

Summary of the Evaluation of the Memorial Grant Program for First Responders

About the Program



In recognition of the critical role of first responders in protecting Canadians, the Memorial Grant Program for First Responders (MGP) provides a one-time lump sum payment to the families of first responders who have died as a result of their duties. The payment is free from federal tax and has a maximum value of \$300,000.

The program's five-year budget is \$117.4M for fiscal years 2018-19 to 2022-23, which includes funding for 72 annual grant payments of \$300,000, as well as program operating costs.

What We Examined

The purpose of the evaluation was to assess the implementation of the program, including its design, early outcomes, and efficiency and economy. The evaluation covered the three-year period from fiscal year 2018-19 to 2020-21, the timeline of which does not include the expansion of the program to include correctional, parole and probation officers. Multiple lines of evidence were collected and analyzed to ensure triangulation of findings.

Evaluation Findings

- There is a strong rationale for the program and its specific design. The program addresses gaps in existing mechanisms that provide financial recognition to families of fallen first responders.
- While Gender-based Analysis+ was considered in program design, some barriers continue to exist due to limited awareness amongst some underrepresented groups.
- The MGP instituted numerous mechanisms to support program delivery, including privacy and security protocol and memoranda of agreement with provinces and territories (PTs), the effectiveness of which varied.
- There is a clear and appropriate division of roles and responsibilities between Public Safety Canada and Raymond Chabot Grant Thornton Consulting Inc.
- The program's eligibility criteria were generally appropriate and incorporated sufficient flexibility to support the program's inclusive mandate. Some concerns were expressed that program communications could include additional details on incident eligibility relating to occupational illness.
- The application process is clearly described and includes reasonable flexibility, but limited awareness created barriers to access amongst some stakeholder groups.

- Internal communications processes and the nature and extent of communications with applicants and beneficiaries is sufficient, but engagement with external stakeholder groups could be improved.
- Despite some initial delays, key program activities have been implemented and the program is on track to achieve its expected results. Best practices and facilitators of program performance include sufficient resources and early outreach. Limited broader awareness of the program constrained the achievement of outcomes.
- While the MGP utilized significantly less of its budget than planned in 2018-19 and 2019-20, its funding was fully expended in 2020-21. The program was economically delivered but there are areas in which efficiency could be improved. Although a robust performance measurement strategy was developed, it was not formally implemented.

Recommendations

The Assistant Deputy Minister, Emergency Management and Programs Branch, should:

1. Review applicant and incident eligibility criteria to ensure clarity of terms and conditions, as well as alignment with program intent.
2. Enhance engagement with and outreach to organizations and associations that represent first responders and PT counterparts to increase awareness and uptake of the program. A focus on organizations and associations in rural, remote and Indigenous jurisdictions and volunteer first responders should be considered in addition to providing information on an ongoing basis and in multiple formats.
3. Review and monitor program resources to ensure they are sufficient to support delivery, particularly in the context of expanded eligibility criteria and increasing program uptake.
4. Review the nature and extent of performance data collected in light of current program needs and identify opportunities for further data collection opportunities to better support program reporting and management.