to SSHRC’s Strategic Outcome of “Research – New knowledge based on excellent research in the social sciences and humanities.”¹⁷

It was suggested in interviews with SSHRC staff that, as the SIG Program funding often acts as seed funding to develop research questions, to build capacity or to explore new research areas, it is not always supporting research “excellence” in a direct way. It could also be argued that this is true of other strategic research development funding at SSHRC and that seed funding can provide an initial contribution to the eventual creation of research excellence. The SIG Program has often been used to cover the costs of travel to conferences, however, which is not directly aligned with developing “excellent research”. Overall, alignment between the SIG Program and SSHRC’s strategic outcomes appears to be only moderate, and SSHRC has not clearly articulated whether it sees itself having a role in institutional capacity-building.

SSHRC has defined five operational priorities for the organization. One of these is applicable to SSHRC’s research funding programs: “Ensure the world-class excellence of SSHRC funded research, and promote new knowledge in priority areas, through research and training.”¹⁸ The SIG Program does not prioritize particular research areas, and so does not address the priority of promoting new research in SSHRC’s research priority areas (competitiveness, prosperity and economic development; Canadian environmental issues; and Northern communities).

As articulated in SSHRC’s “Framing our Direction” plan¹⁹, the SIG Program is aligned with the three ambitions characterizing SSHRC’s vision: enhancing the “quality” of, and support for, research and research training; enabling “connections” through funding research travel, seminars, and other venues; and increasing the “impact” of research and research training through funding dissemination and establishing collaboration.

Revised Program Activity Architecture

SSHRC’s new vision for its PA includes developing three umbrella programs: Talent, Insight, and Connection. Each of these umbrella programs includes specific objectives that are to be met through a series of sub-programs, which are in the process of being defined. At the time of the evaluation, the SIG Program has not been situated within the PA.

A review of preliminary information related to the new PA indicates that the objectives of the SIG appear to cross two of the three umbrella programs: Insight and Connection. The SIG Program’s funding for the development of research is aligned with the Insight program. Funding support for knowledge transfer, dissemination and networking, on the other hand, aligns with the Connection program.

¹⁷ SSHRC. Report on Plans and Priorities 2009-2010.

¹⁸ SSHRC. Report on Plans and Priorities 2009-2010.

¹⁹ SSHRC. Framing our Direction. Accessed online July 14, 2010 at: http://www.sshrc.ca/about-au_sujet/publications/framing_our_direction_e.pdf

4.2 Delivery

4.2.1 Peer Review Process

Question 3: *To what extent is the peer review process at SSHRC and in participating universities meeting accountability requirements?*

Finding: *There is insufficient evidence to conclude on the extent to which institutions are consistently meeting SSHRC requirements related to their SIG grants. Interviews and activity reports illustrate that many institutions have various formal processes in place to allocate funding among their researchers. Opinions among SIG-funded researchers on the selection process undertaken by SSHRC were mixed.*

Peer Review Process

SSHRC provides annual block-grants to institutions. While institutions must apply for the block funding, nearly all institutions that apply are successful (the success rate was 98% for the 1998 and 2002 competitions). Successful institutions then select researchers to fund at their institution through their own internal processes.

Among the institutions examined in this evaluation, SIG grants were administered separately in their own competitions at a few universities, but were more often administered as competitions for funding that combines SIG Program funding with other sources, including general institutional funding and GRF funding (as available).

Among the ten universities interviewed during the evaluation, six said that the SIG Program funding was renamed at the institution. Often funding is renamed with titles that reflect the particular usage of the awards at the institutions. Names given to the funds included the Seed Grant Competition, the Capacity Building Grant, the Supplementary Funding for International Conference Participation Fund, and the Research Development Fund in the Humanities and Social Sciences.

Two universities among those examined disseminated the SIG Program funding to researchers with a grade 4A status (i.e., those who had applied for, and were eligible for SSHRC SRGs but were not funded due to a lack of funds). For those, there was no competition administered. One university indicated that, as the amount they receive is so small, they simply distribute it to their 4A researchers or, if there are no “4As”, it would distribute the funding to new researchers without a contest. In another examined university, it was noted that each social science and humanity department is allocated a proportion of the institution’s SIG funding based on their performance in the SSHRC SRG competitions.

Among the institutions who run their own competitions to distribute the SIG Program grants that were examined in the evaluation, all but one indicated that they have a review committee that reviews applications. This was consistent with the past findings of a SSHRC program officer, who indicated that, across all institutions, most did allocate funds through a peer review process, although a few did not because of the limited number of applications; in those few situations,

projects were evaluated by the Vice-President of Research or Dean of the Faculty. The committee is often responsible for peer review processes for other social sciences and humanities awards. Universities ran either one, two or, in one case, three competitions per year. One research officer noted that they always held one competition early in the year and then held another if there is still funds left over after the first competition.

The institutional committees included four to eight members each. One institution has a pool of 46 members that it draws from, depending on the subject and number of proposals. The type of members also appears to vary, but members tend to be Deans, department chairs, senior faculty, and researcher officers. One institution has a student on its committee.

The decisions of the review committee may or may not be formally documented, depending on the institution (i.e., some have peer review reports created, others said they did not). Several institutions did note that they provide written feedback to researchers on their applications.

Accountability

In the past, SSHRC has identified the potential risks in transferring responsibility to the institutions for selection of grantees, particularly given that SSHRC has done limited monitoring of institutional practices in that regard²⁰. The 1995 evaluation of the GRG Program also noted that the relationship between the administration of the program at the institution level and SSHRC's ultimate accountability for the use of public funds is one of the key program design issues. The evaluation tied this issue to SSHRC not collecting sufficient and appropriate information on the grants from funded institutions.

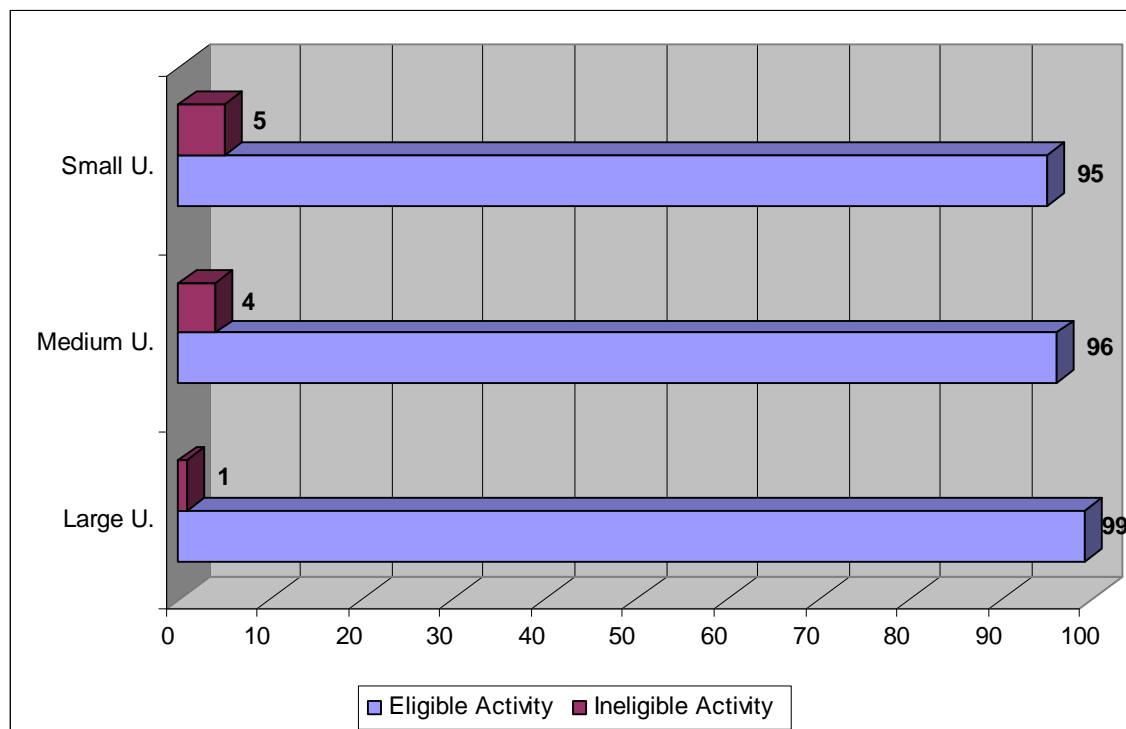
Research officers did not note any issues with respect to accountability within their institutions, and felt that their institutions' processes were effective. The limited information included in the activity reports does not allow a full assessment of the rigour of accountability processes at the institutions, however.

SSHRC has noted some instances where institutions have allocated SIG Program funds to faculty members who are not in the social sciences and humanities. During its review of activity reports from a sample of institutions, SSHRC noted, for example, that SIG Program grants were provided to researchers in health sciences, nursing, human kinetics, kinesiology, pediatrics and electrical and computing engineering.

A review carried out by SSHRC of a sample of activity reports showed that 5% of SIG-funded activities at small universities were ineligible under the program, whereas 3% and 1% of the activities were ineligible activities in the medium and large universities, respectively (see Figure 4).

²⁰ SSHRC Research and Dissemination Grants Division. Memo October 21, 2009 "SSHRC's Institutional Grants (SIG and Aid to Small Universities Grants (ASU))".

Figure 4: Proportion (%) of SIG Activities that were Eligible versus Ineligible, by Size of University



Source: Institutional Activity Report Review

SSHRC also previously noted that SIG Program funding has been used to fund expenses that are not eligible under the program. A review of the SIG Program Statement of Accounts for 2006 (undertaken by SSHRC in 2009) identified three instances where SIG Program funding had been used to fund equipment, and one instance where it had been spent to update infrastructure, for example²¹.

The survey of researchers found a relatively low level of satisfaction with the SSHRC allocation process for the program. As shown in Figure 5, a small majority of SIG recipients agreed or strongly agreed that the dissemination of the SIG Program funding was objective and impartial (51%), that the selection process for the SIG Program funding competition was fair (58%) and that the criteria used by SSHRC to select projects to fund with the SIG Program funding was clear (55%).

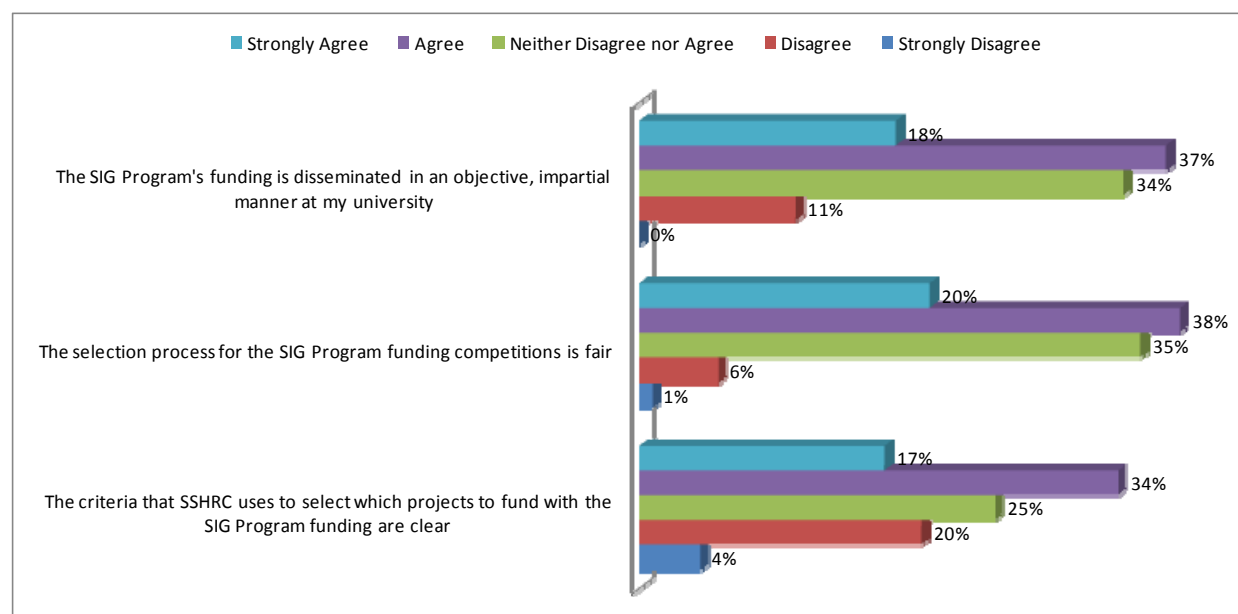
SSHRC allocates SIG funding based on a relatively straight-forward funding formula. Additionally, there are high rates of institutional success in obtaining SIG funding. Therefore, it is possible that respondents' feedback regarding the clarity of SIG funding relates to their broader opinions toward SSHRC competitions rather than their views of SSHRC's distribution of SIG funds in particular. However, these levels of satisfaction were lower than those found, in recent evaluations, related to similar aspects of the SRG and RDI Programs.

²¹ SSHRC Research and Dissemination Grants Division. Memo October 21, 2009 "SSHRC's Institutional Grants (SIG and Aid to Small Universities Grants (ASU))".

An alternative conjecture is that respondents may, in fact, be dissatisfied with the distribution of SIG funds, but may be unaware of the administrative roles SSHRC and their university have in distributing it. As a result, dissatisfaction with the dissemination process of SIG funding that is outside SSHRC's control may be attributed to SSHRC.

Some surveyed researchers did comment on their dissatisfaction with the transparency and fairness of the allocation of SIG funding specifically and institutional funding in general, at their institution.

Figure 5: SIG Recipients' Views on SIG Selection Process



Source: Survey of SIG Recipients, n = 100-116

Question 4: To what extent have universities' internal competition processes enabled the intended researchers to access the SIG?

Finding: Research officers indicated that their institutions' competition processes have enabled the intended researchers to access the SIG grants.

Research officers felt that their institutions' competition processes have enabled the intended researchers to access the SIG grants. The small size of some institutional grants (as low as \$5,000) was a noted barrier to access for researchers at small universities.

Only 47% of surveyed SIG recipients agreed or strongly agreed that SIG Program funding is well known among researchers at their university who may potentially have an interest in it. However, this may be the result of some universities folding SIG funding into their general institutional awards programs, which is then distributed under different names.

4.2.2 Reporting and Monitoring

Question 5. How relevant and effective is the reporting and monitoring of the SIG Program?

Finding: *Reporting and monitoring have long been recognized as a weakness of the SIG Program. The information requested from institutions is not appropriate for performance measurement, and compliance with reporting from the institutions has been variable. SSHRC has not undertaken sufficient follow-up to ensure full compliance with reporting or with program guidelines and rules.*

Appropriateness and Relevance of Performance Information

Institutions are expected to report on SIG-funded activities through an annual activity report. The activity report is a three-part form that asks institutions to provide information on how the SIG is administered at their institution, to describe what contribution the SIG Program has made to the research program of the institution, and to list the projects / activities that have been funded (including the dollar amount each received).

The activity report template does not ask institutions to provide information that can be linked directly to the objectives or expected outcomes of the program. Partly, this is the result of a weak report design. The template requests that institutions provide specific titles and funding amounts for funded projects / activities, but does not ask for corresponding descriptions, information on project findings (if applicable) or on project results. Institutions are not asked to provide information on individual funded researchers (including whether the researcher is a new or advanced researcher, their discipline, or contact information) or researchers' subsequent success in national grant competitions, to allow for a determination of the impact of the SIG in improving competitiveness in these competitions.

The activity reports do not appear to be useful for the institutions themselves, and a few interviewed research officers questioned why more information was not required of institutions related to impacts. This finding is consistent with a conclusion of the 1995 evaluation of the GRG, that "program reporting has focused on describing activities and process rather than impact"²².

Further, the format of the activity report is such that information is requested through open-ended questions, with no indication of how much detail is being requested. As a result, the amount of detail provided varies widely by institution. During its analysis of the activity reports undertaken for this evaluation, SSHRC noted that missing and non-standardized information from institutions has meant that it is not even possible to determine the number of grants being provided by institutions to researchers with SIG Program funding.

The vagueness and breadth of the SIG Program's objectives and outcomes is also a barrier to effectively determining the impact of the program. This will be discussed in more detail in Section 4.3.1 (*Effectiveness of the Program*).

²² SSHRC. Evaluation of the General Research Grants Program – Final Report. 1995. 28.

Compliance with Reporting

According to SSHRC, institutions' compliance with reporting through the activity reports has varied. While activity reports were generally completed as intended by those universities examined in this evaluation, according to reports from SSHRC, this is not universally the case. Some institutions do not submit activity reports, while others do so only sporadically. Some universities have submitted to SSHRC their own internal reporting forms rather than follow the activity report format. As of the 2008 grant competition, SSHRC has required universities to complete their previous grant activity reports prior to applying for a new grant. This has, according to SSHRC staff, improved compliance and resulted in universities providing electronic copies of activity reports to SSHRC.

Financial reporting by institutions is expected to be undertaken annually through the "Form 300", which reports all costs incurred against a grant. According to SSHRC program staff, many institutions do not submit this form on a regular basis, and there has been limited follow-up by SSHRC staff. The review undertaken for this evaluation noted that some Statements of Accounts were missing. It was not possible to determine whether or not these reports were not provided to SSHRC at all or were misplaced.

While reporting to SSHRC by institutions appears to have been somewhat lax in the past, this is at least partly a result of a lack of direction from SSHRC that more timely and rigorous compliance is, in fact, important. It appears there has been limited "push", and no incentive, for often very busy research offices to report to SSHRC. One research officer admitted that, in the past, their institution has not always submitted activity reports on time (and, for one year, did not submit an activity report at all), but noted that it appeared that obtaining the reports was not a major priority for SSHRC. In addition, complying with SIG Program reporting requirements may be a low priority for those institutions that receive small SIG grants (e.g., \$5,000).

The lack of consistent follow-up with non-compliant institutions by SSHRC has been partly blamed on the high level of turnover of program officers administering the program (it was said that there had been eight different program officers in eight years), competing demands on program officers' time, and the sense among staff that the program was not a priority within the organization. The recent relocation of the program within SSHRC from the Fellowships area to Research and Dissemination was considered positive, as program staff members within Research and Dissemination are said to be more accustomed to working with university researcher offices and researchers.

It was noted in the past evaluations that some institutions may have developed a sense of entitlement vis-à-vis the SIG Program, which may contribute to reporting being late or incomplete. This sense of entitlement may have been exacerbated by the fact that SSHRC did not run a competition in 2005, and universities that received funding for 2002 were simply allocated an additional three-year grant.

As previously discussed, SSHRC has noted instances where institutions have reported SIG Program funds being used to fund activities for faculty members who are not in the social

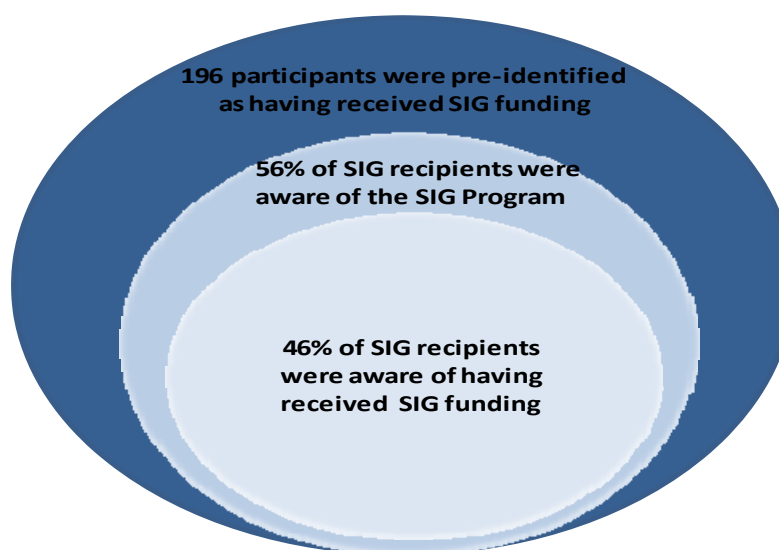
sciences and humanities, or that are not eligible under the program. According to SSHRC, there have been no consequences related to these issues²³.

4.2.3 Other Delivery Issues

Lack of Visibility

SIG Program funding is often combined with other funding, and in many instances the grants are renamed by the institutions. Research officers noted that researchers are sometimes not aware of the source of the funding they are receiving, resulting in a lack of visibility for the SIG Program.

Figure 6: Visibility of SIG Program Funding among SIG Recipients



Source: Survey of SIG Recipients

The issue of visibility and acknowledgement of funding received from SSHRC was also confirmed in the results of the survey of researchers (see Figure 6). Only 110 out of 196²⁴ (56%) of those who had been identified by SSHRC as being SIG funding recipients indicated they were aware of the SIG Program. Further, of those aware of the SIG Program, 90 (82%) were aware that they had received SIG Program funding. Hence, 46% of surveyed SIG recipients were aware that they had received a SIG grant. Lack of visibility was similarly noted as an issue in the 1995 evaluation of the GRG Program.

²³ SSHRC Research and Dissemination Grants Division. Memo October 21, 2009 "SSHRC's Institutional Grants (SIG and Aid to Small Universities Grants (ASU))".

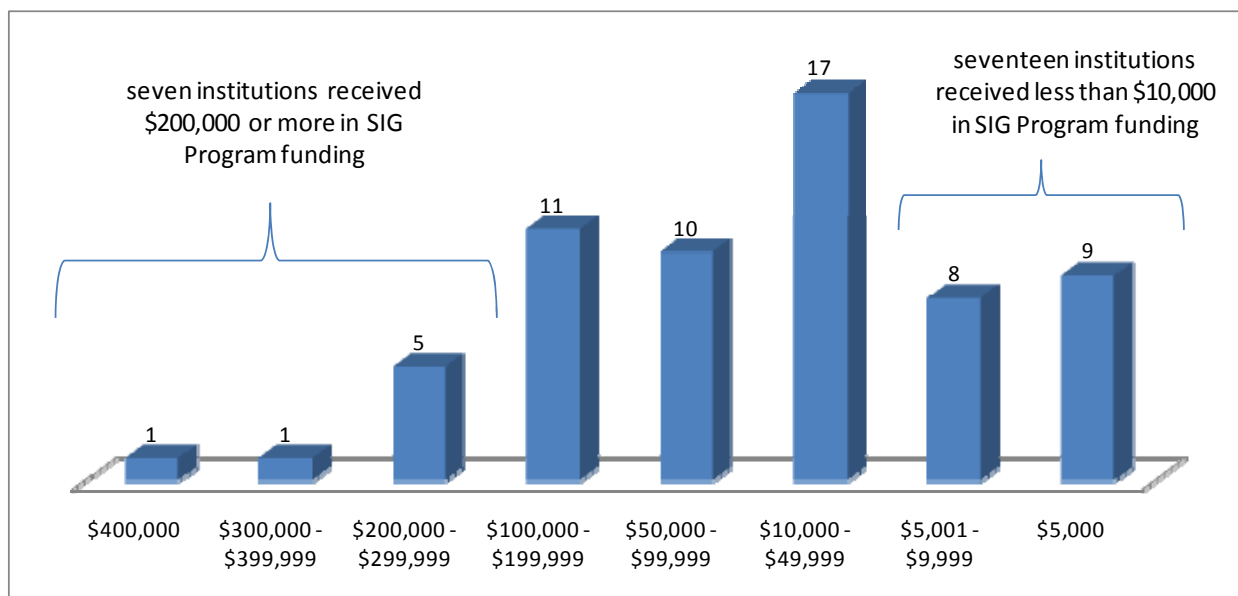
²⁴ Only a subsample of SIG recipients (i.e., those who were marked by SSHRC in the original sample file as having received an award) was included in this analysis. The remaining participants were not included in this analysis because they had been reclassified as SIG recipients by virtue of having indicated that they received a SIG grant.

Formula

The SIG Program formula allocates funding based on institution size (number of faculty) and performance in all SSHRC national research grant competitions over the previous three years. A minimum of \$5,000 is guaranteed to each eligible institution.

The formula favours a small number of large institutions with well-established research programs. According to SIG allocations for 2008-2009 (Figure 7), seven institutions each received \$200,000 or more (with one institution receiving \$479,000), which totaled 50% of the total SIG Program funding for that year. The remaining half of the SIG Program funding was shared between 65 institutions, 17 of which received less than \$10,000 each (with nine institutions receiving only \$5,000). The formula's emphasis on rewarding past research performance is not wholly consistent with the program's objectives, which include research capacity building and supporting new researchers.

Figure 7: Number of Institutions Receiving Various SIG Funding Amounts, 2008-2009



Source: SSHRC, The Year in Numbers, 2009

Other Issues

Research officers were asked if any improvements could be made to the SIG Program. Two indicated that what can be funded under the program should be made clearer and more specific by SSHRC. Two research officers also indicated that the maximum limit per grant to individual researcher (\$7,000) should be raised, with one indicating that there needs to be a larger amount of funding provided to a fewer number of recipients.

Overall Satisfaction with the SIG Program Grants

It should be noted that surveyed SIG recipients were, overall, very satisfied with their grants. Overall, 88% of SIG funding recipients indicated that they were satisfied or very satisfied with the SIG Program. This level of overall satisfaction is consistent with that demonstrated among successful applicants of the SRG Program in a current evaluation. It is considerably higher than that demonstrated among successful RDI applicants, who had an overall satisfaction level of just 56%.

Average levels of satisfaction with the SIG Program did not vary significantly across academic ranks (i.e., Full Professor (Mean = 4.2 on a scale from 1 = very dissatisfied to 5 = very satisfied), Associate Professors (Mean = 4.4) and Assistant Professor (Mean = 4.5), $F < 1$, $p > 0.05$). Nor did they differ significantly across small (Mean = 4.1), medium (Mean = 4.4) or large (Mean = 4.3) universities, $F < 1$, $p > 0.05$.

4.3 Performance

4.3.1 Effectiveness of the Program

Question 6. To what extent are the SIG Program objectives specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bound (SMART)?

Finding: *The objectives of the SIG Program, while praised by research officers for being inclusive, are very broad given the limited size of both the program's funding envelope and of the grants provided to individual researchers.*

SIG Program Objectives

The objectives of the SIG Program are to assist Canadian universities to:

- develop, increase or strengthen research excellence in the social sciences and humanities;
- assist, in particular, researchers embarking on their research career to become competitive in grants competitions at the national level;
- assist established researchers with modest funding requirements or those wishing to reorient and strengthen their research programs; and
- support national and international dissemination and collaboration.

There has been criticism within SSHRC that the SIG Program's objectives are too broad, and do not allow for associated outcomes to be defined²⁵. While a logic model for the SIG Program was developed in 2010 in advance of the evaluation, the expected outcomes, which are largely a restating of the program objectives, are also broad.

Research officers were asked their opinion of the objectives in interviews. The majority praised the objectives, with the flexibility afforded by the objectives cited as one of their strengths. One

²⁵ SSHRC Research and Dissemination Grants Division. Memo October 21, 2009 "SSHRC's Institutional Grants (SIG and Aid to Small Universities Grants (ASU))".

research officer stated that the SIG Program's objectives were not appropriate given the limited size of the overall program funding envelope. Similarly, an external key informant also raised the point that the breadth of the SIG Program objectives may not be appropriate given the size of the grants to researchers (up to \$7,000 each).

There were no specific issues raised related to the second, third and fourth objectives, but several research officers noted that the first objective ("develop, increase or strengthen research excellence in the social sciences and humanities") was not measurable / quantifiable, that there was no clear definition of "research excellence", and that this objective was too broad.

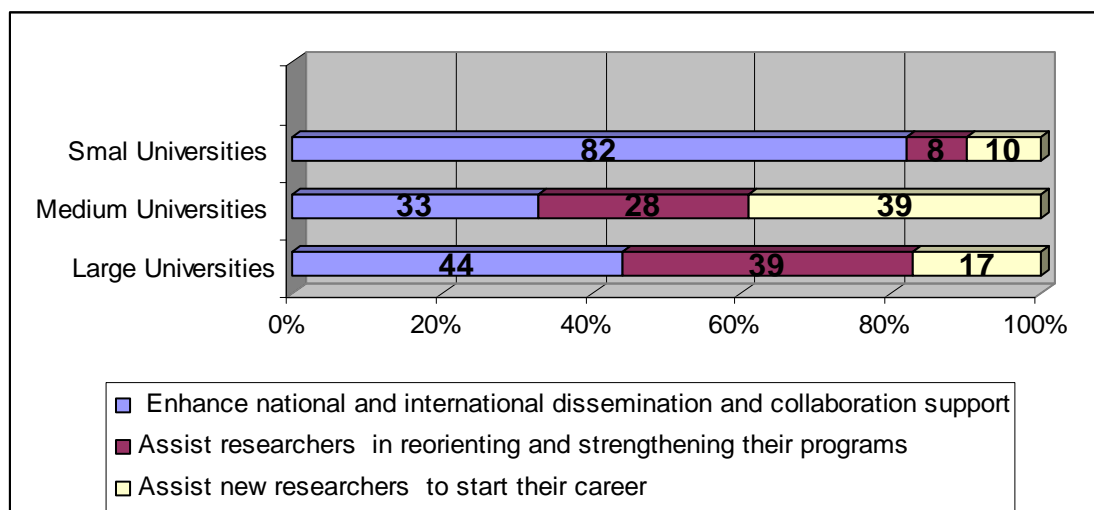
Question 7.1 To what extent have the SIG grants been invested in the intended activities?

Finding: *The SIG Program appears to have generally funded activities that are aligned with SSHRC's (broad) intentions for the program. Some examples where funding had been used for non-eligible expenses were noted. SIG funding is most commonly used to cover researcher travel costs.*

SSHRC undertook a systematic review of a sample of activity reports to examine the extent to which SIG grants have been invested in intended activities. Based on this sample, it appears that the vast majority of SIG funding is being invested in activities that are consistent with the objectives of the program. Overall, 3% of the activities funded by the sampled universities were judged to not be in line with program intentions (i.e., were activities not undertaken in the social sciences and humanities fields or were not eligible expenses). This ranged from 1% of activities at the large universities to 7% at the sampled small universities. As previously discussed, SSHRC staff have, in the past, noted that institutions have not always used the grants for activities intended by the program, which was confirmed in a review of 2006 Statements of Accounts provided by funded institutions.

The institutional activity reports ask universities to code their SIG-funded activities according to a coding scheme provided by SSHRC. In keeping with program objectives, these codes were transformed into three broad categories. The results are shown in Figure 8, by size of university.

Figure 8: Proportion of Types of SIG Intended Research Activities by Size of University



Source: SSHRC Activity Reports

As shown, small universities supported a higher proportion of activities aimed at enhancing national and international dissemination and collaboration (82%). Large universities supported a larger proportion of activities dedicated to assisting researchers in reorienting and strengthening their research programs (39%). Medium-sized universities completed more activities oriented to assisting new researchers to start their career (39%). SSHRC also calculated, among the six sampled universities, the proportion of SIG expenditures by research activity and by size of university. These findings were largely consistent with the proportion of activities described above.

Another review undertaken within SSHRC in 2006 noted that, across all institutions, reported SIG activities were most often related to travel (44%), followed by research activities (31%). As shown in Table 10, travel made up one-half (50%) of SIG-funded activities at large universities.

Table 10: Proportion of Investment of SIG Funding, by Size of Institution, 2002-2005 Grant Period

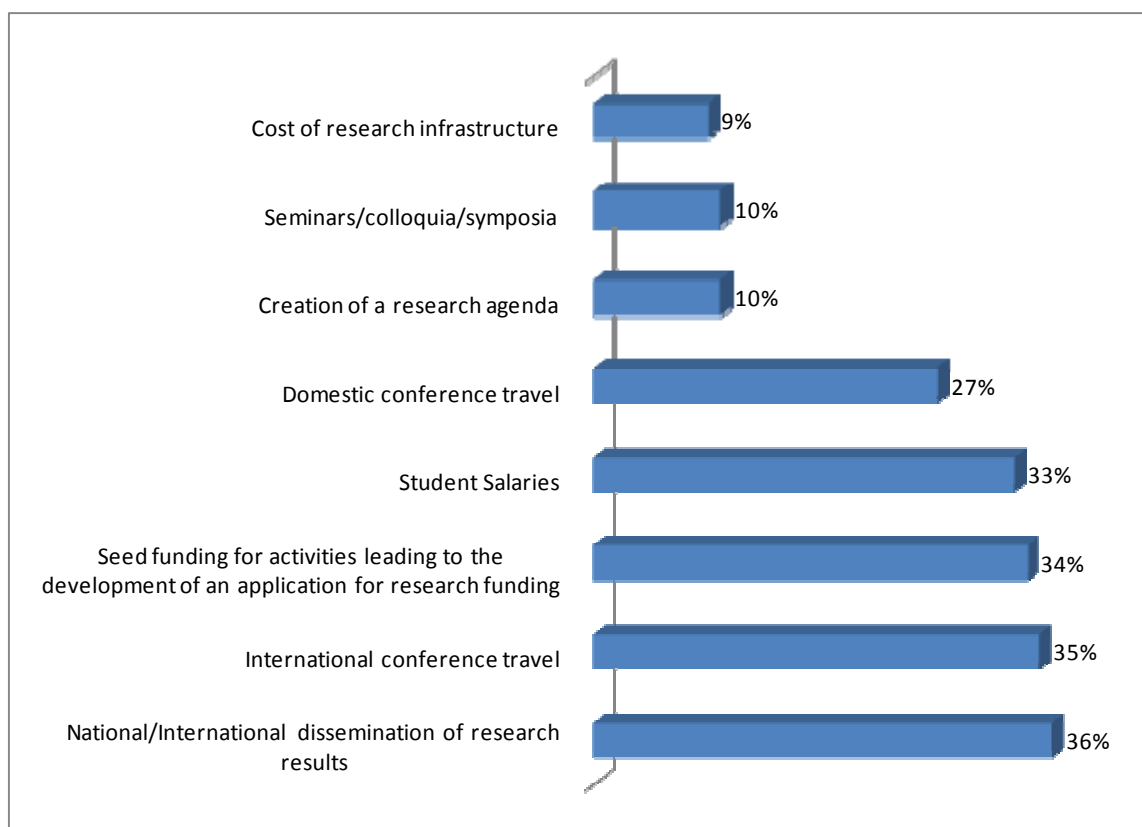
	Research	Travel	Collaboration	Dissemination	Student	Combination*
Small universities	28%	37.7%	3.4%	3%	5.7%	16.7%
Medium universities	26.8%	45.1%	3.7%	1.9%	2%	20.5%
Large universities	38%	49.6%	0.1%	2.7%	1.9%	7.9%
Average	30.7%	44.1%	2.4%	2.5%	3.2%	15%

*Combination of activities, such as research and students or dissemination and travel.

Source: SSHRC. SIG Report. Suzanne Bruneau, 2006.

Surveyed SIG recipients were asked to indicate how they had used their SIG funding. As shown in Figure 9, researchers indicated a wide range of different types of activities. Most commonly, these included national / international dissemination of research results (36% of SIG recipients), international conference travel (35%), and seed funding for activities leading to the development of an application for research funding. One-third (33%) of surveyed SIG recipients indicated that they used the SIG funding to cover costs of student salaries.

Figure 9: Usage of SIG Funding among Surveyed SIG Recipient



Source: Survey of SIG Recipients, n = 123-212

Note: Question allowed for multiple responses so total exceeds 100%.

Interviewed research officers were asked to what extent the SIG grants have been consistent with the objectives of the program. All but one said that they had been; several noted that as the objectives of the program are broad, this was not difficult to achieve. One of the universities that distributed the SIG funding to their 4A researchers noted that the funding is not necessarily targeted to new researchers as a result.

Similarly, research officers were asked to what extent the SIG grants have been invested in the intended activities. Again, most indicated that the grants have been invested in the intended activities but, as pointed out, the program allows institutions a considerable degree of latitude in that regard. A few research officers expressed some uncertainty with regard to whether certain

activities could be funded through the SIG. These included publication costs and publication preparation costs (for reproducing images, lyrics, etc.).

Question 7.3 To what extent have the intended researchers increased their competitiveness in SSHRC grant competitions?

Finding: *Analysis of administrative data did not provide conclusive evidence that receiving a SIG was associated with increased competitiveness in SRG competitions. Researchers and research officers are generally of the opinion that the program has been beneficial in increasing competitiveness of researchers in SSHRC national grant competitions.*

Two data sources were used to assess the extent to which researchers increased their competitiveness in SSHRC grant competitions as a result of receiving a SIG Program grant: SSHRC administrative data and the survey of researchers undertaken for this evaluation.

SSHRC administrative data were examined to determine to what extent SIG recipients who had previously been declared “4A” (application was satisfactory but not funded) or “unsuccessful” in their SRG grant competition (in the 2002-2005 SRG competitions), before obtaining a SIG Program grant (in 2005-2008), had been more successful in subsequent (2006-2010) SRG competitions. In theory, these previously unfunded applicants would have potentially increased their competitiveness in subsequent SRG competitions as a result of having undertaken additional research activities funded through their SIG Program grant.

SSHRC’s analysis of the administrative data found that, in fact, 40% of the SIG recipients who had been deemed to be “4A” in their initial SRG competition went on to be successfully funded in a subsequent SRG competition (see Table 11). In addition, 48% of the SIG recipients who had been deemed “unsuccessful” in their initial SRG application were successful in a subsequent SRG competition (see Table 12). Across the two groups (previously deemed “4A” or “unsuccessful”), then, 44% of SIG recipients who had previously not been funded in an early SRG competition went on to be funded in a subsequent SRG competition. While other factors may have also contributed to this increased competitiveness, this analysis seems to suggest that receiving a SIG grant is associated with researchers’ increased competitiveness in SRG competitions.

Table 11: Competition Results of SIG Recipients (Previously Deemed “4A” in 2002-2005 SRG Competition) in 2006-2010 SRG Competition

	Successful (1)	1A*	4A	Total
2006	3	0	4	7
2007	0	0	3	3
2008	1	0	1	2
2009	2	0	0	2
2010	2	1	3	6
Total	8	1	11	20
n	20	20	20	20
%	40,0	5,0	55,0	100,0

*SSHRC indicated that 1A status signified that the grant was not successful but that some funding was provided for the project

Table 12: Competition Results of SIG Recipients (Previously Deemed Unsuccessful in 2002-2005 SRG Competition) in 2006-2010 SRG Competition

	Successful (1)	Unsuccessful (4)	4A	Total
2006	3	0	3	6
2007	2	0	1	3
2008	0	1	2	3
2009	5	0	1	6
2010	0	2	1	3
Total	10	3	8	21
n	21	21	21	21
%	47,6	14,3	38,1	100,0

SSHRC also undertook analysis of administrative data for a comparison group of researchers who did not receive a SIG from 2002-2005. Like the SIG recipient group, this comparison group also applied unsuccessfully for an SRG in 2002-2005 (i.e., were either awarded a “4A” status or were deemed “unsuccessful”) and applied again in the 2006-2010 SRG competitions. Forty-eight percent (48%) of “4A” SIG non-recipients were successful in the 2006-2010 SRG competitions (see Table 13), while 40% of SIG non-recipients who were previously deemed “unsuccessful” were subsequently successful in the 2006-2010 SRG competition (Table 14). The comparison between SIG recipients and non-recipients, then, shows a difference between the two groups: SIG non-recipients from the “4A” group were eight percentage points more successful in subsequent SRG competitions than SIG recipients, while SIG recipients who had previously been deemed “unsuccessful” in a SRG competition were eight percentage points more successful in subsequent SRG competitions.

Table 13: Competition Results of Non-SIG Recipients (Previously Deemed “4A” in 2002-2005 SRG Competition) in 2006-2010 SRG Competition

	Successful (1)	4A	Total
2006	7	3	10
2007	4	4	8
2008	10	6	16
2009	6	6	12
2010	4	7	11
Total	31	26	57
n	65	65	65
%	47.7	40.0	87.7

Table 14: Competition Results of Non-SIG Recipients (Previously Deemed Unsuccessful in 2002-2005 SRG Competitions) in 2006-2010 SRG Competition

	Successful	4A	Total
2006	8	9	17
2007	5	9	14
2008	7	11	18
2009	3	8	11
2010	8	3	11
Total	31	40	71
n	77	77	77
%	40.3	51.9	92.2

Thus, there does not appear to be an appreciable difference between SIG recipients and non-recipients in terms of their success in a subsequent SRG competition.

In addition, results of the survey of researchers were also examined to address this expected outcome. Surveyed SIG recipients who indicated they had competed in a national SSHRC grant competition from 2005 to 2008 were asked to provide their rate of success in these competitions. Surveyed SIG recipients (Mean = 52.6%) averaged slightly higher rates of success in obtaining other SSHRC grants (e.g., SRGs, Strategic Grants, etc.) than did non-recipients (Mean = 50.6%). This difference was not statistically significant, however ($t_{(328)} = 0.4$, $p > 0.05$).

When examining success in obtaining other SSHRC grants among those who self-identified as new researchers (i.e., someone who has not yet had the opportunity to establish an extensive record of research achievement, but is in the process of building one), the outcome was less positive. New researchers who received SIG Program funding (Mean = 45.5%) indicated lower rates of success in other SSHRC grants than did those who did not self-identify as a new researchers (Mean = 51.3%). Again, this difference was not statistically significant, $t_{(277)} = -1.0$, $p > 0.05$).

Size of institution appeared to be a significant determining factor in competitiveness in national grant competitions. There was a significant different in success rate among researchers at small (Mean = 29.6%), medium (Mean = 50.3%) and large (Mean = 53.5%) universities, $F_{(2,327)} = 3.2$, $p < .05$. Post-hoc analyses indicate that researchers at small and large universities differ significantly.

Despite these findings, there was a common perception that SIG funding has in fact increased researchers' competitiveness: 70% of surveyed SIG recipients indicated that the activities they undertook with support from their SIG assisted them in becoming more competitive in other grant competitions. Research officers also generally felt that SIG has made an impact on increasing the competitiveness of researchers in SSHRC grant competitions. One research officer stated that one in three of their SIG recipients had gone on to receive a larger SSHRC grant. One research officer noted that the amount that their institution had received (\$5,000) was not sufficient to make a significant impact in this way, however.

The SIG Program funding has been allocated to some researchers who received a 4A classification on a national grants competition. A 4A classification indicates that a project has been deemed by SSHRC to be sufficiently promising to be recommended for funding, but not funded due to a lack of available funding. SSHRC found that 25 universities out of 69 mentioned that SIG Program funding has been used to strengthen projects that received a 4A classification from SSHRC's Standard Research Grants Program or other funding agency programs²⁶.

Further, according to the survey of SIG recipients, 19% of recipients were new scholars, who, it can be assumed, would be especially likely to become more competitive as a result of the experience gathered through SIG-funded research activities.

It should be noted, however, that the most common activity funded through the SIG Program appears to be travel (to national and international conferences), which may not always be likely to have a strong, direct impact on the competitiveness of researchers in grant competitions.

Question 7.4 To what extent has the SIG helped participating universities increase their research capacity?

Finding: *SIG-funded activities can reasonably be inferred to have increased research capacity at many institutions. Limited funding amounts from the program were felt to have been a barrier to increasing research capacity at some institutions.*

Increased Research Capacity

Surveyed SIG recipients gave a moderate average rating (on a scale from 1 "to no extent" to 5 "to a great extent") to questions related to the perceived extent to which the SIG Funding has contributed to increasing research capacity. As shown in Table 15, recipients believed that the SIG Program had the greatest impact in providing assistance to undertaking research projects, increasing overall capacity to conduct research and strengthening their research program. In contrast, recipients less commonly indicated that SIG funding had a strong impact on reorienting their research programs and enhancing national and international research partnership / collaborations.

²⁶ SSHRC. SIG Report. Suzanne Bruneau, 2006.

Table 15: SIG Recipients' Views on Extent to which SIG Funding had Contributed to Increasing Research Capacity

Increased Research Capacity Items	Mean	Standard Deviation
Enhancing national dissemination of research results	3.6	1.2
Enhancing international dissemination of research results	3.3	1.4
Enhancing national research partnerships/collaboration	3.1	1.4
Enhancing international research partnerships/collaboration	3.0	1.4
Assisting in reorienting your research program	2.9	1.3
Assisting in strengthening your research program	4.0	1.1
Assisting new researchers to start their research careers	3.9	1.2
Helping to leverage additional funding from other research funding sources	3.2	1.5
Assisting in strengthening research proposals for national funding competitions	3.8	1.3
Assisting in undertaking research projects	4.1	1.1
Assessing/Determining the most promising content areas in which to focus research	3.5	1.4
Increasing overall capacity to conduct research	4.0	1.1
Developing a culture of research excellence	3.8	1.1

Source: Survey of SIG Recipients, n = 68-90

Interestingly, and in contrast to the results of similar analyses conducted among ASU recipients, there was no relationship between perceived increase to research capacity and rates of success in obtaining “other SSHRC grants”, $r_{(49)} = 0.1$, $p > 0.05$. This indicates that recipients' perceptions about increases to their research capacity that came about through SIG Program funding are not connected to their rates of success in other SSHRC competitions. Potentially, the size of the SIG limits the extent to which it will influence subsequent success in other competitions.

Most research officers stated that the SIG Program funding had helped to increase research capacity at their institution. Some examples provided in interviews included:

- The SIG Program has allowed researchers to disseminate their findings nationally and internationally through participating in conferences;
- The grants provided seed funding to develop research projects that have subsequently been funded through national grant competitions;
- SIG grants have been used to leverage funding from other sources; and
- They allow researchers to hire students to assist in research activities.

However, nearly one-half of the interviewed research officers noted that the limited funding from the program (either the limited size of each grant to researchers, or the limited size of the grant to the institution) had inhibited the impact of the program. For example, one stakeholder from a small university noted that, although they are grateful for any research funding they receive, the \$5,000 they receive annually was not sufficient to increase research capacity at their institution in any significant way.

4.3.2 Cost-Efficiency

Question 8. Has the SIG Program been delivered in a cost-efficient manner?

Finding: SSHRC has administered 43 SIG applications and 42 SIG awards per \$10,000 in administrative costs. The proportion of administrative costs to grant expenditures is lower than that of other SSHRC grants programs, suggesting that the program is cost-efficient.

During the period for which figures are available (2000-01 to 2008-09), the total amount of funding provided for the SIG Program has remained constant at around \$5.2 million per year. This comprises approximately 4% of SSHRC's annual research funding. SIG grant expenditures are presented in Table 16.

Table 16: SIG Program Grant Expenditures, 2001-02 to 2008-09

	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09
Total Grant Amount (\$)	5,180,000	5,218,000	5,188,000	5,188,000	5,188,000	5,188,000	5,188,000	5,188,000

Source: SSHRC, The Year in Numbers, 2009

SSHRC provided data on estimated administrative expenditures for the SIG Program from 2001-2002 to 2008-2009. These data are presented in Table 17, which presents actual estimated expenditures and Table 18, which presents the same amounts adjusted to 2002 constant dollars for the sake of comparison across years. Given administrative difficulties in capturing the costs for the non-salary expenses, the amounts presented in the tables do not include expenses indirectly attributable to program such as general administration costs. Salary costs were estimated based on hours of related work multiplied by salary costs.

Table 17: SIG Program Estimated Direct Program Spending

Type of Costs	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09
Salary (\$)	5,212	6,968	5,720	6,100	6,246	6,532	6,559	8,745
Non-Salary (\$)	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total (\$)	5,212	6,968	5,720	6,100	6,246	6,532	6,559	8,745

Source: SSHRC

Table 18: SIG Program Estimated Direct Program Spending – 2002 Constant Dollars

Type of Costs	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09
Salary (\$)	\$5,270	\$6,758	\$5,506	\$5,738	\$5,752	\$5,880	\$5,825	\$7,671
Non-Salary (\$)	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0	\$0
Total (\$)	\$5,270	\$6,758	\$5,506	\$5,738	\$5,752	\$5,880	\$5,825	\$7,671

Source: SSHRC

Based on the above information, SSHRC estimated the costs to SSHRC for the administration of grants for the years 2002 and 2005. The results are shown in Table 19 (estimated actual dollars) and Table 20 (estimated actual dollars adjusted to 2002 constant dollars).

Table 19: Administrative Cost per Grant Application / Award for the SIG Program

Competition Year	Application			Award		
	Number of applications	Expenditures (\$)	Cost-Efficiency	Number of Awards	Expenditures (\$)	Cost-Efficiency
2002	76	18,788	40 appl/\$10,000	75	18,788	40 Awards /\$10,000
2005	76	19,337	39 appl/\$10,000	75	19,337	39 Awards /\$10,000
Total	152	38,125	40 appl/\$10,000	150	38,125	39 Awards /\$10,000

Source: SSHRC

Table 20: Administrative Cost per Grant Application / Award for the SIG Program – 2002 Constant Dollars

Competition Year	Application			Award		
	Number of applications	Expenditures (\$)	Cost-Efficiency	Number of Awards	Expenditures (\$)	Cost-Efficiency
2002	76	18,002	42 appl/\$10,000	75	18,002	42 Awards /\$10,000
2005	76	17,457	44 appl/\$10,000	75	17,457	43 Awards /\$10,000
Total	152	35,459	43 appl/\$10,000	150	35,459	42 Awards /\$10,000

Source: SSHRC

As demonstrated, for the 2002 and 2005 competition years, SSHRC administered 43 applications and 42 awards per \$10,000 in administrative cost.

Findings from recent program evaluations undertaken by SSHRC affords the opportunity to compare the relative costs of SIG Program's administration with that of other SSHRC grant programs, including the Indirect Costs Program and the Networks of Centres of Excellence Program, as well as the ASU Program. SSHRC calculated the administrative costs per \$1 million in grants, as well as the proportion of administrative costs to grants, for each of the programs.

The administration cost per \$1 million in grant expenditures for the SIG Program was \$1,254 or 0.1%. The administrative cost for the Indirect Costs Program was \$2,910 per \$1 million in grants, or 0.3%, which was deemed by SSHRC (both its evaluation team and Audit) to be very low. For the ASU Program, the cost of administration per \$1 million was \$7,041, or 0.7%. In comparison, the proportion of administrative costs to grant expenditures for the Networks of Centres of Excellence Program was 3.5%.

While these programs all have somewhat different aims, administrative requirements and sizes of grant budgets, the comparison does suggest that the SIG Program is being delivered in a very cost-efficient manner.

This finding is, perhaps, not surprising, given that the SIG Program, unlike other SSHRC grants programs, is co-delivered with the universities (i.e., it is the funded universities who undertake the peer review process and allocation of grants to individual researchers), which results in considerable cost savings for SSHRC. At the same time, the lack of monitoring efforts off-set the savings and efficiencies realized.

5. Evaluation Findings – ASU Program

This section presents the findings of the ASU Program evaluation, organized by the three major evaluation areas: relevance, delivery, and performance.

5.1 Relevance

5.1.1 Continued Need

Question 1. What is the rationale for supporting ASU given the current level of institutions' needs?

Finding: *There is a perceived need for research funding support targeted to small universities. Small universities face barriers to research not experienced by larger universities, and tend to be disfavoured by the formula-based SIG Programs. ASU helps to mitigate these barriers.*

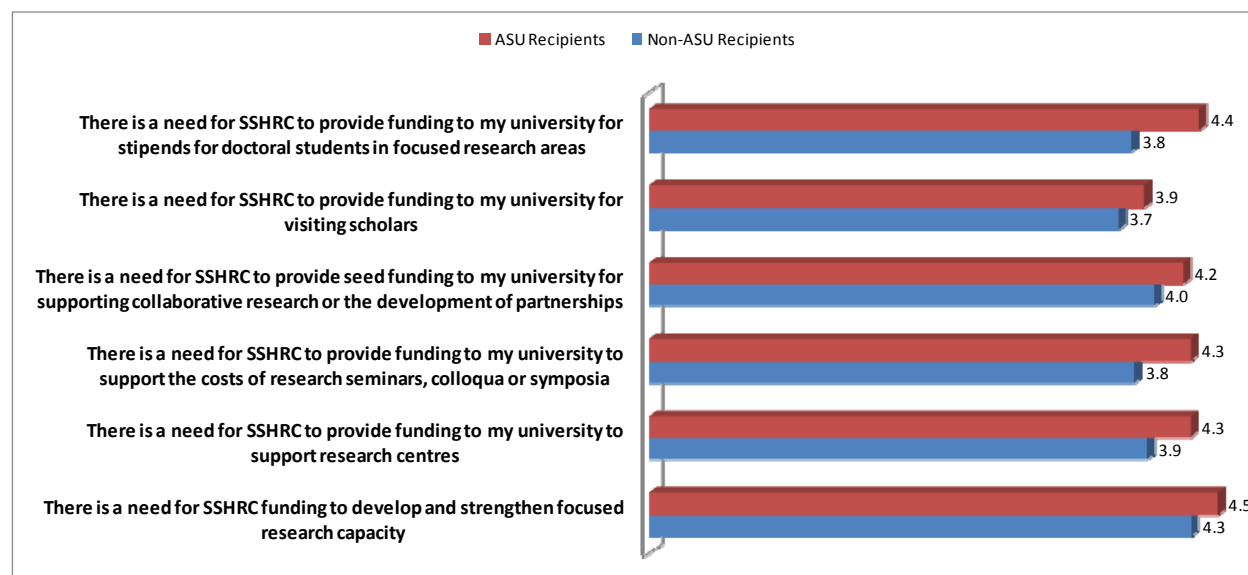
Perceptions of Researchers

Surveyed researchers at small universities indicated that, in their opinion, there is a continued need for SSHRC to provide funding to support research activities at their universities. Across a set of questions related to the perceived need for research funding for activities supported by the ASU Program, researchers at small universities were strongly in agreement that there is a need for SSHRC funding (Mean = 4.5, where 1 = “Strongly Disagree [with need for funding] and 5 = “Strongly Agree [with need for funding]”). This included a perceived need for SSHRC support for: stipends for doctoral students; visiting scholars; seed funding to support collaborative research and the development of partnerships; symposia and colloquia; research centres; and the development of overall research capacity.

As a group, surveyed ASU recipients (Mean = 4.6) tended to feel more strongly about the need for SSHRC funding than did professors at small universities who had not received ASU funding (Mean = 4.4). This difference was statistically significant ($t_{(274)} = 2.3$, $p < 0.05$, Cohen's $d = 0.4$)²⁷. As demonstrated in Figure 10, this difference was consistent across all the relevant questions. Potentially, those who have received funding may have been more actively involved in research and, therefore, more likely to endorse the need for SSHRC funding.

²⁷ The size of this effect is small (i.e., Cohen's d is less than approximately 0.5), which indicates that the statistical significance may be more of artifact of the sample size rather than substantively meaningful.

Figure 10: Average Perceived Need for SSHRC Funding



Source: ASU Survey, $n_{\text{participant}} = 48$, $n_{\text{comparison}} = 228$

Many surveyed researchers also noted that the need for funding support can be stronger among researchers at smaller universities. Reasons given to support this opinion included: professors at small universities often have higher teaching loads than their peers at larger universities; that they have access to a smaller pool of graduate students who can assist with research and teaching; and that smaller universities are often geographically distant from larger metropolitan centres, making it more expensive to attend conferences, network and develop research partnerships.

Surveyed researchers at small universities indicated that they have personally experienced the need for funding to support the types of activities funded through the ASU Program. In contrast to non-ASU recipients (Mean = 4.3), ASU recipients (Mean = 4.5) indicated a slightly higher level of agreement with questions that assessed their past funding needs (1 = “Strongly Disagree [with need for funding]” and 5 = “Strongly Agree [with need for funding]”). This difference was not statistically significant, however ($t_{(276)} = 1.84$, $p > 0.05$).

Surveyed ASU recipients also indicated that the ASU Program has been critical to undertaking their own research activities in the past. The vast majority of ASU recipients indicated that the research activities undertaken with ASU Program funding would have proceeded with a smaller scope (61%) or would not have proceeded at all (37%), in the absence of ASU funding. Only 3% said that the planned activities would have proceeded the same without ASU funding.

This is consistent with the perceived need for SSHRC funding indicated in the opinions expressed in past surveys of research funding recipients. In the recent evaluation of SSHRC’s INE²⁸, 73% of researchers whose projects had been funded through the INE indicated that, in the

²⁸ SSHRC. Evaluation of the Initiative on the New Economy – Final Report. August, 2009. Accessed online July 29th, 2010 at: http://www.sshrc-crsh.gc.ca/about-au_sujet/publications/INE_Final_Report_FinalE.pdf.

absence of this SSHRC funding, their funded project would not have proceeded at all, while 22% indicated that the scope of the project would have changed. As with ASU Program funding recipients, only 3% of INE-funded researchers indicated that their project would have proceeded as proposed without the SSHRC funding.

There was no expressed consensus regarding whether research funding should be targeted to specific research topics at institutions in order to develop specific research nodes or centres. While the evaluation did not specifically address this issue in a comprehensive way, it should be noted that several surveyed researchers expressed displeasure with universities targeting research funding to specific topic areas. As one researcher noted: “There are obvious problems with [small universities having a specific research focus]: individual research programmes get shut out if they do not coincide with the university’s chosen focus and senior faculty members with institutional power can determine and shape an institution’s research agenda”.

Perceptions of Research Officers and Stakeholders

There was consensus among interviewed research officers from small universities that there was a need for research support specifically targeted to small universities. Reasons provided by multiple respondents to support this opinion included:

- Smaller universities have fewer human resources dedicated to obtaining research funding and are less successful in obtaining other grants; and
- Smaller universities have fewer alumni providing financial support, and many do not have the history and tradition of alumni support that exists at larger institutions.

Other reasons included: there is a need to encourage research at small universities, as professors have higher teaching loads and can be reticent of undertaking research; the demand for research funding exceeds the current supply; as small universities provide a significant proportion of the training to social sciences students in Canada, there is a need for these faculty to develop in their fields; with the increasing emphasis from SSHRC on supporting collaborative research and international research, it is important to have the seed funding to develop this work; and many small universities are distant from metropolitan centres and have higher costs associated with forming research teams, travelling to conferences, undertaking seminars, and networking.

SSHRC management and staff, as well as external key informants, agreed that smaller universities face certain disadvantages when it comes to obtaining research funding, including limited human resources within the university to pursue available funding options, less success in obtaining funding through national grant competitions, and more limited funding from sources like foundations and the private sector. In 2008, the SSHRC ASU Committee stated it was unanimous in recognizing that the ASU Program was an important “life line” for small institutions.

Distinctiveness Vis-à-vis Other Sources of Funding

The ASU Program was the only identified Canadian research funding program that targets research funding specifically to small universities. It is also the only funding program that has, as its objective, the development and strengthening of “focused” research capacity.

Small universities may also receive institutional funding for research in the social sciences and humanities through the SIG Program. However, the formula used to calculate the amount of SIG funding each eligible institution receives is based on the size of the institution and the institution’s degree of past success in SSHRC national grant competitions: smaller institutions often receive very limited SIG grants, with many receiving \$10,000 or less in grants each year.

The SSHRC RDI Program was identified as a complementary SSHRC program that was also providing funding to support research development. The objectives of the RDI Program are to help researchers develop new research questions; explore methodological and conceptual perspectives and directions; and critically analyze and assess research. In the case of the RDI Program, there is a clear and explicit expectation that funded activities will lead directly to the development of research funding proposals (whether to SSHRC competitions or others), while, the case of the ASU Program, funded activities may not necessarily lead to such a proposal (or, at least not immediately).

The GRF was identified as another complementary source of funding. However, research officers noted that, as GRF dollars are residual funds left over at the end of a SSHRC grant term, whether, and to what extent, institutions will have access to GRF funds varies by year, and this source of funding is not predictable. As a result, institutions appear to see this as supplementary funding. Furthermore, it was indicated that this funding can be limited, particularly at smaller universities. It should be noted that the evaluation did not include a comprehensive comparison of the ASU and GRF, so the extent of overlap between the two sources of funding is not known.

Table 21 presents a summary of the main features of each of the programs identified as most comparable with the ASU Program. No other similar funding programs were identified in interviews or document review. The SSHRC ASU Committee similarly noted in 2008 that there were no other sources of program funding available for smaller institutions to assist them in building their overall research capacity²⁹. Overall, it does not appear that there is duplication, and that the ASU Program retains a distinct role in providing research support specifically for small universities.

²⁹ SSHRC Policy Discussion Report for the 2008 ASU Committee.

Table 21: Main Features of Comparable SSHRC Funding Programs

Program	Type of Applicant	Type of Research	Annual budget \$	Grant Duration	Amount of Grant \$	Success rate % (applications / awards)
ASU	Institution	Research Capacity Development	600,000	3 years	Maximum of 30,000 per year	69
SIG	Institution	Research Excellence & Research Capacity Development	5.2 M	3 years	Minimum of 5,000 per year	98
RDI	Institution & Individual or Group of Researchers	Research Capacity Development & Innovation	1.9 M	2 years	Up to 40,000	32
GRF	Institution	Research	-	NA	-	-

These sources of program funding are complemented by the general institutional funding available for social sciences and humanities research, which varies according to the budgets and priorities of each institution. This funding is part of the operational budget for the university, which is derived from provincial funding, alumni support, private donors and also the federal government in the form of indirect costs funding. The proportion of the overall budget for social sciences and humanities research funding that SSHRC program funding comprises varies by institution. According to interviewed research officers, ASU Program funding can make up nearly one-half of available funding for a small university.

Based on a review of SSHRC funding³⁰ to the institutions examined in the evaluation, ASU Program funding made up between 5% and 85% of the total SSHRC funding provided to the universities, depending on the institution.

5.1.2 Alignment with Government Priorities

Question 2. Are the SIG and ASU Program objectives aligned with the Federal Government's Framework and SSHRC's Strategic Plan and PAA?

Finding: *The ASU Program is aligned with Government of Canada outcomes. The program, with its focus on building research capacity, is only moderately well aligned with SSHRC's strategic outcomes and operational priorities.*

³⁰ Includes funding from the ASU, SIG, SRG and Community-University Research Alliances.

Alignment with Government of Canada Priorities

The Federal Government's Whole-of-Government Framework was designed to map the contributions of departments, agencies, and Crown corporations to a set of 13 Government of Canada outcome areas. The framework is intended to inform the development of departments' and agencies' PAAs, and departments and agencies are to indicate in their RPP and Departmental Performance Report the alignment of program activities to Government of Canada outcome areas.

In SSHRC's RPP, the linkage is made between all of SSHRC research programs and the Government of Canada outcome area of "an innovative and knowledge-based economy"³¹. This is likely the result of the outcome's explicit focus on research and development activities. However, given the wide range of topic areas in social sciences and humanities research in general, the ASU Program (and, indeed, all of SSHRC's research programs, including the Indirect Costs Program) could have direct and indirect effects applicable to other Government of Canada outcome areas, including, for example, "a vibrant Canadian culture and heritage" and "a diverse society that promotes linguistic duality and social inclusion".

SSHRC has also drawn explicit linkages between its programs and elements of the Government of Canada's science and technology strategy, "Mobilizing Science and Technology to Canada's Advantage" (2007). As with much of SSHRC's research funding, the ASU Program can be linked to the "knowledge advantage" emphasized in the strategy, as it generates new ideas and helps to achieve research excellence³².

Alignment with SSHRC Priorities and Policies

SSHRC's PA is in the process of being revised. In the current SSHRC PAA, the ASU Program is grouped with other research funding programs in the Program Activity of "Strategic Research Development". This Program Activity is expected to contribute to SSHRC's Strategic Outcome of "Research – New knowledge based on excellent research in the social sciences and humanities."³³ The program is only moderately well aligned with the strategic outcome, as, the program appears primarily to be funding activities related to research capacity building. SSHRC has not clearly articulated whether it sees itself having a role in institutional capacity-building.

SSHRC's new vision for its PA includes developing three umbrella programs: Talent, Insight, and Connection. Each of these umbrella programs includes specific objectives that are to be met through a series of sub-programs, which are in the process of being defined. At the time of the evaluation, the ASU Program has not been situated within the PA. A review of preliminary information related to the new PA indicates that the objectives of the ASU appear to cross two of the three umbrella programs: Insight and Connections.

SSHRC's RPP has defined five operational priorities for the organization. One of these is applicable to SSHRC's research funding programs: "Ensure the world-class excellence of

³¹ SSHRC. Report on Plans and Priorities 2009-2010. Accessed online July 8, 2010 at: http://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/rpp/2009-2010/inst/ssh/ssh01-eng.asp#a1_3

³² Government of Canada. Mobilizing Science and Technology to Canada's Advantage – Summary. 2007. 4.

³³ SSHRC. Report on Plans and Priorities 2009-2010.

SSHRC funded research, and promote new knowledge in priority areas, through research and training.”³⁴ Through its focus on capacity building, the ASU Program is somewhat indirectly aligned with the priority of ensuring the “world-class excellence” of SSHRC-funded research. In addition, the ASU Program does not prioritize particular research topics, and so does not address the priority of promoting new research in SSHRC’s research priority areas (competitiveness, prosperity and economic development; Canadian environmental issues; and Northern communities).

The ASU Program is aligned with the three ambitions characterizing SSHRC’s vision, as articulated in SSHRC’s “Framing our Direction” plan³⁵: enhancing the “quality” of, and support for, research and research training (through, for example, support for research centres and stipends for doctoral students); enabling “connections” (through funding the development of partnerships / collaboration and visiting scholars); and increasing the “impact” of research and research training (through funding for colloquia and symposia and national/international dissemination of research).

The SSHRC Strategic Plan for 2006-2011, “Knowledge Council”, noted that a priority of SSHRC was to “revitalize the Aid to Small Universities program to help universities and colleges develop more robust research cultures and broaden their graduates’ skill sets”³⁶. No subsequent changes were made to the program’s design, delivery or budget, however.

5.2 Delivery

5.2.1 Peer Review Process

Question 3: *To what extent is the peer review process at SSHRC and in participating universities meeting accountability requirements?*

Finding: *While no specific issues were identified by SSHRC or research officers with respect to SSHRC’s process for allocating ASU funding to institutions, related opinions among ASU recipients were mixed.*

ASU grant applications are submitted to SSHRC from eligible institutions. Depending on the institution, an application may be prepared by the research office, by an institution’s research centre(s) or by individual researchers in conjunction with the research office. Some institutions assess what prospective projects to include in its application to SSHRC through a committee that examines proposals, while others use a more informal process based on their institutional research plan.

SSHRC adjudicates all ASU grant applications through a selection committee made up of SSHRC senior management and scholars from the research committee evaluating each

³⁴ SSHRC. Report on Plans and Priorities 2009-2010.

³⁵ SSHRC. Framing our Direction. Accessed online July 14, 2010 at: http://www.sshrc.ca/about-au_sujet/publications/framing_our_direction_e.pdf

³⁶ SSHRC. Knowledge Council SSHRC Strategic Plan 2006-2011. July 2005. 15. Accessed online July 14, 2010 at: <http://dsp-psd.pwgsc.gc.ca/Collection/CR22-42-2006E.pdf>

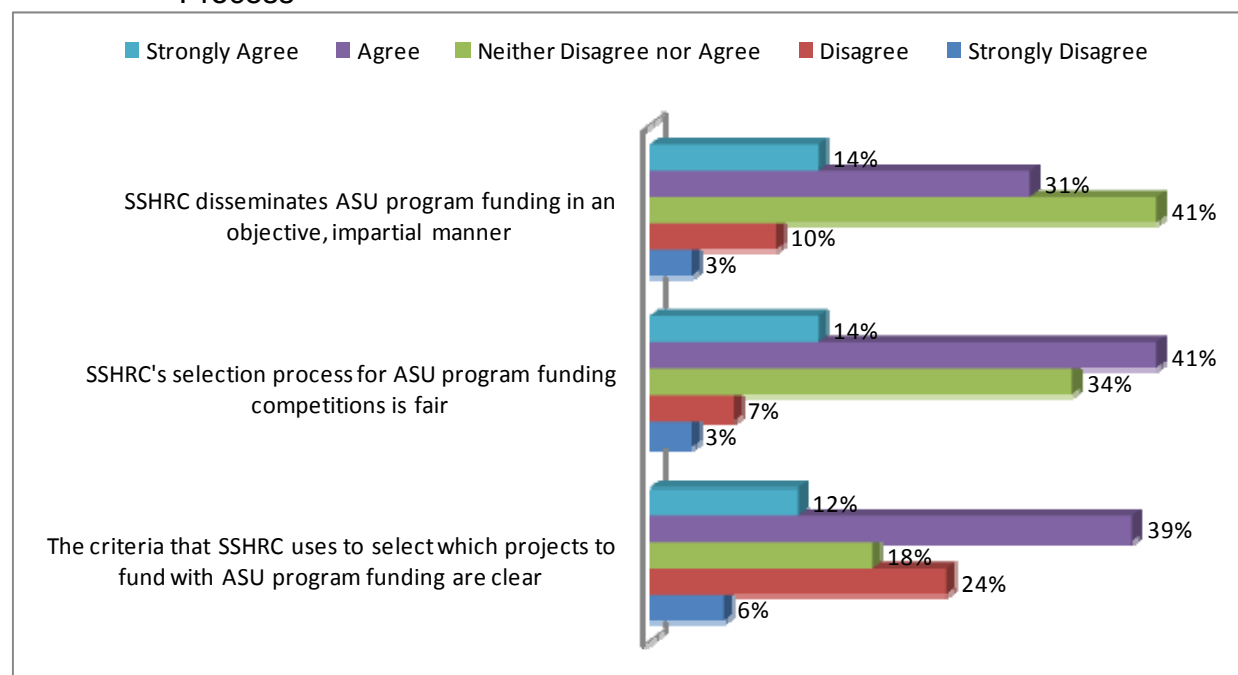
application. The process follows the established and tested processes used for other SSHRC research funding programs.

SSHRC assembles a group of adjudicators that meet outlined criteria (e.g., knowledge of official languages, gender, region), which reviews and provides preliminary scores for each institutional application. The committee then meets in-person as a group in Ottawa to finalize these scores. It was noted by SSHRC that it has been somewhat difficult in the past to find researchers willing to be members of the selection committee, as members are not paid for their time.

There were no concerns raised in interviews with research officers, SSHRC staff or external key informants with the peer review process. The 2008 ASU Committee put forward some suggestions for improvement—including asking institutions to include performance measures in their development plan—but these did not suggest any fundamental problems with the process.

Interestingly, surveyed recipients' opinions on SSHRC's processes related to the ASU were mixed. As illustrated in Figure 11, when ASU recipients were asked about SSHRC's peer review process, only a small majority (52%) agreed or strongly agreed that "the criteria that SSHRC uses to select which projects to fund with ASU Program funding are clear" and that "SSHRC's selection process for ASU Program funding competitions is fair" (55%). Further, only 45% of researchers agreed or strongly agreed that "SSHRC disseminates ASU Program funding in an objective, impartial manner". The level of dissatisfaction with the application process was higher than that reported in a current evaluation of the SRG and RDI Programs. Potential sources of dissatisfaction among recipients with the SSHRC selection and peer review process for the ASU Program were not explored in the survey, however.

Figure 11: Perception among Surveyed ASU Recipients of SSHRC's Peer Review Process



Source: Survey of ASU Recipients, n = 29-33

Once SSHRC's competitive process is complete, ASU funds are provided to the successful institutions to be distributed for the activities outlined in the funding application. Among the institutions examined in the evaluation, one-half of the institutions distributed the funding separately at their institutions, while the other half combined the funds at the institution with other sources (including, for example, the SIG Program).

ASU recipients' survey responses indicated that they felt more positively regarding their universities' criteria, selection process and dissemination of ASU Program funding, compared with those of SSHRC. When asked about the processes at their university, 74% of recipients, on average, agreed or strongly agreed with the same statements presented in Figure 11.

5.2.2 Reporting and Monitoring

Question 5. How relevant and effective is the reporting and monitoring of the ASU Program?

Finding: *SSHRC has not collected information useful to performance monitoring for the ASU Program.*

A review of ASU activity reports conducted by SSHRC concluded that, similar to the reporting for the SIG Program, the information being requested from institutions is not sufficient to allow for the measurement of program results. The template asks institutions to provide information related to funded activities and projects, but not related to outcomes. Additional information is sometimes provided by institutions with respect to, for example, the activities of funded research centres. This additional information is not consistent in format, however, so it is not possible to determine the overall impact of the ASU Program from this material. In addition, some ASU activity reports contain incomplete information regarding the researchers who benefited from the ASU grants. The previous evaluation of the ASU Program (completed in 1989) similarly noted a "prevalent [...] lack of information on objective-related accomplishments arising from previous grants"³⁷.

SSHRC also noted past issues with respect to the timeliness and full compliance with reporting requirements by institutions. SSHRC program staff noted that the quality of information received from institutions for the ASU Program was better than that received for the SIG Program. One issue noted was that institutions only have access to the blank activity report template to fill in for reporting purposes when they apply for new funding.

Interviewed research officers did not raise any concerns with the reporting required of them by SSHRC for the ASU Program. One noted, in fact, that the required reporting allows the research office to gather complete information on the activities undertaken by its research centres, and so had been useful for internal monitoring. Research officers indicated that, from their point-of-view, their institutions had provided consistent, timely information back to SSHRC with respect to the ASU Program.

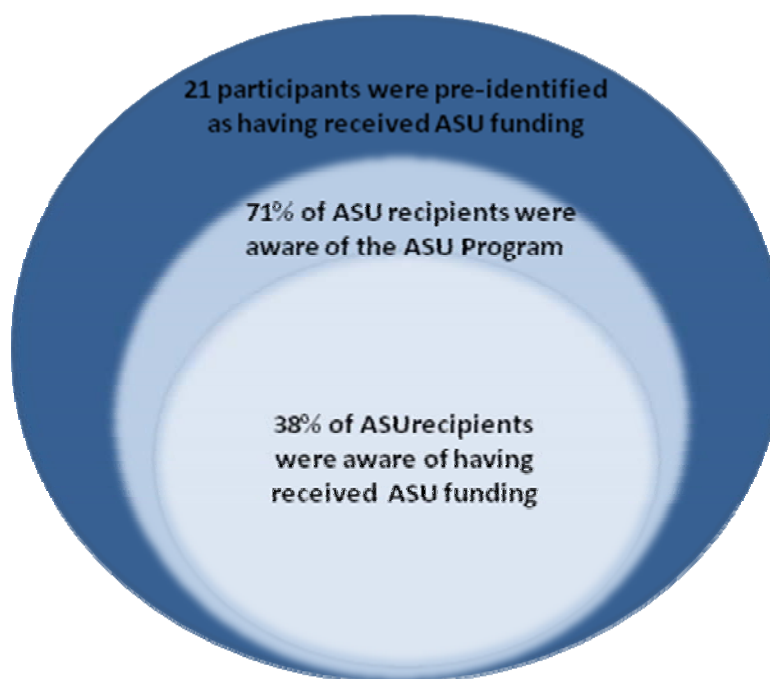
³⁷ Hanson, R. Report to the SSHRC on the Evaluation Study of the Aid to Small Universities Program. SSHRC. October, 1989. iii.

5.2.3 Other Delivery Issues

Visibility

Sometimes the ASU Program funding is renamed at the institution before it is distributed to researchers or to a research centre. In some cases, institutions said they acknowledge and publicize SSHRC's funding assistance, but this was not always the case. A few research officers noted that the ASU Program lacks visibility and that SSHRC may not be getting all the credit it deserves for this funding.

Figure 12: Visibility of ASU Program Funding among ASU Recipients



Source: Survey of ASU Recipients

The issue of visibility and acknowledgement of funding received from SSHRC was also demonstrated in the survey of researchers (see Figure 12). Fifteen out of 21³⁸ (71%) of those who had been identified by SSHRC as being ASU recipients were unaware of the ASU Program. Further, only 8 recipients (38%) were aware that they (or a research centre with which they were affiliated) had received ASU Program funding. Finally, just over half (54%) of ASU recipients agreed or strongly agreed that the ASU Program's funding is well known among researchers at their university who may have an interest in it.

³⁸ Only a subsample of ASU recipients (i.e., those who were marked by SSHRC in the original sample file as having received an award) was included in this analysis. The remaining participants were not included in this analysis because they had been reclassified as ASU recipients by virtue of having indicated that they received an ASU grant.

Institutional Eligibility

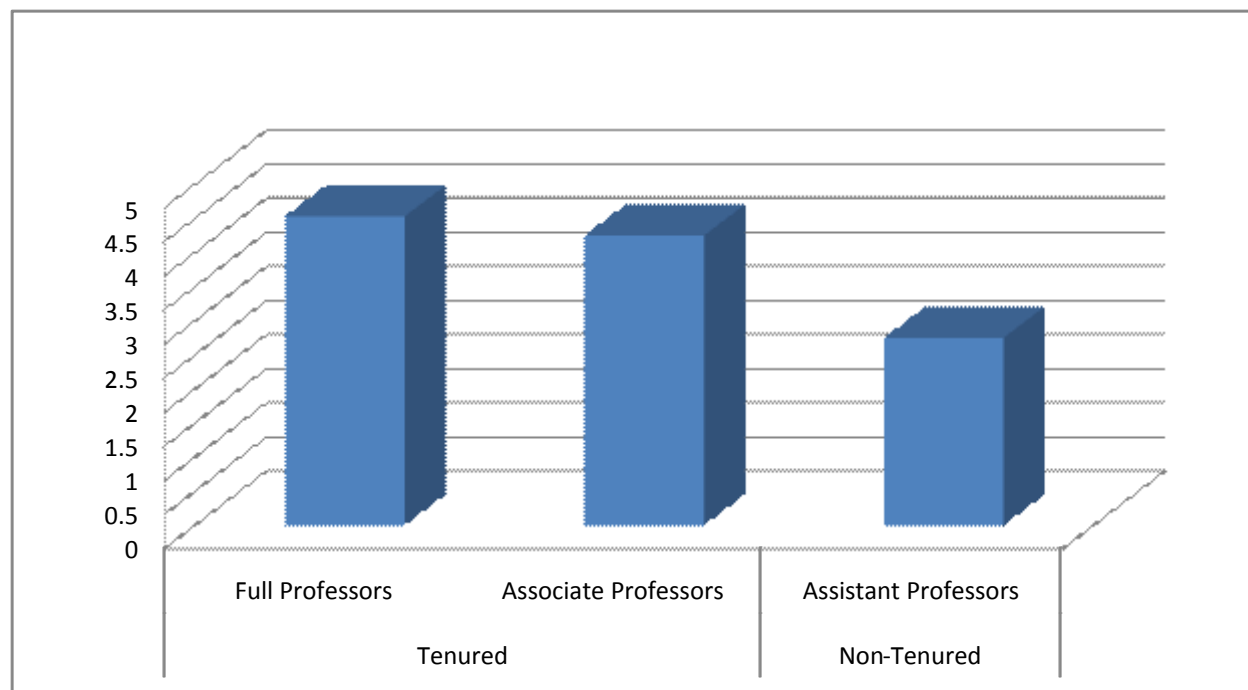
The 2008 ASU Committee recommended that the eligibility criteria for institutions be revised. For example, the number of students enrolled in the university in the social sciences and humanities could be used instead of number of faculty³⁹. This issue was not raised in other evaluation activities, however.

Overall Satisfaction with the Program

The vast majority (81%) of surveyed ASU funding recipients indicated that they were satisfied or very satisfied with the grant they received. This level of satisfaction is consistent with that demonstrated among successful applicants of the SRG program in a current evaluation.

As shown in Figure 13, ASU recipients demonstrated a significantly different level of general satisfaction with the ASU Program across academic positions ($F_{(2,33)} = 5.1, p < 0.05$). Specifically, tenured professors (i.e., Full Professor and Associate Professors) tended to be more satisfied than non-tenured (i.e., Assistant Professor) professors.⁴⁰

Figure 13: Mean Satisfaction with the ASU Grant Received



Source: Survey of ASU Recipients, n = 37

³⁹ According to the Report to the SSHRC on the Evaluation Study of the Aid to Small Universities Program, number of students was being used to determine institutional eligibility at that time (1989).

⁴⁰ Given small sample sizes, these results should be interpreted with caution.

There was not a significant difference in general satisfaction across research domains (i.e., researchers in the social sciences, humanities or undertaking interdisciplinary research), $F_{(2,33)} = 0.3, p > 0.05$.

5.3 Performance

5.3.1 Effectiveness of the Program

Question 6. *To what extent is the ASU Program objective specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bound (SMART)?*

Finding: *The ASU objective is broad and not clearly defined.*

ASU Program Objective

The ASU Program's objective is to enable small universities to develop and strengthen focused research capacity in the social sciences and humanities. This objective is broad, and does not demonstrate the characteristics ideally sought by SSHRC for its program objectives, i.e., that they be specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bound (SMART).

Research officers were in disagreement over whether the objectives were SMART. Interviewed SSHRC staff members noted that "focused research capacity" was not clearly defined, and that the objectives should be more aligned with what the program aims to fund. Based on comments from the survey, some researchers are not clear on the meaning of "focused research capacity".

Similarly, in a policy discussion document prepared by the 2008 ASU Committee, the members recommended that more specific objectives for the ASU Program should be defined. The committee suggested that objectives for the program should be aligned with criteria used to evaluate ASU proposals, and should focus on: 1) assessing the most promising areas in which to focus or concentrate research, 2) strengthening research capacity in the areas selected, and 3) where appropriate, supporting focus points or research centres.

Question 7.2 *To what extent have the ASU grants been invested in the intended activities?*

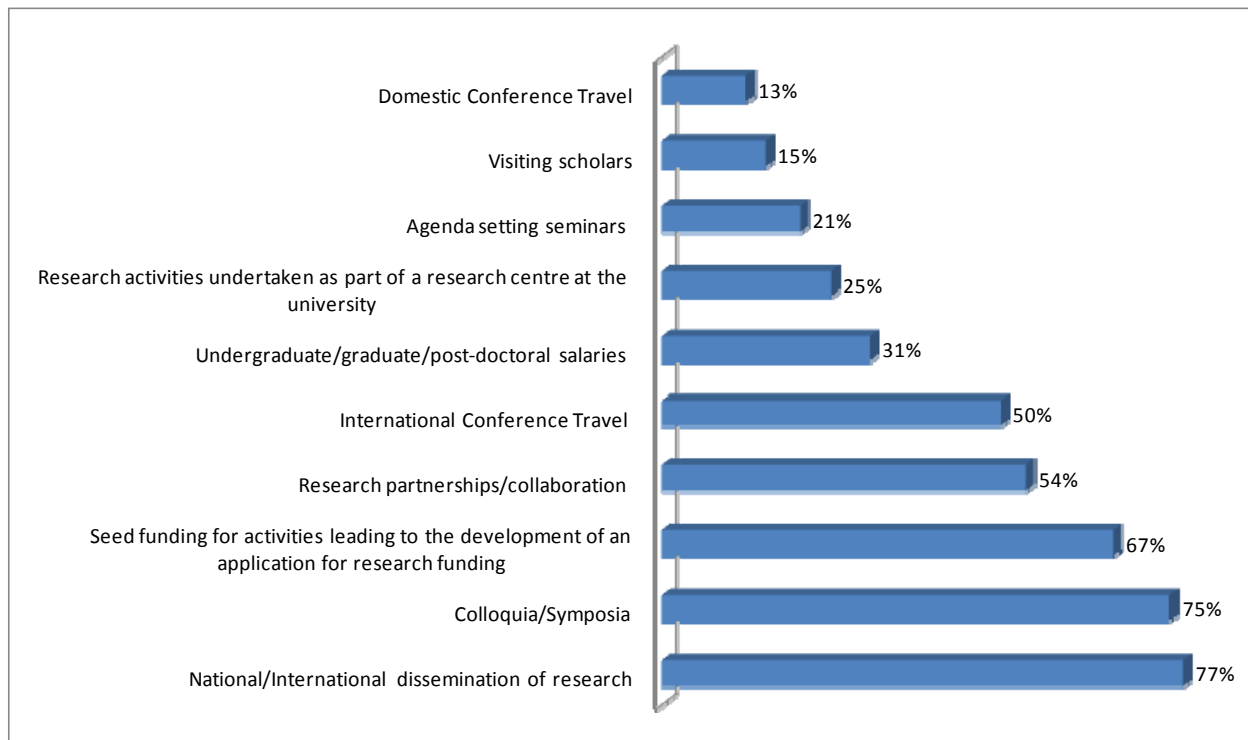
Finding: *The ASU grants appear to have been invested in activities that are aligned with the broad intentions of the program.*

According to the review undertaken by SSHRC, universities supported a variety of activities with their ASU Program funding, including funding research centres, organizing colloquia / symposia, visiting scholars, and providing stipends for doctoral students. The review did not find any examples where funded activities were not aligned with the intentions of the program.

Similarly, interviewed research officers all indicated that the funding received from the ASU Program had all been invested in activities that were aligned with SSHRC's intentions for the program. As one research officer noted, the objectives of the program are broad, and there are few limitations on what can be funded.

Surveyed ASU funding recipients noted a range of ways that ASU Program funds had been used. The most commonly indicated use of ASU funding was to support national / international dissemination of research (77% of recipients), as shown in Figure 14.

Figure 14: Use of ASU Program Funds

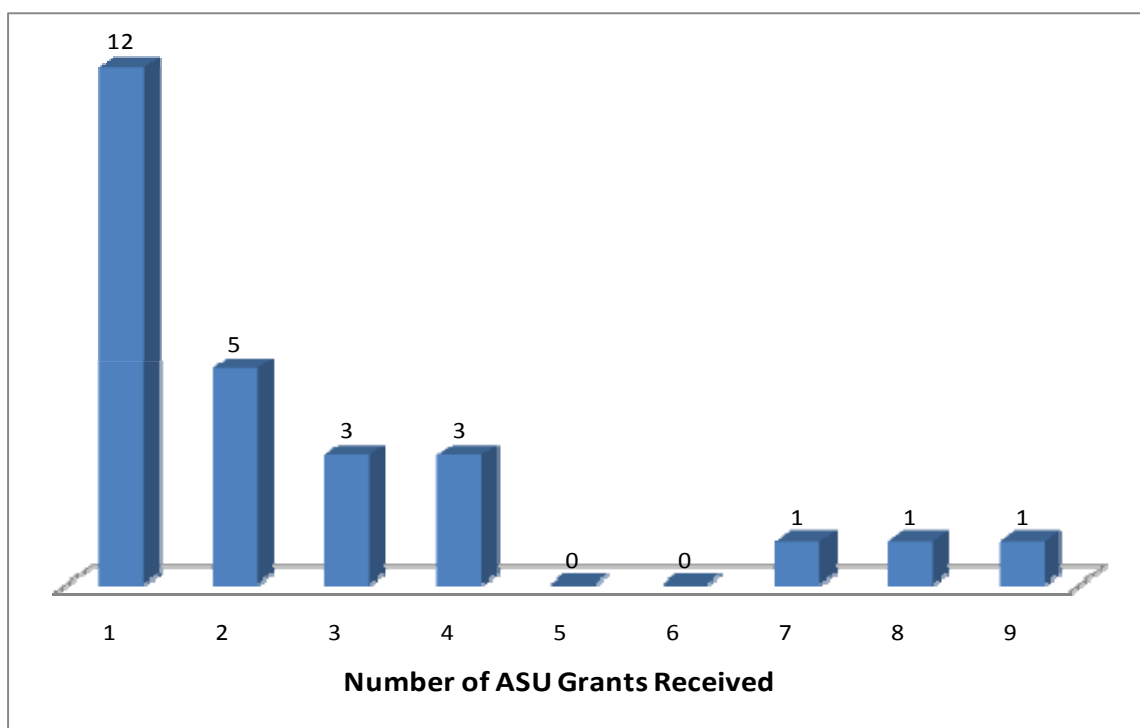


Source: Survey of ASU Recipients, n = 8-39

Note: Question allowed for multiple responses so total exceeds 100%.

Among surveyed ASU recipients indicating that they were aware they had received funding, the majority reported receiving one grant between 1998 and 2008. However, a few recipients indicated that they have received upwards of six ASU grants during the 10-year period examined in this evaluation.

Figure 15: Tally of Recipients Receiving Various Numbers of ASU Grants



Source: Survey of ASU Recipients, n=26

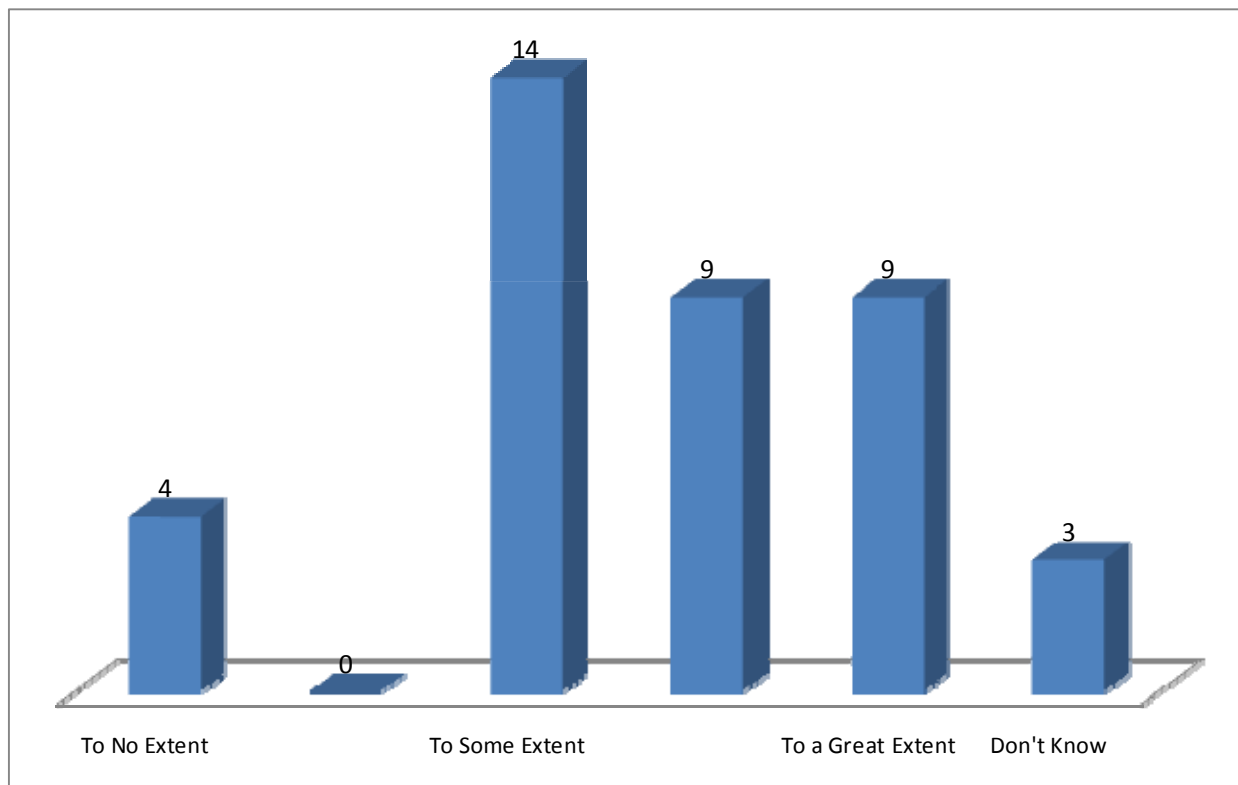
A total of 25 ASU recipients provided an estimate of the total amount of funding they received through the ASU Program at their current university between 1998 and 2008. These amounts varied between \$1,200 and \$90,000. On average (mean), each recipient received \$12,172. However, given the skewed nature of these data, the median and mode, \$5,000 per recipient (for both measures), are considered better measures.

Question 7.3 *To what extent have the intended researchers increased their competitiveness in SSHRC grant competitions?*

Finding: *It is not clear to what extent the ASU Program has increased the competitiveness of funded researchers in grant competitions, although it is perceived as having been beneficial.*

Based on its review of data from institution activity reports and other administrative information, SSHRC determined that there were insufficient available data to conclude whether the ASU Program had resulted in researchers increasing their competitiveness in SSHRC research grant competitions.

Figure 16: Perceived Extent to which Activities Undertaken with the Support of an ASU had Increased Competitiveness in Other Grant Competitions



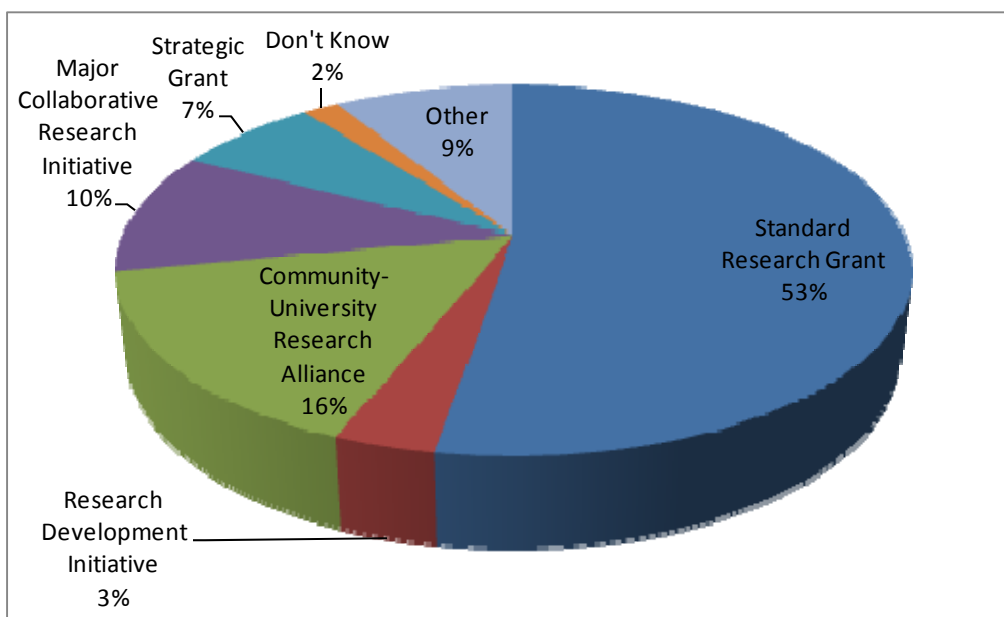
Source: Survey of SIG Recipients, n=39

Surveyed ASU Program recipients generally perceived their grant as having increased their competitiveness (see Figure 15). The majority (32 of 39 respondents, or 82%) of ASU Program recipients agreed (i.e., indicated some extent of impact or higher) that the activities undertaken with the support of their grant funding had assisted them in becoming competitive in other grant competitions. The majority of the research officers interviewed also stated that the ASU Program had helped to increase the competitiveness of researchers in SSHRC grant competitions.

Surveyed ASU recipients' rate of self-reported success (Mean = 51%) in other SSHRC grant competitions (e.g., Standard Research Grant, Strategic Grant, etc.) during the period from 2005 to 2008 was higher than that of non-recipients (in the comparison group) (Mean = 40%). However, there is a large amount of variability in success rates. As a result, this difference is not statistically significant ($t_{(127)} = 1.6, p > 0.05$).

As demonstrated in Figure 17, SRGs accounted for the most common type of successful applications for other SSHRC grants (i.e., not including the ASU Program) among ASU recipients.

Figure 17: Percentage of Other Types of SSHRC Grants Awarded to ASU Recipients, 2005-2008



Source: ASU Recipient Survey, n = 57

Question 7.4 *To what extent has the ASU Program helped participating universities increase their research capacity?*

Finding: *The ASU Program has increased focused research capacity at small universities, primarily through developing and supporting research centres.*

A key method of enhancing focused research capacity through the ASU Program has been through the development of research centres. Several examples were noted in both the review of activity reports and during interviews with research officers. Information is presented in Table 22. Given the different formats in which information is presented in the activity reports, it is likely that additional research activities were funded at research centres at these institutions than is presented here.

Table 22: ASU-funded Research Centre Activities and Reported Outcomes

University / Research Centre	Activities	Outcomes
University of Winnipeg		
The National Centre for First Nations Governance	Aboriginal Governance and Globalization Symposium (2008): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Two lectures by internationally acclaimed guest speakers Youth sessions Presentation of academic papers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New Master's program developed in aboriginal governance Forum on current Aboriginal governance topics 6 articles developed
Trent University		
Centre for Theory, Culture and Politics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Conferences Speakers series Seed research 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 1 publication
Frost Centre for Canadian and Native Studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seed research Guest speakers Conferences Collaboration with outside scholars 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 4 publications
The Trent University Archaeology Research Centre	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Seminar, lecture Biannual meeting Visiting speakers Co-sponsorship of annual student colloquium Book launch Conferences and colloquia lectures Workshops 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Research publications and presentations Activities helped to attract research associates
Saint Mary's University		
Gorsebrook Research Institute for Atlantic Canada Studies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 5 research projects Conferences, symposia, workshops Visiting researchers Student researchers 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 3 published books 8 published reports 8 published articles 18 papers presented at conferences
Vancouver Island University		
Institute for Coastal Resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Student salaries Undertake a conference 	No information provided

Source: Activity Reports Review

Surveyed ASU recipients were also asked to indicate the extent to which their funding had had an influence on a range of activities related to focused research capacity. Overall, ASU recipients strongly indicated that the funding had had a beneficial effect on each of these items (Table 23). As demonstrated by the Mean scores (on a scale from 1 “to no extent” to 5 “to a great extent”), researchers indicated that the ASU Program had the greatest impact on increasing overall capacity to conduct research, and on strengthening research capacity in a specific area. Scores were lowest in areas related to developing research ideas, topics or research centres that were completely new, suggesting that ASU funding is more commonly helping to further develop research activities that have already been, to some degree, initiated.

Table 23: ASU Recipients' Perspectives on Impact of ASU on Components of Focused Research Capacity

Focused Research Capacity Item	Mean	Standard Deviation
Increasing overall capacity to conduct research	4.4	0.9
Strengthening research capacity in a specific area	4.2	0.9
Developing a culture of research excellence	4.1	1.1
Strengthening an existing research centre at your university	4.0	1.2
Helping to leverage additional funding from other research funding sources	4.0	1.2
Enhancing research partnerships/collaboration	3.9	1.2
Assisting in strengthening research proposals for national funding competitions	3.9	1.1
Setting the research agenda/priorities at your university	3.6	1.3
Developing a new research centre at your university	3.4	1.7
Changing research activities to focus on a new area	3.2	1.4
Assessing/Determining the most promising content areas in which to focus research	3.2	1.3

Source: Survey of ASU Recipients, n = 18-38

An average (Mean) score was computed across all items⁴¹ to create a composite score of ASU recipients' perceived focused research capacity building resulting from ASU funding. Subsequent analysis revealed that there is a positive relationship ($r_{(23)} = 0.6$, $p < 0.05$) between perceived focus research capacity building among ASU recipients and their reported rates of success in other SSHRC competitions (e.g., SRGs, RDIs, etc.). This suggests that the more researchers perceived that ASU had an impact on increasing focused research capacity, the more successful they were in other SSHRC competitions. These results provide an interesting contrast with earlier analyses that demonstrated no significant difference in success in other SSHRC competition between ASU recipient and non-recipient groups.

Researchers who had not received ASU funding were asked their views about the extent to which additional funding aimed at developing and strengthening focused research capacity in the social sciences and humanities *would have* an impact on increasing aspects of focused research capacity. As shown in Table 24, these researchers believed that additional funding could have the largest implications for increasing overall capacity to conduct research and strengthening research capacity in a specific area.

⁴¹ Cronbach's alpha, a measure of internal consistency across items, is very good at 0.89.

Table 24: Non-Recipients' Perspectives on the Impact Additional Funding Would Have on Developing and Strengthening Focused Research Capacity

Focused Research Capacity Item	Mean	Standard Deviation
Increasing overall capacity to conduct research	4.7	0.7
Developing a culture of research excellence	4.6	0.8
Helping to leverage additional funding from other research funding sources	4.5	0.8
Assisting in strengthening research proposals for national funding competitions	4.4	0.9
Enhancing research partnerships/collaboration	4.4	0.8
Strengthening research capacity in a specific area	4.3	0.9
Developing a new research centre at your university	4.1	1.1
Strengthening an existing research centre at your university	4.1	1.0
Setting the research agenda/priorities at your university	4.0	1.1
Changing research activities to focus on a new area	3.8	1.1
Assessing/Determining the most promising content areas in which to focus research	3.8	1.1

Source: Survey of ASU Non-recipients, n = 179-214

Interviewed research officers were asked to what extent the ASU Program funding had helped to increase their university's focused research capacity. Most indicated that the program had helped, and provided examples related to the development of research centres. Two research officers noted that the program would have a greater impact if it was more targeted or focused in its design.

The review of the activity reports undertaken by SSHRC indicated that it was difficult to determine to what extent the program had succeeded in developing focused research capacity given that the concept of focused research capacity was not clearly defined. Some surveyed researchers also noted in their survey responses that "focused research capacity" was not clear to them as a concept.

5.3.2 Cost-Efficiency

Question 8. Has the ASU Program been delivered in a cost-efficient manner?

Finding: *SSHRC has administered 34 ASU Program applications and 22 awards per \$10,000 in administrative costs. A comparison of administrative costs with other grants programs at SSHRC suggests that the ASU Program has been delivered in a cost-efficient manner.*

During the period for which figures are available (2001-2002 to 2008-2009), the total amount of research funding provided for the ASU Program has remained constant at around \$600,000 per year (ranging from \$536,000 to \$629,000). This comprises less than one percent of SSHRC's annual research funding. The number of institutions in receipt of grants each year has also remained fairly constant: the ASU funded 21 institutions in 1981, and 22 in 2008-2009.

Table 25: ASU Program Grant Expenditures, 2001-02 to 2008-09

	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09
Total Grant Amount (\$)	629,000	594,000	588,000	536,000	594,000	616,000	604,000	605,000

Source: SSHRC, The Year in Numbers, 2009

SSHRC provided data on estimated expenditures for the administration of the ASU Program for the years 2002-2003, 2005-2006 and 2008-2009. These data are presented in Table 26, which shows actual estimated expenditures, and Table 27, which shows the same amounts adjusted to 2002 constant dollars for the sake of comparison across years. Given administrative difficulties in capturing the costs for the non-salary expenses, the amounts presented in the tables do not include expenses indirectly attributable to program such as general administration costs. Salary costs were estimated based on hours of related work multiplied by salary costs.

Table 26: ASU Program Estimated Direct Program Spending

Type of Costs	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09
Salary	\$0	\$6,340	\$0	\$0	\$6,768	\$0	\$0	\$6,950
Non-Salary	\$0	\$5,078	\$0	\$0	\$3,621	\$0	\$0	\$4,804
Total	\$0	\$11,418	\$0	\$0	\$10,389	\$0	\$0	\$11,754

Source: SSHRC

Table 27: ASU Program Estimated Direct Program Spending – 2002 Constant Dollars

Type of Costs	2001-02	2002-03	2003-04	2004-05	2005-06	2006-07	2007-08	2008-09
Salary	\$0	\$6,150	\$0	\$0	\$6,232	\$0	\$0	\$6,097
Non-Salary	\$0	\$4,925	\$0	\$0	\$3,335	\$0	\$0	\$4,214
Total	\$0	\$11,075	\$0	\$0	\$9,566	\$0	\$0	\$10,310

Source: SSHRC

Based on the above information, SSHRC estimated the costs to SSHRC for the administration of grants and awards for the 2002 and 2005 competition year grants. The results are shown in Table 28 (estimated actual dollars) and Table 29 (estimated actual dollars adjusted to 2002 constant dollars).

Table 28: Administrative Cost per Grant Application / Award for the ASU Program

Competition Year	Application			Award		
	Number of applications	Expenditures (\$)	Cost-Efficiency	Number of Awards	Expenditures (\$)	Cost-Efficiency
2002	36	11,418	32 appl/\$10,000	23	11,418	20 Awards /\$10,000
2005	34	10,389	33 appl/\$10,000	22	10,389	21 Awards /\$10,000
Total	70	21,807	32 appl/\$10,000	45	21,807	21 Awards /\$10,000

Source: SSHRC

Table 29: Administrative Cost per Grant Application / Award for the ASU Program – 2002 Constant Dollars

Competition Year	Application			Award		
	Number of applications	Expenditures (\$)	Cost-Efficiency	Number of Awards	Expenditures (\$)	Cost-Efficiency
2002	36	11,075	33 appl/\$10,000	23	11,075	21 Awards /\$10,000
2005	34	9,566	36 appl/\$10,000	22	9,566	23 Awards /\$10,000
Total	70	20,641	34 appl/\$10,000	45	20,641	22 Awards /\$10,000

Source: SSHRC

As demonstrated, for the 2002 and 2005 competition years, SSHRC administered 34 applications and 22 awards per \$10,000 in administrative cost.

Findings from recent program evaluations undertaken by SSHRC affords the opportunity to compare the relative costs of ASU Program's administration with that of other SSHRC grant programs, including the Indirect Costs Program and the Networks of Centres of Excellence Program, as well as the SIG Program. SSHRC calculated the administrative costs per \$1 million in grants, as well as the proportion of administrative costs to grants, for each of the programs.

The administration cost per \$1 million in grant expenditures for the ASU Program was \$7,041 or 0.7%. The administrative cost for the Indirect Costs Program was \$2,910 per \$1 million in grants, or 0.3%, which was deemed by SSHRC's evaluation team and Audit to be very low. For the SIG Program, which is co-delivered with participating universities, the cost to SSHRC of administration per \$1 million was \$1,254, or 0.1%. In comparison, the proportion of administrative costs to grant expenditures for the Networks of Centres of Excellence Program was 3.5 %.

While these programs all have somewhat different administrative requirements (e.g., the Networks of Centres of Excellence Program has a very large peer review workload) and sizes of grant budget), the comparison does suggest that the ASU Program is being delivered in a cost-efficient manner.

6. Conclusions and Recommendations

This section provides a summary of the conclusions related to the SIG and ASU Programs individually, as well as overall conclusions from the cluster evaluation. Potential options and recommendations following from these conclusions are also presented.

6.1 Conclusions

6.1.1 SIG Program Conclusions

The SIG Program is designed to address the need among social sciences and humanities researchers for funding support for small-scale research activities. The researchers and research officers perceive a need for SSHRC to continue to fund these activities. Researchers indicated a particular need for SSHRC to provide funding support to develop and strengthen research capacity, and to support collaborative research and the development of partnerships. Universities generally view the funding support from the SIG Program as critical to their institutional research funding, although for some smaller universities, the SIG grants have been too small to address any significant need.

The SIG Program is the only SSHRC program that provides funding support to all sizes of universities for small-scale research activities, including, for example, travel to conferences. However, insofar as the SIG Program is intended to support the development of new research projects, the program's objectives overlap with those of the current SSHRC Research Development Initiatives Program and the Research Development Program (planned as part of SSHRC's redevelopment of its PA).

As with all of SSHRC's research funding programs, the SIG Program is aligned with Government of Canada outcomes. The SIG Program is only moderately well aligned with SSHRC's Strategic Outcome of "Research – New knowledge based on excellent research in the social sciences and humanities", as the program does not generally, in itself, fund excellent research. The SIG Program is aligned with the three elements of SSHRC's vision: quality, connections and impact. Due to its broad objectives and the wide range of eligible activities under the program, the SIG Program objectives appears to be situated across two of the planned "umbrella programs" (Insight and Connection) of SSHRC's revised PA.

SSHRC has in the past expressed concern that delegating institutions the responsibility for allocation of grant funding to researchers may have compromised program accountability. The institutions examined in the evaluation appear to have implemented various processes that are systematic and involve peer review of applications. However, some instances were identified in which institutions have funded activities that are not allowable under the terms of the grant. The inadequate information requested from SSHRC, and inconsistent information submitted by institutions as part of reporting requirements for their grants, make it difficult to monitor institutional processes and the results of the grant funding. As a result, there is insufficient evidence to conclude on the extent to which institutions are consistently meeting SSHRC requirements related to their SIG grants.

Program management has been hampered by limited monitoring and follow-up from SSHRC program staff. The evaluation also noted that the long-standing issue of program visibility has not been addressed. Many researchers appear to be unaware of the program, including many whose research activities were funded by the SIG Program.

The SIG Program's formula for determining the value of its grants to institutions favours a small number of large universities with well-established research programs. The assumption is therefore that the program is rewarding past research activities and research excellence. However, this runs counter to the apparent goal of the program of developing research capacity.

Despite the issues identified with the program delivery, it should be noted that surveyed SIG recipients expressed a high degree of satisfaction with their grants.

The SIG Program has been invested in a fairly wide range of activities—including travel to conferences, small research projects, student salaries, and other activities. In medium-sized universities, these activities were mostly dedicated to assisting new scholars in starting their careers. Small universities focused their activities on enhancing national and international dissemination and collaboration, whereas large universities focused on assisting researchers in reorienting and strengthening their careers.

Institutions praised the flexibility of the program, which allowed them to tailor their grant to meet their needs. While the program is perceived by researchers and research officers as having been successful in increasing competitiveness in national grant competitions, the empirical evidence is not sufficient to conclude on this. The small scale of the research activities funded has limited the extent to which the program has likely achieved its expected outcome of increasing research capacity.

In comparison with other SSHRC grants programs, the SIG Program has demonstrated a high degree of cost-efficiency. SSHRC administered 43 applications and 42 awards per \$10,000 in administrative cost. The co-delivery of the program with funded universities has reduced the administrative costs to SSHRC.

6.1.2 ASU Program Conclusions

Researchers, research officers, and other stakeholders strongly perceive a continued need for research funding specifically targeted to small universities. Much of this need was perceived to be related to the issue of equity: the ASU was perceived as having helped to mitigate barriers to research activities that were more commonly faced by researchers at small institutions, such as higher teaching loads and geographic isolation, among many others. Furthermore, the ASU Program provides funding support to small universities that receive relatively limited institutional research funding through the SIG Program. There were no other programs that appeared to duplicate the support provided by the ASU Program.

The ASU Program's objective is only moderately well aligned with SSHRC strategic outcome of "Research – New knowledge based on excellent research in the social sciences and humanities". Through developing and strengthening focused research capacity, the ASU Program does work

to generate new knowledge in the social sciences and humanities, although the program is more related to institutional capacity building than research excellence. Similarly, it is not directly aligned with the identified operational priorities for SSHRC, which include ensuring “the world-class excellence of SSHRC funded research, and promote new knowledge in priority areas, through research and training”, as it is focused on capacity building and does not prioritize particular research topics.

The objective of the ASU Program (“to enable small universities to develop and strengthen focused research capacity”) is broad and lacks clarity and precision (i.e., what is focused research capacity and how should institutions achieve it?). As a result, the expected outcomes of the program are similarly broad and ill-defined.

No specific issues were identified by SSHRC or research officers related to SSHRC’s processes for allocating ASU funding to institutions. However, recipients of ASU Program funding demonstrated a fairly significant degree of dissatisfaction with SSHRC allocation criteria and processes.

ASU Program funding is often combined with other sources of institutional funding, or is delivered to researchers under the titles for institutional grants used by different institutions. As a result, there appears to be an inconsistent awareness among even ASU recipients that SSHRC was the source of funding.

Reporting, monitoring and general management of the program appears to have been limited. The lack of consistency in the information provided by institutions, the lack of appropriate information being requested in activity reports, and varying levels of compliance by institutions in reporting makes it challenging to gather program-wide information on activities funded or on attainment of expected outcomes.

As with SIG Program funding recipients, the vast majority of surveyed ASU funding recipients indicated that they were satisfied or very satisfied with the grant they received.

Based on available information, ASU Program funds have been used to support national and international dissemination of research, colloquia / symposia, and other activities. Many examples were provided of ASU Program funding having been used to create and support research centres, which was a key identified strength of the program.

SSHRC has administered 34 ASU Program applications and 22 awards per \$10,000 in administrative costs. A comparison of administrative costs with other grants programs at SSHRC suggests that the ASU Program has been delivered in a cost-efficient manner.

6.1.3 Overall Conclusions of the Cluster Evaluation

Undertaking the evaluation of the two programs through the use of a cluster approach has highlighted many commonalities between SIG, a formula-based program, and ASU, a competition-based program. It has also pointed to the need for decision-making on the future of the programs to examine both programs in tandem.

Overall, as per the surveys and interviews, the evaluation findings suggest that there is strong support from researchers, research officers and other stakeholders for continued SSHRC funding to support dissemination, collaboration and small-scale research projects. There is some ambiguity, however, regarding whether SSHRC sees itself having a role in developing research capacity at the institutional level.

The lack of clear and precise objectives for either the SIG or the ASU Programs has meant that the programs, while complementary, are not clearly defined or differentiated. The ASU Program appears to sometimes be perceived as helping to address the inequities of the SIG Program's formula-based funding for small universities. However, it cannot be successful in this regard because not all small universities receive ASU Program funding and because the ASU Program is also designed to build research capacity in focused areas, which would exclude some researchers. While the two programs have very different grant sizes, there is also some overlap with the RDI Program objectives that should be addressed through a clearer differentiation of SSHRC funding programs intended to support research development.

The SIG and ASU Programs both suffer from similar flaws in program delivery. Both programs lack user-friendly reporting systems for funded institutions, and have poor reporting templates that do not ask institutions to provide appropriate information on the use and results of the grants. There has been limited monitoring and follow-up from SSHRC on either program, although the management by SSHRC of the ASU Program's peer review process has allowed closer management of that program. While both programs have been relatively cost-efficient, this may be as much a result of the low level of oversight and interest in the programs within SSHRC as any particular design or delivery characteristics of the two programs.

Notwithstanding these issues, there have been clear benefits from the programs and both institutions and researchers expressed a high degree of satisfaction with the two programs. The wide range of activities funded by the programs speaks to the broad objectives of the programs, and to the flexibility afforded to institutions in addressing their own priorities and needs. At the same time, a more clearly defined focus and purpose for SSHRC institutional funding may provide more targeted results in the future.

6.2 Options and Recommendations

Recommendation #1: The evaluation first and foremost recommends that SSHRC should develop a clear statement and policy with regard to its role in institutional capacity building as a precursor to any significant changes to the SIG and ASU Programs.

Three basic options exist for SSHRC with respect to the future of the two institutional research programs. Based on the findings of the evaluation, and following a discussion with SSHRC program managers and staff, the following section provides some details on these options.

Choosing the best option first requires SSHRC to clarify its objectives and priorities with respect to research support. In light of this need for further clarity in policy direction, this report does

not recommend a particular option but provides some recommendations and potential implications, based on the findings and discussions of the evaluation.

Option #1: Retain, but Modify, the Existing Two Programs

The evaluation identified positive impacts from both programs. SSHRC could, therefore, decide to keep both the SIG and ASU Programs as part of its suite of research support programs.

However, the evaluation did identify significant areas of the programs' design and delivery that require modification if the programs are to continue. As a result, the following recommendations are proposed should SSHRC decide to selection Option #1. SSHRC would have three years to design and implement this option, as it has already announced the SIG Program competition for the next three-year grant period (i.e., for award years 2011 to 2013) with only minor adjustments to the design and delivery of the programs.

- Recommendation #1.1: SSHRC should re-develop its objectives and expected outcomes for the two programs. These objectives should be clear, precise and targeted and should be achievable given the limited program budgets and, for the SIG Program, the small size of the grants to individual researchers.
 - For the SIG Program, new objectives should clearly distinguish the program from other existing and planned programs at SSHRC (including the Research Development Grants Program).
 - Also for the SIG Program, the program's objectives should help to clearly situate the program within SSHRC's new PA.
 - A new logic model should also be developed following the development of new objectives.
- Recommendation #1.2: Ensure that the design of the programs follows logically from the revised program objectives. For example:
 - Ensure that the funding formula for the SIG Program is aligned with program's objectives.
 - For the SIG Program, devise a formula that creates a more equitable distribution of funding between small and larger universities. This could also be improved through implementing minimum institutional grant and/or through creating a maximum grant size, for example.
- Recommendation #1.3: Revise reporting templates to collect consistent, precise information from institutions related to program objectives / expected outcomes and funding allocation processes. Revise systems to make reporting and monitoring accessible and user-friendly. This could, for example, entail the use of an online reporting system for institutions, similar to that used for the SRG Program.
- Recommendation #1.4: For the SIG Program, ensure that SSHRC is an active partner with institutions in the management of the funding. This should include undertaking

consistent and timely monitoring of institutional practices and undertaking immediate and appropriate follow-up, in cases where institutional practices or uses of grant funding are not consistent with the programs' terms or expectations.

- Recommendation #1.5: Examine how SSHRC can increase the visibility of the two programs among researchers and other stakeholders.

Should SSHRC choose Option #1, some potential positive implications would include:

- Addressing the design and delivery shortcomings in the two programs will strengthen the two programs. Most crucially, longstanding issues with respect to weaknesses in reporting / monitoring and program management will be addressed, and accountability will improve as a consequence.
- Maintaining the two programs, while addressing their weaknesses, will better facilitate achieving the (current) objectives of the programs.
- While design modifications will result in some changes in the size of the institutional grants, compared with the other options, this option will likely generate the least negative reaction from the institutions, many of whom have come to depend on these funding to further their research programs.

Negative implications may include:

- The required modification of the programs' design and delivery, and increased monitoring and management in the future, will entail significant additional SSHRC resources. The required administrative and management resources may be disproportionate to the actual grants budget, and there is a significant risk that the programs will become inefficient as a result.
- Some institutions may see their institutional grants decrease in value, and this may cause a negative reaction.
- Maintaining two relatively small institutional programs is not aligned with the current redevelopment of the SSHRC PA and the move to rationalize / streamline SSHRC's program offerings.
- Responsibility for the allocation of SIG Program funding to individual researchers will remain with the institutions, which continues to present a risk in terms of the accountability for these funds.

Option #2: Create a New Program

The second option would be for SSHRC to end both the SIG and ASU Program and create a single, new program that, by itself, meets all of SSHRC's objectives for institutional funding.

While this would entail a radical change in programming, as with the previous option, SSHRC would have at least three years to design and implement this option, which should be sufficient.

The following recommendations should be considered in pursuing this option:

- Recommendation #2.1: As part of the design of a new program, SSHRC should undertake a comprehensive, inclusive and formal consultation process with institutional administrators and researchers, and within SSHRC management, in order to identify program needs, priorities, and design / delivery options. Consultations will help to address such questions as:
 - What types of research activities at institutions would most benefit from SSHRC institutional funding support?
 - Is concentrating research in specific topic areas (such as through research centres) the most effective method of furthering research capacity at small universities?
- Recommendation #2.2: SSHRC should ensure that the design of any new institutional funding program carefully balances the needs of institutions of different sizes. For example, a formula-based design should not result in small institutions receiving grants that are too small to result in any significant research activity.
- Recommendation #2.3: SSHRC should launch a new communications strategy to coincide with a new program, in order to increase the visibility of its institutional research funding.

Some potential positive implications of Option #2 include:

- The ASU Program is sometimes perceived as acting as a supplement to the SIG Program, in that it can help to address some of the limitations of the SIG Program in adequately addressing small universities' needs. Developing a single, new institutional program would allow SSHRC to address these shortcomings more effectively through a single program.
- This option would effectively allow SSHRC to go "back to the drawing board" in order to develop a new program based on clearly defined goals and principles that are feasible given the length of the term and amount of the grant.
- Reducing the number of programs would help to streamline and simplify SSHRC's program offerings. This would improve the coherency of SSHRC's research program, which is aligned with the intentions of the current PA redevelopment at the Council.
- One program would reduce the amount of administration required on the part of SSHRC (for program monitoring and administration) and small universities that would receive both grants (for applications, reporting).
- The launch of a new program could provide SSHRC a good opportunity to address the low level of visibility of SSHRC institutional funding among researchers.

The potential negative implications include:

- There may be institutions that see a decrease in the value of their institutional funding from SSHRC, or, potentially, that would no longer be eligible for institutional funding. This would likely reduce some institutions' ability to carry out their usual research activities. This would also likely generate a negative reaction from these institutions, many of whom have come to depend on these funding to further their research programs.

- This would require SSHRC to expend significantly more resources towards the design and implementation of a new program (though perhaps not more than would be expended for the major changes required in option #1).

Option #3: Eliminate One or Both Programs

The third option is to eliminate SSHRC institutional funding altogether, or, at least, to eliminate one of the programs. This is obviously the most radical option, but it is not without precedent: NSERC eliminated its institutional funding support program when the GRF was created in 1992. As previously stated, SSHRC must look at its overall priorities and clarify its future role in institutional funding.

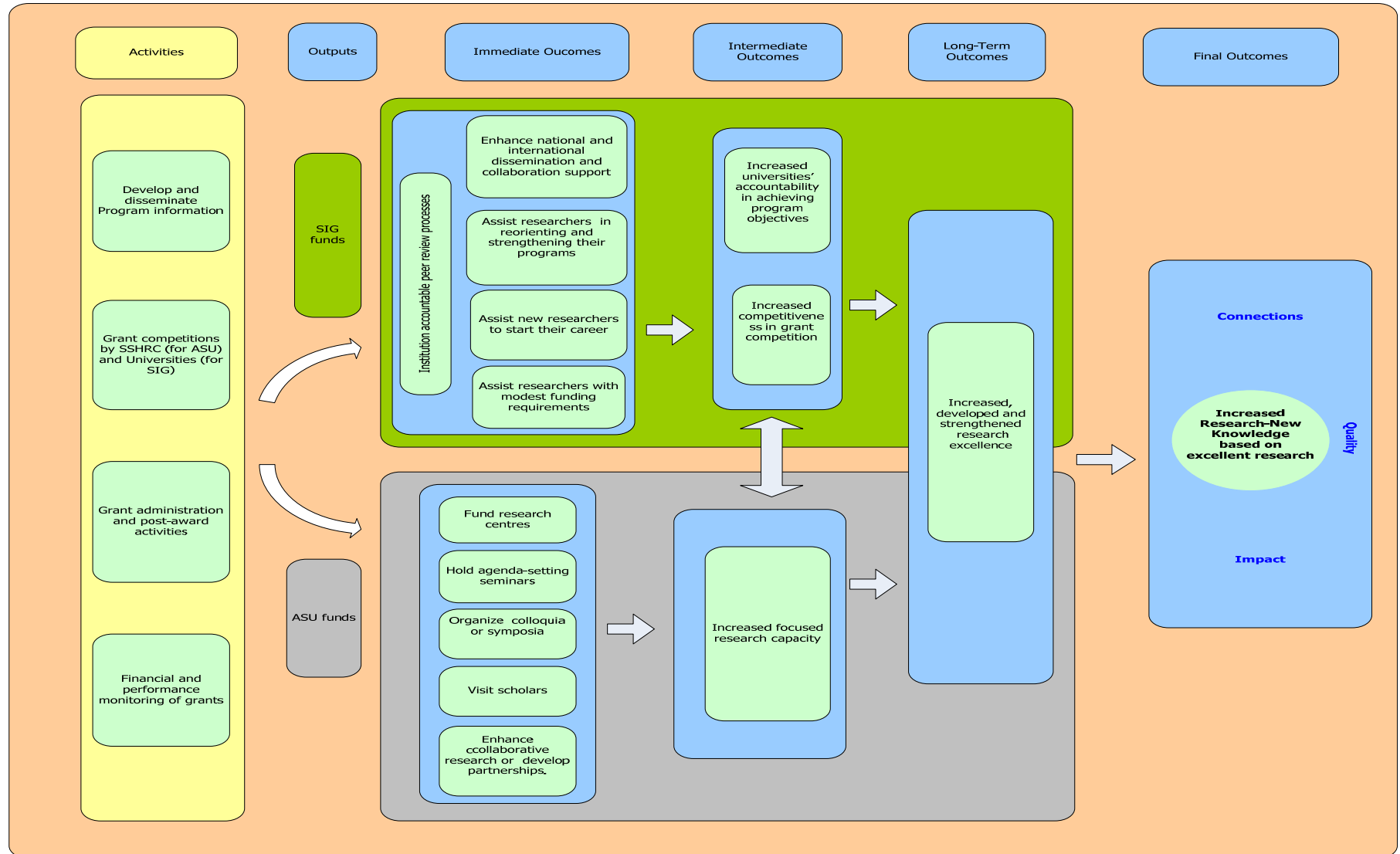
The evaluation findings have demonstrated that both programs have been beneficial to institutions, and the elimination of institutional funding would have some impact on the amount of research-related activities at universities.

Some measures may be considered in order to fill the gaps left by eliminating one or both the programs, including special considerations of small universities in other funding opportunities at SSHRC (if the ASU Program is to be eliminated), expansion of the Research Development and Partnership Development grants funding opportunities, or others. Eliminating one of the programs would require further examination of the impact of such a change. SSHRC would need to explore whether there are other means to provide similar support to researchers.

If SSHRC eliminated the SIG Program and retained the ASU Program, this would signal that SSHRC sees a stronger need to support smaller universities. Conversely, eliminating the ASU Program and retaining the SIG Program would signal that SSHRC sees a stronger need to support medium and large universities. The findings of this evaluation provide limited evidence in support of either of these directions.

Annex A: SIG and ASU Logic Model

Graphic 1 SIG & ASU Logic Model



Annex B: Evaluation Matrix

Issues & Questions	Indicators	Source of data							
		Documents and Files Review	Interviews with Key Informants	Interviews with Research Officers	Survey with researchers	Evaluation Reports Review	Activity reports Review	Case study Analysis	Cost-efficiency Analysis
1. Relevance									
Issue 1: Continued Need for the Programs									
Question 1 - Policy What is the rationale for supporting SIG and ASU given the current level of the institutions' needs?	1.1 Trend in number and amount of SIG grants	X				X	X	X	
	1.2 Trend in number and amount of ASU grants	X				X	X	X	
	1.3 Evidence of perceived importance and rationale for key informants		X					X	
	1.4 Evidence of perceived importance and rationale for Research Officers			X				X	
	1.5 Evidence of perceived importance and rationale for researchers (for SIG)				X			X	
	1.6 Distinctiveness vis-a-vis other sources of funds (GRF, other SSHRC programs like RDI, provincial funding, etc)	X	X	X	X			X	
Issue 2: Alignment with Federal Government and SSHRC priorities and policies									
Question 2 - Policy Are the SIG and ASU Program objectives aligned with the Federal Government's Framework ⁴² , and SSHRC's Strategic Plan and PAA?	2.1 Evidence of program alignment with the Federal Government's Framework and SSHRC's Strategic Plan and PAA	X	X					X	

⁴² TBS *Whole-of-Government Framework*, 2005

2. Delivery									
Issue 3: Institution Peer Review Process									
Question 3 – Accountability Processes									
To what extent is the peer review process at SSHRC and in participating universities meeting accountability requirements?	3.1 View of key informants		X					X	
	3.2 View of Research Officers			X				X	
	3.3 Evidence of accountable processes	X	X	X	X			X	
Question 4 - SIG Accessibility									
To what extent has the universities' internal competition process enabled the intended researchers to access the SIG grants?	4.1 View of Research Officers			X				X	
	4.2 View of researchers				X			X	
	4.3 Trend in number and nature of researchers with small research needs	X			X		X	X	
Question 5 Reporting and Monitoring									
How relevance and effective is the reporting and monitoring of SIG and ASU?									
	5.1 Relevance	X	X	X			X	X	X
	5.2 Consistence	X	X	X			X	X	X
	5.3 Timeliness	X	X	X			X	X	X
	5.4 Completeness	X	X	X			X	X	X
	5.6 Effectiveness	X	X	X			X	X	X
	5.7 Compliance with the reporting requirements	X	X	X			X	X	
3. Performance									
Issue 4: Effectiveness of the Programs									
Question 6 - Program Objectives Appropriateness									
To what extent are the SIG and ASU Program objectives specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bound (SMART)?	6.1 View of key informants on clarity and ease of evaluation of objectives		X					X	
	6.2 Evidence of SMART program objectives	X	X	X				X	
Question 7 - Investment in research capacity Building									
7.1 To what extent have the SIG grants been invested in the intended activities?	7.1.1 View of Research Officers			X				X	
	7.1.2 View of researchers				X				
	7.1.3 Number and type of SIG intended research activities	X				X	X	X	
	7.1.4 Consistence between the SIG supported activities and the program objectives	X	X	X			X	X	
	7.1.5 Amount and trend of grants invested in SIG intended research	X				X	X	X	

	activities								
7.2 To what extent have the ASU grants been invested in the intended activities?	7.2.1 View of Research Officers			X				X	
	7.2.2 View of researchers				X				
	7.2.3 Number and type of ASU intended research activities	X				X	X	X	
	7.2.4 Consistence between the SIG supported activities and the program objectives	X	X	X			X	X	
	7.2.5 Amount and trend of grants invested in ASU intended research activities	X				X	X	X	
7.3 To what extent have the intended researchers increased their competitiveness in SSHRC grant competitions?	7.3.1 View of Research Officers			X				X	
	7.3.2 View of researchers				X			X	
	7.3.3 Number and trend of success on the A4-list and in other SSHRC competitions (SRG, RDI, etc.)	X			X		X	X	
	7.3.4 Number and trend in grants competition (appl & awards) of SIG intended researchers	X				X	X	X	
	7.3.5 Evidence of capacity improvement	X		X	X			X	
7.4 To what extent have the SIG and ASU participating universities increased their focused research capacity?	7.4.1 View of key informants		X					X	
	7.4.2 View of Research Officers			X				X	
	7.4.3 View of researchers				X				
	7.4.4 Number and trend of focused research (projects)	X				X	X	X	
	7.4.5 Evidence of capacity improvement	X	X	X				X	
Issue 5: Cost- Efficiency									
Question 8									
Have the SIG and ASU Programs been delivered in a cost-efficient manner?	8.1 Administrative cost per grant application	X					X	X	X
	8.2 Administrative cost per award	X					X	X	X
	8.3 % of change in # of applications/ administrative cost	X					X	X	X

Annex C: List of Documents Reviewed

Year	Title/Contents	Author	Format
1984	Report of the SSHRC General Research Grants Program Evaluation Project	Bruce A. McFarlane	CPE Repository
1989	Report to SSHRC on the Evaluation Study of the Aid to Small University Program	SSHRC	CPE Repository
1989	Research Grants Review Committee. Final Report.	SSHRC	CPE Repository
1995	SSHRC. Evaluation of the General Research Grants Program. Final Report.	SSHRC	CPE Repository
2000	The Analysis of the Use of SIG 1995-1997	Elaine Gauthier	CPE Repository
2002 - 08	ASU Activity Reports	SSHRC	AMIS database
2002 - 08	SIG Activity Reports	SSHRC	AMIS database
2005	Whole-of-Government Framework http://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/rma/krc/framework-05_e.asp	TBS	Website
2006	SIG Report	RDG Division	Hard-copy
2006	SSHRC's PAA 2009-2010 http://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/rpp/2007-2008/sshrc-crshc/sshrc-crshc01-eng.asp	SSHRC	Website
2006	SSHRC's Strategic Plan: Framing Our Direction http://docs.google.com/viewer?a=v&q=cache:TDbFYAqY-oJ:www.sshrc.ca/site/about-crsh/publications/framing_our_direction_e.pdf+SSHRC+Strategic+Plan:+Framing+Our+Direction&hl=en&gl=ca&pid=bl&srcid=ADGEESh_EaBvZjiOpFrFO5254PW_DtG54R8pptBN6Vt5xoLOSz-UplGdTsIghIT6DNpizJIMFMo7IFsFbkCFnAELAp2oObLhvZ8D3yYj7OEm7MJ5zeccAzojHNJfcdGFJ5jiNpK6dq4&sig=AHIEtbTgLLfwpEsSv5-3mBycb3HmX_-0Wg	SSHRC	Website
2007	Mobilizing Science and Technology Strategy to Canada's Advantage http://www.ic.gc.ca/eic/site/ic1.nsf/eng/h_00231.html	Government of Canada	Website
2008	Policy Discussion Report for the 2008 ASU Committee	SSHRC	CPE Repository
2009	Report on Plans and Priorities http://www.tbs-sct.gc.ca/rpp/2009-2010/index-eng.asp?acr=1429	TBS	Website
2009	Report on SSHRC's Institutional Grants (SIG) and Aid to Small Universities Grants (ASU)	RDG Division	Hard-copy
2009	SSHRC Research and Dissemination Grants Division. Memo October 21, 2009 "SSHRC's Institutional Grants (SIG and Aid to Small Universities Grants (ASU))".	SSHRC	
2009	SSHRC: The Year in Numbers 2008-09	SSHRC	Hard-copy
2009-10	SSHRC. Framing our Direction.	SSHRC	Website
2010	ASU Program Description http://www.sshrc-crsh.gc.ca/site/apply-demande/program_descriptions-descriptions_de_programmes/aid_small_universities-aide_petites_universites-eng.aspx	SSHRC	Website
2010	Briefing on SSHRC's Renewed Program Architecture	SSHRC	CPE Repository
2010	SIG Program Description http://www.sshrc-crsh.gc.ca/site/apply-demande/program_descriptions-descriptions_de_programmes/institutional_grants-subventions_institutionnelles-eng.aspx	SSHRC	Website

Annex D: Interview Questions

External Key Informants

Background

1. How familiar are you with SSHRC funding to support small-scale research activities or targeted to small universities to develop research capacity? Are you familiar with the SIG and ASU Programs, for example?

Relevance of the SIG and ASU Programs

2. Is there a continued need for SSHRC to provide funding to universities to support small-scale research activities by social sciences and humanities faculty? Why or why not?
3. Is there a continued need for SSHRC to provide additional funding support specifically targeted for small universities to develop and strengthen focused research capacity in the social sciences and humanities? Why or why not?
4. Are you aware of other sources of funding that:
 - support small-scale research activities for researchers in the social sciences and humanities?
 - are targeted to small universities to develop and strengthen focused research capacity in the social sciences and humanities?

These sources can include other funding available from federal, provincial or other organizations.

5. If yes to Q4 and if aware of the SIG and ASU Programs:
 - a. How are these other funding sources similar to the SIG and ASU Programs?
 - b. How do these other funding sources differ from the SIG and ASU Programs?
 - c. Do these other funding sources duplicate or complement the SIG and ASU Programs, in your opinion?

Delivery

6. Are you aware of any issues with respect to the delivery/administration of SSHRC funding to support small-scale research activities or targeted to small universities to develop research capacity? For example, in the case of SIG and ASU, are you aware of any issues with respect to the allocation of funding to individual researchers?

Performance

SIG Program

7. To what extent are the SIG Program objectives specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bound (SMART)?

[OBJECTIVES ARE PROVIDED IN THE ANNEX TO THIS INTERVIEW GUIDE.]

[IF AWARE OF THE SIG PROGRAM]

8. To what extent has the SIG Program helped participating universities increase their research capacity? Please explain your answer.
 - a. Can you provide some examples or evidence of capacity improvement?

ASU Program

9. To what extent is the objective of the ASU Program specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bound (SMART)?

[IF AWARE OF THE ASU PROGRAM]

10. To what extent has the ASU Program helped participating universities increase their focused research capacity? Please explain your answer.
- a. Can you provide some examples or evidence of capacity improvement?

Other

11. Do you have any other comments about either the SIG or ASU Programs?

Thank you for your assistance in this important evaluation.

Research Officers

Background

1. Can you briefly describe your involvement with the SIG Program and/or ASU Program?

Relevance of the SIG and ASU Programs

2. Is there a continued need for SSHRC to provide funding to your university to support small-scale research activities by social sciences and humanities faculty? Why or why not?

[FOR ASU RECIPIENTS:]

3. Is there a continued need for SSHRC to provide additional funding support specifically targeted for small universities to develop and strengthen focused research capacity in the social sciences and humanities? Why or why not?

[FOR SIG RECIPIENTS:]

4. Are you aware of other sources of funding that are similar to that of the SIG Program? These sources can include other funding available from SSHRC, as well as from other federal, provincial or other organizations.

[IF YES, ASK:]

- a. How are these other funding sources similar to the SIG Program?
- b. How do these other funding sources differ from the SIG Program?
- c. Do these other funding sources duplicate or complement the SIG Program, in your opinion?
- d. Does your institution benefit from any of these programs? If yes, how much does it receive?

[FOR ASU RECIPIENTS:]

5. Are you aware of other sources of funding that are similar to that of the ASU Program? These sources can include other funding available from SSHRC, as well as from other federal, provincial or other organizations.

[IF YES, ASK:]

- a. How are these other funding sources similar to the ASU Program?
- b. How do these other funding sources differ from the ASU Program?
- c. Do these other funding sources duplicate or complement the ASU Program, in your opinion?
- d. Does your institution benefit from any of these programs? If yes, how much does it receive?

Delivery

[FOR SIG RECIPIENTS:]

6. Please describe how the SIG Program funds are administered at your university.
 - a. Are the SIG Program funds combined with other funding sources or are they administered separately at your university?
 - b. If combined with other funding sources, what proportion of the entire pooled funding for institutional research grants comes from the SIG Program? If combined with ASU, what proportion of the combined funding is from each of the two programs?
 - c. Are the SIG Program funds renamed as part of your university's research funding program?
 - d. Are the SIG Program funds administered by the research office or other offices of the university?

7. Please describe the process at your university for SIG Program funding competitions.

[FOR SIG RECIPIENTS:]

8. Please comment on the extent to which the funding competition processes are meeting both SSHRC and institutional accountability requirements (i.e., are the processes fair, equitable and adequate). Could you please provide us with copies of peer review reports for your institution?

[FOR SIG RECIPIENTS:]

9. Using the rating scale below, please indicate the effectiveness of your university's internal competition process for the SIG Program at funding the intended researchers. Please explain your response.

Not at all effective

1

2

3

4

Very Effective

5

[FOR ASU RECIPIENTS:]

10. Please describe how the ASU Program funds are administered at your university.

- a. Are the ASU Program funds combined with other funding sources or are they administered separately at your university?
- b. If combined with other funding, what proportion of the entire pooled funding for institutional research grants comes from the ASU Program? If combined with the SIG Program funding, what proportion of the combined funding is from each of the two programs?
- c. Are the ASU Program funds renamed as part of your university's research funding program?
- d. Are the ASU Program funds administered by the research office or other offices of the university?

11. Please comment on how SSHRC's funding competition processes for the ASU Program are meeting accountability requirements (i.e., are the processes fair, equitable and adequate).

[FOR SIG RECIPIENTS:]

12. Please comment on the following aspects of reporting for the SIG Program:

- a. Relevance (e.g., is the appropriate type of information being collected?)
- b. Consistency (e.g., is information being collected and provided in a consistent manner?)
- c. Timely (e.g., is your institution providing information to SSHRC when it is due?)
- d. Completeness (e.g., is your institution providing complete information in Activity Reports?)
- e. Effectiveness (e.g., is information being collected supportive of learning and decision making?)
- f. Compliance with SSHRC reporting requirements

13. Does your research office keep documentation (project reports, proceedings and reports from seminars) to support what is reported in the SIG Program Activity Reports?

[FOR ASU RECIPIENTS:]

14. Please comment on the following aspects of reporting for the ASU:

- a. Relevance (e.g., is the Activity Report well designed?)
- b. Consistency (e.g., is information being collected and provided in a consistent manner?)
- c. Timely (e.g., is your institution providing information to SSHRC when it is due?)
- d. Completeness (e.g., is your institution providing complete information in Activity Reports?)
- e. Effectiveness (e.g., is information being collected supportive of learning and decision making?)
- f. Compliance with SSHRC reporting requirements

15. Does your research office keep documentation (project reports, proceedings and reports from seminars) to support what is reported in the ASU Program Activity Reports?

Performance

[FOR SIG RECIPIENTS]

16. To what extent are the SIG Program objectives specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bound (SMART)?
[OBJECTIVES ARE PROVIDED IN THE ANNEX TO THIS INTERVIEW GUIDE.]
17. Have the activities funded by the SIG Program in your university been consistent with the program's objectives? Please explain your answer.
18. To what extent have the SIG Program grants been invested in the intended activities? Are there other activities that could be funded? Please explain your answer
19. Using the rating scale below, please indicate the extent to which the SIG Program has helped your university increase its research capacity. Please explain your answer.

No Extent				Great Extent
1	2	3	4	5

20. Can you provide any examples of improved research capacity that resulted from SIG Program grants at your university?
21. Using the rating scale below, please indicate the effectiveness of the SIG Program at increasing researchers' competitiveness in SSHRC grant competitions at your university. Please explain your response.

Not at all Effective				Very Effective
1	2	3	4	5

22. Do you have any suggestions for how the SIG Program could be improved?

[FOR ASU RECIPIENTS]

23. To what extent is the objective of the ASU Program specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bound (SMART)?
[OBJECTIVE IS PROVIDED IN THE ANNEX TO THIS INTERVIEW GUIDE.]
24. Have the activities funded by the ASU Program at your university been consistent with the program's objective? Please explain your answer.
25. To what extent have the ASU Program grants been invested in the intended activities? Are there other activities that could be funded? Please explain your answer.
26. Using the rating scale below, please indicate the extent to which the ASU Program has helped your university increase its focused research capacity. Please explain your answer.

No Extent				Great Extent
1	2	3	4	5

27. Can you provide any examples of specific improved capacity in focused research that resulted from ASU Program grants at your university?

28. Using the rating scale below, please indicate the effectiveness of the ASU Program at increasing researchers' competitiveness in SSHRC grant competitions at your university. Please explain your response.

Not at all effective

1

2

3

4

Very Effective

5

29. Do you have any suggestions for how the ASU Program could be improved?

Other

30. Do you have any other comments about either the SIG or ASU Programs?

Thank you for your assistance in this important evaluation.

SSHRC Internal Key Informants

Background

12. Can you briefly describe your involvement with the SIG and ASU Programs?

Relevance of the SIG and ASU Programs

13. Is there a continued need for SSHRC to provide funding to universities to support small-scale research activities by social sciences and humanities faculty? Why or why not?

14. Is there a continued need for SSHRC to provide additional funding support specifically targeted for small universities to develop and strengthen focused research capacity in the social sciences and humanities? Why or why not?

15. Are you aware of other sources of funding that are similar to that of the SIG and ASU Programs? These sources can include other funding available from SSHRC, as well as from other federal, provincial or other organizations.

[IF YES, ASK:]

- a. How are these other funding sources similar to the SIG and ASU Programs?
- b. How do these other funding sources differ from the SIG and ASU Programs?
- c. Do these other funding sources duplicate or complement the SIG and ASU Programs, in your opinion?

16. How do the objectives of the SIG and ASU align with:

- a. SSHRC's Strategic Plan?
- b. SSHRC's Program Activity Architecture (PAA)?
- c. The Federal Government's Whole of Government Framework?

[OBJECTIVES ARE PROVIDED IN THE ANNEX TO THIS INTERVIEW GUIDE.]

Delivery

17. Please describe:

- a. The peer review process (i.e., the funding competition process) at participating universities for the SIG funding competitions.
- b. The peer review process (i.e., the funding competition process) at SSHRC for the ASU funding competitions.

18. Please comment on the extent to which the funding competition processes are meeting accountability requirements.

19. Please comment on the following aspects of reporting and monitoring for the SIG Program:
- Relevance (e.g., is the appropriate type of information being provided?)
 - Consistency (e.g., is information being collected and provided in a consistent manner?)
 - Adequacy (e.g., is enough follow-up undertaken by SSHRC when institutions are not submitting Activity Reports?)
 - Completeness (e.g., is complete information being provided in Activity Reports from the institutions?)
 - Effectiveness (e.g., is reporting and monitoring ensuring proper accountability, including related to how funding is being spent?)
 - Compliance with reporting requirements (e.g., are institutions complying with SSHRC reporting requirements in a timely manner?)
20. Please comment on the following aspects of reporting and monitoring for the ASU:
- Relevance (e.g., is the Activity Report well designed?)
 - Consistency (e.g., is information being collected and provided in a consistent manner?)
 - Adequacy (e.g., is enough reporting and monitoring being undertaken by SSHRC?)
 - Completeness (e.g., is complete information being provided in Activity Reports from the institutions?)
 - Effectiveness (e.g., is reporting and monitoring ensuring proper accountability?)
 - Compliance with reporting requirements

Performance

SIG Program

21. To what extent are the SIG Program objectives specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bound (SMART)?
22. Have the activities funded by the SIG Program been consistent with the program's objectives? Please explain your answer.
23. Given the evidence submitted through the reporting and monitoring mechanisms, is it possible to evaluate the achievement of the SIG Program's objectives?
- Why or why not?
 - What improvements could be made?
24. To what extent has the SIG Program helped participating universities increase their focused research capacity? Please explain your answer.
- Can you provide some examples or evidence of capacity improvement?

ASU Program

25. To what extent is the objective of the ASU Program specific, measurable, achievable, realistic and time-bound (SMART)?
26. Have the activities funded by the ASU Program been consistent with the program's objective? Please explain your answer.
27. Given the evidence submitted through the reporting and monitoring mechanisms, is it possible to evaluate the achievement of the SIG Program's objectives?
- Why or why not?
 - What improvements could be made?

28. To what extent has the ASU Program helped participating universities increase their focused research capacity? Please explain your answer.
- a. Can you provide some examples or evidence of capacity improvement?

Other

29. Do you have any other comments about either the SIG or ASU Programs?

Thank you for your assistance in this important evaluation.

Annex: Program Objectives

SSSHRC Institutional Grants

The objectives of the SIG Program are to assist Canadian universities to:

- develop, increase or strengthen research excellence in the social sciences and humanities;
- assist, in particular, researchers embarking on their research career to become competitive in grants competitions at the national level;
- assist established researchers with modest funding requirements or those wishing to reorient and strengthen their research programs; and
- support national and international dissemination and collaboration.

Aid to Small Universities

The objective of the ASU Program is to enable small universities to develop and strengthen focused research capacity in the social sciences and humanities.

Annex E: Survey Questions

SSHRC Institutional Grant (SIG) Evaluation Survey

Introduction

Government Consulting Services (GCS) has been engaged by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) to conduct a survey of university researchers in the social sciences and humanities. This survey is one component of an evaluation of selected SSHRC institutional research funding programs. The evaluation will help to inform future program decision-making at SSHRC.

Background

SSHRC provides funding to support individual research projects or institutional research development plans. These funds are provided either directly to researchers, or to universities. Funding provided directly to researchers is not the subject of the present evaluation.

SSHRC provides funding to universities through programs such as SSHRC Institutional Grants (SIG) and Aid to Small Universities (ASU) programs. In some cases, universities combine SIG with funds received from other sources, and administer this funding under the names of their institutional grants (e.g., University Budgeted Committee funds, Vice-President Research Office contributions, Institution of Research/New Direction Funding, Research Development Fund, Capacity Building Grant, etc.).

SIG grants are used to assist Canadian universities to:

- develop, increase or strengthen research excellence in the social sciences and humanities;
- assist, in particular, researchers embarking on their research career to become competitive in grant competitions at the national level;
- assist established researchers with modest funding requirements or those wishing to reorient and strengthen their research programs; and
- support national and international dissemination and collaboration.

The current evaluation is examining the relevance and results of SSHRC funding for institutional research activities. This survey is intended for both researchers who have received SSHRC funding for research activities through the SIG Program, as well as those who have not. Participation in this survey is voluntary, but your input is important to us. The survey will take approximately 15 – 20 minutes to complete.

Please note that the responses you provide will not be attributed to you or your university, and survey results will be reported in aggregate form only.

If you have any questions about the evaluation, please do not hesitate to contact Vanessa Chung, Consultant at Government Consulting Services, at 613-996-0297, or Patrick Kashala, SSHRC Senior Performance and Evaluation Officer, at 613-947-4451.

Section 1: Research Funding Needs [ALL RESPONDENTS]

The first questions ask about funding needs potentially experienced by universities and university researchers.

1. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Disagree nor Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know
a) I have experienced a need for funding for small-scale research activities.	1	2	3	4	5	D/K
b) I have experienced a need for funding to assist me in becoming competitive in national grant competitions.	1	2	3	4	5	D/K
c) I have experienced a need for funding for national and/or international dissemination of research findings.	1	2	3	4	5	D/K
d) I have experienced a need for seed funding to initiate new research ideas.	1	2	3	4	5	D/K
e) I have experienced a need for funding to re-orient my research program.	1	2	3	4	5	D/K
f) I have experienced a need for funding to strengthen my research capacity.	1	2	3	4	5	D/K
g) I have experienced a need for funding to support developing research collaboration / partnerships / research teams.	1	2	3	4	5	D/K

2. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Disagree nor Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know
a) There is a need for SSHRC to provide funding to my university to develop and strengthen research capacity.	1	2	3	4	5	D/K
b) My university has sufficient research funding for the social sciences and humanities.	1	2	3	4	5	D/K
c) There is a need for SSHRC to provide seed funding to my university for supporting collaborative research or the development of partnerships.	1	2	3	4	5	D/K
d) There is a need for SSHRC to provide funding to my university for visiting scholars.	1	2	3	4	5	D/K

e) There is a need for SSHRC to provide funding for projects that will lead directly to an application to a funding agency	1	2	3	4	5	D/K
f) I feel that my university has a culture of research excellence in the social sciences and humanities.	1	2	3	4	5	D/K

Section 2: SIG Program [SIG PARTICIPANTS ONLY]

[SAMPLE FILE FROM SSHRC INDICATES THEY RECEIVED SIG FUNDING – OTHERS CONTINUE SURVEY AT SECTION 4]

According to your university's records, you have received a research grant that was at least partially funded through the SSHRC Institutional Grants (SIG) program. Often, SIG funding is combined with other sources of funding to produce institutional grants known by different names at different universities (e.g., University Budget Committee funds, Vice-President Research Office contributions, Initiation of Research & New Direction, Research Development Fund, Capacity Building Grants, etc.).

3a. Are you aware of the SSHRC Institutional Grants program?

- ☐ Yes [GO TO Q3b]
- ☐ No [GO TO Q6]
- ☐ Don't Know [GO TO Q6]

3b. Are you aware that you received this funding?

- ☐ Yes [GO TO 3c]
- ☐ No [GO TO Q6]
- ☐ Don't Know [GO TO Q6]

3c. When you received your grant that included funding from the SSHRC Institutional Grants program, did the grant also include other sources of funding?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Don't Know

4. How many SSHRC Institutional Grants did you receive during the period from 2005 to 2008?

- ☐ Don't Know

5. What is the total amount of funding that you have received in SSHRC Institutional Grants between 2005 to 2008? \$_____

- ☐ Don't Know

6. Did you apply to your university for other types of funding available (i.e., not including the SSHRC Institutional Grants program) during the period between 1998 to 2008?

- ☐ Yes [GO TO Q7a]
☐ No [IF Q3a=YES, GO TO Q9 – IF Q3a=No, DK, GO TO Q36]
☐ Don't Know [IF Q3a=YES, GO TO Q9 – IF Q3a=No, DK, GO TO Q36]

7a. Were you successful in any of these other applications for funding (i.e., not through the SSHRC Institutional Grants program)?

- ☐ Yes [GO TO Q7b]
☐ No [IF Q3a=YES, GO TO Q9 – IF Q3a=No, DK, GO TO Q36]
☐ Don't Know [IF Q3a=YES, GO TO Q9 – IF Q3a=No, DK, GO TO Q36]

7b. For which other sources of university-provided funding were you successful?

- ☐ Aid to Small Universities
☐ General Research Fund
☐ Other, Specify: _____

8. How many other funding grants (i.e., not including through the SSHRC Institutional Grants program) did you receive from your university during the period from 2005 to 2008? _____

[IF Q3a=No, or DK, SKIP TO Q36]

9. Using the following scale, please indicate your level of agreement with the following aspects of the application and funding process for the SSHRC Institutional Grants program:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Disagree nor Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know
a) SIG Program funding is well known among researchers at my university who may potentially have an interest in it.	1	2	3	4	5	D/K
b) The criteria used to select which projects to fund with SIG Program funding are clear.	1	2	3	4	5	D/K
c) The selection process for SIG funding competitions is fair.	1	2	3	4	5	D/K
d) SIG funding is disseminated in an objective, impartial manner.	1	2	3	4	5	D/K
e) I am satisfied overall with the application and funding process for the SIG Program.	1	2	3	4	5	D/K

[IF Q3b=NO, DK, GO TO Q11]

10. Please indicate what you think would have happened in the absence of the SIG you received.

- ☐ Research activity / activities would have proceeded the same
- ☐ Research activity / activities would have proceeded with a smaller scope or reduced activities
- ☐ Research activity / activities would not have proceeded at all
- ☐ Don't Know

11. During the period from 1998 to 2008, did you ever apply for SIG Program funding but were unsuccessful in your application?

- ☐ Yes [GO TO Q12a]
- ☐ No [GO TO SECTION 3]
- ☐ Don't Know [GO TO SECTION 3]

12a. Were you provided a reason for this/these application(s) for SIG Program funding not being successful?

- ☐ Yes [GO TO Q12b]
- ☐ No [GO TO SECTION 3]
- ☐ Don't Know [GO TO SECTION 3]

12b. What reason(s) was/were provided to you for your grant funding application not being successful?

13. Using the following scale, please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements about your unsuccessful SIG application.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Disagree nor Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know
a) The reason(s) I was given for my SIG funding application(s) not being successful was/were clear.	1	2	3	4	5	D/K
b) The reason(s) I was given for my SIG grant funding application(s) not being successful was/were reasonable.	1	2	3	4	5	D/K

Section 3. Results [SIG PARTICIPANTS ONLY]

14. Which of the following activities were funded through the grant(s) you received from the SSHRC Institutional Grant program? [SELECT ALL THAT APPLY]

- ☐ Seed funding for activities leading to the development of an application for research funding
- ☐ Creation of a research agenda
- ☐ Costs of research infrastructure
- ☐ Student salaries
- ☐ Other, specify: _____

15a. Did the SSHRC institutional grant(s) you received fund domestic conference travel?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

15b. [IF YES] Please specify the number of domestic conferences that were funded by the SIG(s) you received. _____

16a. Did the SSHRC institutional grant(s) you received fund international conference travel?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

16b. [IF YES] Please specify the number of international conferences that were funded by the SIG(s) you received. _____

17a. Did the SSHRC institutional grant(s) you received fund seminars/colloquia/symposia?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

17b. [IF YES] Please specify the number of colloquia/symposia that were funded by the SIG(s) you received. _____

17c. Did you nationally or internationally disseminate your research results through the support of the grant(s) you received from the Aid to Small Universities program

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

17d. [IF YES] What type(s) of national or international dissemination activities were funded through the Aid to Small Universities program? [SELECT ALL THAT APPLY]

- ☐ Publishing research in peer-reviewed journals
- ☐ Posting of research on website
- ☐ Presenting results at conference
- ☐ Other, specify: _____

18. Did you expect that the activities funded through the SSHRC Institutional Grant program would assist you in becoming more competitive in other funding competitions (including other SSHRC competitions)?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Don't Know

19a. During the period from 1998 to 2008, did you compete in any other SSHRC grant competitions (i.e., not including the SSHRC Institutional Grant program or any grants provided through your university) as Principal Investigator or Co-applicant?

- ☐ Yes [GO TO Q19b]
- ☐ No [GO TO Q21]
- ☐ Don't Know [GO TO Q21]

19b. Which other SSHRC grants (i.e., not including the SSHRC Institutional Grant program or any grants provided through your university) did you apply for as Principal Investigator or Co-applicant?

- ☐ Standard Research Grant (SRG)
- ☐ Research Development Initiative (RDI)
- ☐ Community-University Research Alliance (CURA)
- ☐ Major Collaborative Research Initiative
- ☐ Strategic Grant
- ☐ Don't Know
- ☐ Other, specify: _____

20. To the best of your knowledge, during the period from 2005 to 2008, what has been your rate of success in these other SSHRC competitions? _____%

- ☐ Don't Know

21. Please indicate to what extent the activities you undertook with the support of the SSHRC Institutional Grant program assisted you in becoming more competitive in other grant competitions.

To no extent	To Some Extent	To a Great Extent	Don't Know
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1	2	3	4	5	D/K
---	---	---	---	---	-----

22. To what extent did the SSHRC Institutional Grant program have an impact on each of the following at your university? (Please select "Not Applicable" if the question does not apply to your research activity.)

	To no extent		To Some Extent		To a Great Extent	Not Applicable	Don't Know
a) Enhancing national dissemination of research results	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	D/K
b) Enhancing international dissemination of research results	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	D/K
c) Enhancing national research partnerships / collaboration	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	D/K
d) Enhancing international research partnerships / collaboration	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	D/K
e) Assisting in reorienting your research program	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	D/K
f) Assisting in strengthening your research program	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	D/K
g) Assisting new researchers to start their research career	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	D/K
h) Helping to leverage additional funding from other research funding sources	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	D/K
i) Assisting in strengthening research proposals for national funding competitions	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	D/K
j) Assisting in undertaking research projects	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	D/K
k) Assessing / determining the most promising content areas in which to focus research	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	D/K
l) Increasing overall capacity to conduct research	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	D/K
m) Developing a culture of research excellence	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	D/K

23a. In general, how satisfied are you with the SSHRC Institutional Grant you received?

Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither Dissatisfied nor Satisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied	Don't Know
1	2	3	4	5	D/K

[IF Q23a=1,2 ASK Q23b, OTHERS GO TO DEMOGRAPHICS]

23b. Why were you not satisfied with the SSHRC Institutional Grant?

[GO TO DEMOGRAPHICS]

SECTION 4: Research Grants [COMPARISON GROUP]

[SAMPLE FILE FROM SSHRC DOES NOT INDICATE THEY HAVE RECEIVED
SIG FUNDING]

24. Are you aware of any grants available to develop and strengthen research capacity in the social sciences and humanities at small universities?

This could include, for example, grants to support research centre activities, to increase competitiveness in national grant competitions or to support national and international dissemination.

- ☐ Yes [GO TO Q25]
- ☐ No [GO TO Q36]
- ☐ Don't Know [GO TO Q36]

25. Are you aware of the SSHRC Institutional Grant program?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Don't Know

26. During the period from 1998 to 2008, did you apply for funding to support small-scale research activities through research funding competitions?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No [GO TO Q36]
- ☐ Don't Know [GO TO Q36]

[IF Q25=NO,DK GO TO Q28]

27a. Did you apply for funding from the SSHRC Institutional Grant program?

- ☐ Yes [GO to 27b]
- ☐ No [GO TO Q28]
- ☐ Don't Know [GO TO Q28]

27b. Were you successful in receiving funding from the SSHRC Institutional Grant program?

- ☐ Yes [GO TO PARTICIPANT SURVEY SECTION 2, Q4]
- ☐ No
- ☐ Don't Know

28. Did you apply to your university for any other sources of funding (i.e., not including the SSHRC Institutional Grant program) between 1998 to 2008?

- ☐ Yes [GO to Q29]
- ☐ No [GO TO Q33]
- ☐ Don't Know [GO TO Q33]

29. Were you successful in any of these other applications to your university for funding (i.e., not including the SSHRC Institutional Grant program)?

- ☐ Yes [GO TO Q29b]
- ☐ No [GO TO Q31]
- ☐ Don't Know [GO TO Q33]

29b. For which other sources of university-provided funding were you successful?

- ☐ Aid to Small Universities program
- ☐ General Research Fund
- ☐ Other, Specify: _____

30. How many other funding grants (i.e., not including the SSHRC Institutional Grant program) did you receive during the period from 2005 to 2008? _____

31. Were you provided a reason for your SIG Program not being successful?

- ☐ Yes [GO TO Q32]
- ☐ No [GO TO Q33]
- ☐ Don't Know [GO TO Q33]

32. What reason(s) was/were provided to you for your SIG Program application not being successful?

33. Using the following scale, please indicate your level of agreement with the following aspects of the application and funding process for the SSHRC Institutional Grant program:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Disagree nor Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know
a) The SIG Program's funding is well known among researchers at my university who may potentially have an interest in it.	1	2	3	4	5	D/K
b) The criteria used to select which projects to fund with the SIG Program funding are clear.	1	2	3	4	5	D/K
c) The selection process for the SIG Program funding competitions is fair.	1	2	3	4	5	D/K
d) The SIG Program's funding is disseminated in an objective, impartial manner at my university.	1	2	3	4	5	D/K
e) I am satisfied overall with the application and funding process for the SIG Program.	1	2	3	4	5	D/K
f) [IF Q31=YES] The reason(s) I was given for my SIG program application(s) not being successful was/were clear.	1	2	3	4	5	D/K
g) [IF Q31=YES] The reason(s) I was given for my SIG Program application(s) not being successful was/were reasonable.	1	2	3	4	5	D/K

34. Please indicate what you think would have happened if your application for the SSHRC Institutional Grant program had been successful.

- ☐ Research activity / activities would have proceeded with a larger scope and increased activities [LARGER SCOPE]
- ☐ Research activity / activities would have proceeded the same
- ☐ Other, specify _____
- ☐ Don't Know

35. [IF LARGER SCOPE] Please indicate what activity/activities would have proceeded with a larger scope if your application for the SSHRC Institutional Grant had been successful.
[SELECT ALL THAT APPLY]

- ☐ Seed funding for activities leading to the development of an application for research funding
- ☐ National dissemination of research results
- ☐ International dissemination of research results
- ☐ Developing research partnerships / collaboration
- ☐ Student salaries
- ☐ Other, specify: _____

36. To what extent would additional funding aimed at developing and strengthening focused research capacity in the social sciences and humanities have an impact on the following at your university?

	To no extent		To Some Extent		To a Great Extent	Not Applicable	Don't Know
a) Enhancing national dissemination of research results	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	D/K
b) Enhancing international dissemination of research results	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	D/K
c) Enhancing national research collaborations / partnerships	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	D/K
d) Enhancing international research collaborations / partnerships	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	D/K
e) Assisting in reorienting your research program	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	D/K
f) Assisting in strengthening your research program	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	D/K
g) Assisting new researchers to start their research career	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	D/K
h) Helping to leverage additional funding from other research funding sources	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	D/K
i) Assisting in strengthening research proposals for national funding competitions	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	D/K
j) Assisting in undertaking research projects	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	D/K
k) Assessing / determining the most promising content areas in which to focus research	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	D/K
l) Increasing overall capacity to conduct research	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	D/K
m) Developing a culture of research excellence	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	D/K

37. During the period from 1998 to 2008, did you compete in any other SSHRC grant competitions (i.e., not including the SSHRC Institutional Grant program) as Principal Investigator or Co-applicant?

- ☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ Don't Know

38. [IF YES] Which other SSHRC grants did you apply for as Principal Investigator or Co-applicant?

- ☐ Standard Research Grant (SRG)
- ☐ Research Development Initiative (RDI)
- ☐ Community-University Research Alliance (CURA)
- ☐ Major Collaborative Research Initiative
- ☐ Strategic Grant
- ☐ Other, specify: _____
- ☐ Don't Know

39. [IF YES] To the best of your knowledge, during the period from 2005 to 2008, what has been your rate of success in these other SSHRC competitions? _____%

- ☐ Don't Know

Section 5: Demographics [ALL RESPONDENTS]

40. What is your current position at your university?

- ☐ Full Professor
- ☐ Associate Professor
- ☐ Assistant Professor
- ☐ Student
- ☐ Other: _____

41. What is your general area of research?

- ☐ Social sciences
- ☐ Humanities
- ☐ Interdisciplinary
- ☐ N/A

42. How many years have you been engaging in research in the social sciences or humanities in a university environment (if relevant, please include post-doctoral years)? _____ years

42b. Are you a new scholar (i.e., someone who has not yet had the opportunity to establish an extensive record of research achievement, but is in the process of building one)?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Don't Know

43. [IF YES] Do ANY of the following apply to you?

- You have applied, as principal investigator or project director, for a grant from any of the following SSHRC programs: Standard Research Grants, Major Collaborative Research Initiatives, or Strategic Grants but were not successful in your application;
- You have held a tenured or tenure-track university appointment for less than five years;
- You have held a university appointment, but never a tenure-track position (in the case of institutions which offer tenure-track positions);
- You have had your career significantly interrupted or delayed for family reasons.

- ☐ Yes, at least one of the above applies to me
☐ No, none of the above apply to me
☐ Don't Know

44. Please provide any other comments on any of the issues raised in this survey.

Thank you for completing this important survey.

AID TO SMALL UNIVERSITIES (ASU) SURVEY

Introduction

Government Consulting Services (GCS) has been engaged by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) to conduct a survey of university researchers in the social sciences and humanities. This survey is one component of an evaluation of selected SSHRC institutional research funding programs. The evaluation will help to inform future program decision-making at SSHRC.

Background

SSHRC provides funding to support individual research projects or institutional research development plans. These funds are provided either directly to researchers, or to universities. Funding provided directly to researchers is not the subject of the present evaluation.

SSHRC provides funding to universities through programs such as SSHRC Institutional Grants (SIG) and Aid to Small Universities (ASU) programs. In some cases, universities combine the ASU grant with funds received from other sources, and administer these funds under the names of their institutional grants (e.g., Globalization and/or Aboriginal Governance funds, combined ASU and SIG funds, etc.).

ASU grants are used to support activities such as:

- funding of research centres;
- stipends to doctoral students, provided the program of studies is related to the ASU grant;
- agenda-setting seminars;
- visiting scholars (travel and stipend);
- organization of colloquia or symposia; and
- seed funding for collaborative research or the development of partnerships.

Activities funded through ASU grants are undertaken by individual researchers or by research teams.

The current evaluation is examining the relevance and results of SSHRC funding for institutional research activities. This survey is intended for both researchers who have received SSHRC funding for research activities through the ASU program, as well as those who have not. Participation in this survey is voluntary, but your input is important to us. The survey will take approximately 15-20 minutes to complete.

Please note that the responses you provide will not be attributed to you or your university and survey results will be reported in aggregate form only.

If you have any questions about the evaluation, please do not hesitate to contact Vanessa Chung, Consultant at Government Consulting Services, at 613-996-0297, or Patrick Kashala, SSHRC Senior Performance and Evaluation Officer, at 613-947-4451.

Section 1: Research Funding Needs [ALL RESPONDENTS]

The first questions ask about funding needs potentially experienced by universities and university researchers.

1. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Disagree nor Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know
a) I have experienced a need for funding for small-scale research activities.	1	2	3	4	5	D/K
b) I have experienced a need for funding to assist me in becoming competitive in national grant competitions.	1	2	3	4	5	D/K
c) I have experienced a need for funding for national and/or international dissemination of research findings.	1	2	3	4	5	D/K
d) I have experienced a need for funding to develop my research capacity.	1	2	3	4	5	D/K
e) I have experienced a need for funding to support developing research collaboration / partnerships.	1	2	3	4	5	D/K

2. Please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Disagree nor Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know
a) There is a need for SSHRC to provide funding to my university to develop and strengthen focused research capacity.	1	2	3	4	5	D/K
b) There is a need for SSHRC to provide funding to my university to support research centres.	1	2	3	4	5	D/K
c) I feel that the research activities in the social sciences and humanities at my university are properly focused into particular areas/topics.	1	2	3	4	5	D/K
d) My university has sufficient research funding for the social sciences and humanities.	1	2	3	4	5	D/K
e) There is a need for SSHRC to provide funding to my university to support the costs of research seminars, colloquia or symposia.	1	2	3	4	5	D/K

f) There is a need for SSHRC to provide seed funding to my university for supporting collaborative research or the development of partnerships.	1	2	3	4	5	D/K
g) There is a need for SSHRC to provide funding to my university for visiting scholars.	1	2	3	4	5	D/K
h) I feel that my university has a culture of research excellence in the social sciences and humanities.	1	2	3	4	5	D/K
i) There is a need for SSHRC to provide funding to my university for stipends for doctoral students in focused research areas.	1	2	3	4	5	D/K N/A

Section 2: Aid to Small University Program Grants [ASU PARTICIPANTS ONLY]
[SAMPLE FILE FROM SSHRC INDICATES THEY RECEIVED ASU FUNDING – OTHERS CONTINUE SURVEY AT SECTION 4]

According to your university's records, you have received research funding that was provided to your university through SSHRC's Aid to Small Universities program.

3a. Are you aware of the Aid to Small Universities (ASU) program?

- ☐ Yes [GO TO Q3b]
- ☐ No [GO TO Q6]
- ☐ Don't Know [GO TO Q6]

3b. Are you aware that you (or the research centre with which you are affiliated) received ASU program funding?

- ☐ Yes [GO TO Q3c]
- ☐ No [GO TO Q6]
- ☐ Don't Know [GO TO Q6]

3c. Was the funding you received at this university provided to you (with or without co-investigators) or to a research centre with which you are affiliated? [SELECT ALL THAT APPLY]

- ☐ To me personally (with or without co-investigators)
- ☐ To a research centre with which I am affiliated
- ☐ Both to me personally and to a research centre with which I am affiliated
- ☐ Don't Know

[IF Q3c="TO A RESEARCH CENTRE WITH WHICH I AM AFFILIATED" OR "BOTH TO ME PERSONALLY AND TO A RESEARCH CENTRE WITH WHICH I AM AFFILIATED", SHOW THE FOLLOWING TEXT:]

Questions throughout the survey will refer to your ASU program grant funding. Please answer the survey taking into consideration the ASU program funding provided to you personally and/or ASU program funding provided to a research centre with which you are affiliated, depending on your situation.

4. How many Aid to Small Universities grants did you receive at this university during the period from 1998 to 2008? _____

☐ Don't Know

5. What is the (approximate) amount of funding you have received from the Aid to Small Universities program at this university from 1998 to 2008? \$_____

☐ Don't Know

6. Did you apply to your university for other types of funding (i.e., not including the Aid to Small Universities program) during the period from 1998 to 2008?

☐ Yes [GO TO Q7a]

☐ No [IF Q3a=YES, GO TO Q9, IF Q3a=NO,DK, GO TO Q36]

☐ Don't Know [IF Q3a=YES, GO TO Q9, IF Q3a=NO,DK, GO TO Q36]

7a. Were you successful in any of these other applications for funding (i.e., not including the Aid to Small Universities program)?

☐ Yes [GO TO Q7b]

☐ No [GO TO Q9]

☐ Don't Know [GO TO Q9]

7b. For which other sources of university-provided funding were you successful?

☐ General Research Fund

☐ Other, Specify:_____

8. How many other funding grants (i.e., not including through the Aid to Small Universities program) did you receive from your university from 1998 to 2008? _____

[IF Q3a=NO,DK, SKIP TO Q36]

9. Using the following scale, please indicate your level of agreement with the following aspects of the application and funding process for the Aid to Small Universities program:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Disagree nor Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know
a) The ASU program's funding is well known among researchers at my university who may potentially have an interest in it.	1	2	3	4	5	D/K
b) The criteria that SSHRC uses to select which projects to fund with ASU program funding are clear.	1	2	3	4	5	D/K
c) SSHRC's selection process for ASU program funding competitions is fair.	1	2	3	4	5	D/K
d) SSHRC disseminates ASU program funding in an objective, impartial manner.	1	2	3	4	5	D/K
e) The criteria my university uses to select which projects to fund with ASU program funding are clear.	1	2	3	4	5	D/K
f) My university's selection process for ASU program funding competitions is fair.	1	2	3	4	5	D/K
g) My university disseminates ASU program funding an objective, impartial manner.	1	2	3	4	5	D/K
h) I am satisfied overall with the application and funding process for the ASU program at my university.	1	2	3	4	5	D/K

[IF Q3b=NO, DK, GO TO Q11]

10. Please indicate what you think would have happened in the absence of the ASU grant you received.

- ☐ Research activity / activities would have proceeded the same
- ☐ Research activity / activities would have proceeded with a smaller scope or reduced activities
- ☐ Research activity / activities would not have proceeded at all
- ☐ Other, specify _____
- ☐ Don't Know

11. During the period from 1998 to 2008, did you ever apply for ASU program funding but were unsuccessful in your application?

- ☐ Yes [GO TO Q12a]
☐ No [GO TO SECTION 3]
☐ Don't Know [GO TO SECTION 3]

12a. Were you provided a reason for this/these application(s) for ASU program funding not being successful?

- ☐ Yes [GO TO Q12b]
☐ No [GO TO SECTION 3]
☐ Don't Know [GO TO SECTION 3]

12b. What reason(s) were provided to you for your ASU program funding application not being successful?

13. Using the following scale, please indicate your level of agreement with the following statements about your unsuccessful ASU application.

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Disagree nor Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know
a) The reason(s) I was given for my ASU funding application(s) not being successful was/were clear.	1	2	3	4	5	D/K
b) The reason(s) I was given for my ASU grant funding application(s) not being successful was/were reasonable.	1	2	3	4	5	D/K

Section 3. Results [ASU PARTICIPANTS ONLY]

14a. Which of the following activities were funded through the grant(s) you received from the Aid to Small Universities program? [SELECT ALL THAT APPLY]

- ☐ Seed funding for activities leading to the development of an application for research funding
☐ Agenda setting seminars
☐ Visiting scholars
☐ Undergraduate / graduate / post-doctoral ~~student~~ salaries
☐ Other, specify: _____

14b. Did the ASU grant(s) you received fund domestic conference travel?

- ☐ Yes
☐ No

14c. [IF YES] Please specify the number of domestic conferences that were funded by the ASU grant(s) you received. _____

14d. Did the ASU grant(s) you received fund international conference travel?

☐ Yes

☐ No

14e. [IF YES] Please specify the number of international conferences that were funded by the ASU grant(s) you received. _____

14f. Did the ASU grant(s) you received fund colloquia/symposia?

☐ Yes

☐ No

14g. [IF YES] Please specify the number of colloquia/symposia that were funded by the ASU grant(s) you received. _____

14h. Did you nationally or internationally disseminate your research results through the support of the grant(s) you received from the Aid to Small Universities program

☐ Yes

☐ No

14i. [IF YES] What type(s) of national or international dissemination activities were funded through the Aid to Small Universities program? [SELECT ALL THAT APPLY]

☐ Publishing research in peer-reviewed journals

☐ Posting of research on website

☐ Presenting results at conference

☐ Other, specify: _____

14j. Did the ASU grant(s) you received support research activities undertaken as part of a research centre at your university?

☐ Yes

☐ No

15. [IF YES] What type(s) of activities were undertaken as part of a research centre at your university?

16. Did you develop research collaboration / partnerships through the support of the grant(s) you received from the Aid to Small Universities program?

- ☐ Yes
☐ No

17. [IF YES] What type(s) of researcher partnerships / collaborations were developed through Aid to Small Universities program funding? [SELECT ALL THAT APPLY]

- ☐ Partnerships / collaborations with other researchers within your university
☐ Partnerships / collaborations with other researchers at other universities in Canada
☐ Partnerships / collaborations with researchers outside of Canada
☐ Other, please specify: _____

18. Did you expect that the activities funded through the Aid to Small Universities program would assist you in becoming more competitive in other funding competitions (including other SSHRC competitions)?

- ☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ Don't Know

19a. During the period from 1998 to 2008, did you compete in any other SSHRC grant competitions (i.e., not including the Aid to Small Universities program or any grants provided through your university) as Principal Investigator or Co-applicant?

- ☐ Yes [GO TO Q19b]
☐ No [GO TO Q21]
☐ Don't Know [GO TO Q21]

19b. Which other SSHRC grants (i.e., not including the Aid to Small Universities program or any grants provided through your university) did you apply for as Principal Investigator or Co-applicant?

- ☐ Standard Research Grant (SRG)
☐ Research Development Initiative (RDI)
☐ Community-University Research Alliance (CURA)
☐ Major Collaborative Research Initiative
☐ Strategic Grant
☐ Other, specify: _____
☐ Don't Know

20. To the best of your knowledge, during the period from 1998 to 2008, what has been your rate of success in these other SSHRC competitions?

_____%
☐ Don't Know

21. Please indicate to what extent the activities you undertook with the support of the Aid to Small Universities program assisted you in becoming more competitive in other grant competitions.

To no extent		To Some Extent		To a Great Extent		Don't Know
1	2	3	4	5		D/K

22. To what extent did the Aid to Small Universities program have an impact on each of the following at your university? (Please select "Not Applicable" if the question does not apply to your research activity or your university.)

	To no extent		To Some Extent		To a Great Extent	Not Applicable	Don't Know
a) Developing a new research centre at your university	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	D/K
b) Strengthening an existing research centre at your university	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	D/K
c) Setting the research agenda / priorities at your university	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	D/K
d) Enhancing research partnerships/ collaboration	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	D/K
e) Helping to leverage additional funding from other research funding sources	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	D/K
f) Assisting in strengthening research proposals for national funding competitions	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	D/K
g) Changing research activities to focus on a new area	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	D/K
h) Assessing/Determining the most promising content areas in which to focus research	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	D/K
i) Strengthening research capacity in a specific area	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	D/K
j) Increasing overall capacity to conduct research	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	D/K
k) Developing a culture of research excellence	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	D/K

23a. In general, how satisfied are you with the Aid to Small Universities grant you received?

Very Dissatisfied	Dissatisfied	Neither Dissatisfied nor Satisfied	Satisfied	Very Satisfied	Don't Know
1	2	3	4	5	D/K

[IF Q23=1,2 ASK Q23b, OTHERS GO TO DEMOGRAPHICS]

23b. Why were you not satisfied with the Aid to Small Universities grant?

[GO TO DEMOGRAPHICS]

SECTION 4: Research Grants [COMPARISON GROUP]

[SAMPLE FILE FROM INSTITUTION DOES NOT INDICATE THEY HAVE RECEIVED ASU FUNDING]

24. Are you aware of any grants available to develop and strengthen focused research capacity in the social sciences and humanities at small universities?

This could include, for example, grants to support research centre activities, research travel, visiting speakers, or other activities.

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No [GO TO Q36]
- ☐ Don't Know [GO TO Q36]

25. Are you aware of the Aid to Small Universities program?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No

26. During the period from 1998 to 2008, did you (or a research centre with which you are affiliated) apply for funding to support small-scale research activities through research funding competitions and/or through your university's research office?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No [GO TO Q36]
- ☐ Don't Know [GO TO Q36]

[IF Q25=NO,DK GO TO Q28]

27a. Did you (or a research centre with which you are affiliated) apply for funding from the Aid to Small Universities program?

- ☐ Yes [GO to 27b]
- ☐ No [GO TO Q28]
- ☐ Don't Know [GO TO Q28]

27b. Were you (or a research centre with which you are affiliated) successful in receiving funding from the Aid to Small Universities program?

- ☐ Yes [GO TO PARTICIPANT SURVEY SECTION 2, Q4]
- ☐ No
- ☐ Don't Know

28. Did you (or a research centre with which you are affiliated) apply for any other sources of funding from your university (not including the Aid to Small University program)?

- ☐ Yes [GO to Q29a]
- ☐ No [GO TO Q33]
- ☐ Don't Know [GO TO Q33]

29a. Were you successful in any of these other applications for funding (i.e., not including the Aid to Small Universities program)?

- ☐ Yes [GO TO Q29b]
- ☐ No [GO TO Q31]
- ☐ Don't Know [GO TO Q33]

29b. For which other sources of university-provided funding were you successful?

- ☐ General Research Fund
- ☐ Other, Specify: _____

30. How many other funding grants (i.e., not including the Aid to Small Universities program) did you receive during the period from 1998 to 2008? _____

31. Were you provided a reason for your application for ASU program not being successful?

- ☐ Yes [GO TO Q32]
- ☐ No [GO TO Q33]
- ☐ Don't Know [GO TO Q33]

32. What reason(s) was/were provided to you for your ASU program application not being successful?

33. Using the following scale, please indicate your level of agreement with the following aspects of the application and funding process for the Aid to Small Universities program:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Disagree nor Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know
f) [IF Q31=YES] The reason(s) I was given for my ASU program application(s) not being successful was/were clear.	1	2	3	4	5	D/K
g) [IF Q31=YES] The reason(s) I was given for my ASU program application(s) not being successful was/were reasonable.	1	2	3	4	5	D/K

33. Using the following scale, please indicate your level of agreement with the following aspects of the application and funding process for the Aid to Small Universities program:

	Strongly Disagree	Disagree	Neither Disagree nor Agree	Agree	Strongly Agree	Don't Know
a) The ASU program's funding is well known among researchers at my university who may potentially have an interest in it.	1	2	3	4	5	D/K
b) The criteria that SSHRC uses to select which projects to fund with ASU program funding are clear.	1	2	3	4	5	D/K
c) SSHRC's selection process for ASU program funding competitions is fair.	1	2	3	4	5	D/K
d) SSHRC disseminates ASU program funding in an objective, impartial manner.	1	2	3	4	5	D/K
e) The criteria my university uses to select which projects to fund with ASU program funding are clear.	1	2	3	4	5	D/K
f) My university's selection process for ASU program funding competitions is fair.	1	2	3	4	5	D/K
g) My university disseminates ASU program funding an objective, impartial manner.	1	2	3	4	5	D/K
h) I am satisfied overall with the application and funding process for the ASU program at my university.	1	2	3	4	5	D/K

34. Please indicate what you think would have happened if your application for the Aid to Small Universities program had been successful.

- ☐ Research activity / activities would have proceeded with a larger scope and increased activities [LARGER SCOPE]
☐ Research activity / activities would have proceeded the same
☐ Other, specify _____
☐ Don't Know

35. [IF LARGER SCOPE] Please indicate what activity/activities would have proceeded with a larger scope if your application for the Aid to Small Universities Grant had been successful.
[SELECT ALL THAT APPLY]

- ☐ Research activities undertaken as part of a research centre at your university
☐ Seed funding for activities leading to the development of an application for research funding
☐ Domestic conference travel
☐ International conference travel
☐ Colloquia/symposia
☐ National dissemination of research results
☐ International dissemination of research results
☐ Developing research partnerships / collaboration
☐ Agenda setting seminars
☐ Visiting scholars
☐ Undergraduate / graduate / post-doctoral salaries
☐ Other, specify: _____

36. To what extent would additional funding aimed at developing and strengthening focused research capacity in the social sciences and humanities have an impact on the following at your university?

	To no extent		To Some Extent		To a Great Extent	Not Applicable	Don't Know
a) Developing a new research centre at your university	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	D/K
b) Strengthening an existing research centre at your university	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	D/K
c) Setting the research agenda / priorities at your university	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	D/K
d) Enhancing research partnerships / collaboration	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	D/K

e) Helping to leverage additional funding from other research funding sources	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	D/K
f) Assisting in strengthening research proposals for national funding competitions	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	D/K
g) Changing research activities to focus on a new area	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	D/K
h) Assessing/Determining the most promising content areas in which to focus research	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	D/K
i) Strengthening research capacity in a specific area	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	D/K
j) Increasing overall capacity to conduct research	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	D/K
k) Developing a culture of research excellence	1	2	3	4	5	N/A	D/K

37. During the period from 1998 to 2008, did you compete in any other SSHRC grant competitions (i.e., not including the Aid to Small Universities program or any grants provided through your university) as Principal Investigator or Co-Applicant?

- ☐ Yes
☐ No
☐ Don't Know

38. [IF YES] Which other grants (i.e., not including the Aid to Small Universities program or any grants provided through your university) did you apply for through SSHRC as Principal Investigator or Co-Applicant?

- ☐ Standard Research Grant (SRG)
☐ Research Development Initiative (RDI)
☐ Community-University Research Alliance (CURA)
☐ Major Collaborative Research Initiative (MCRI)
☐ Strategic Grant
☐ Other, specify: _____
☐ Don't Know

39. [IF YES] To the best of your knowledge, during the period from 1998 to 2008, what has been your rate of success in these other SSHRC competitions? _____%

- ☐ Don't Know

Section 5: Demographics [ALL RESPONDENTS]

40. What is your current position at your university?

- ☐ Full Professor
- ☐ Associate Professor
- ☐ Assistant Professor
- ☐ Student
- ☐ Other: _____

41. What is your general area of research?

- ☐ Social sciences
- ☐ Humanities
- ☐ Interdisciplinary
- ☐ N/A

42. How many years have you been engaging in research in the social sciences or humanities in a university environment (if relevant, please include post-doctoral years)? _____ years

Are you a new scholar (i.e., someone who has not yet had the opportunity to establish an extensive record of research achievement, but is in the process of building one)?

- ☐ Yes
- ☐ No
- ☐ Don't Know

43. Do ANY of the following apply to you?

- You have applied, as principal investigator or project director, for a grant from any of the following SSHRC programs: Standard Research Grants, Major Collaborative Research Initiatives, or Strategic Grants but were not successful in your application;
- You have held a tenured or tenure-track university appointment for less than five years;
- You have held a university appointment, but never a tenure-track position (in the case of institutions which offer tenure-track positions);
- You have had your career significantly interrupted or delayed for family reasons.

- ☐ Yes, at least one of the above applies to me
- ☐ No, none of the above apply to me
- ☐ Don't Know

44. Please provide any other comments on any of the issues raised in this survey.

Thank you for completing this important survey.