

Results at a Glance

Evaluation of the National Cost-Sharing Program for Heritage Places



Objective and Scope

Consistent with the requirements of the Treasury Board *Policy on Results* (2016) and the associated Directive on Results and Standard on Evaluation, the evaluation focused on the relevance and effectiveness of the National Cost-Sharing Program for Heritage Places.

Completed at the request of the Program, this targeted evaluation considered application requirements, guidelines, and selection processes in use from 2017-2018 to 2022-2023, with a particular focus on their equity across applicant groups. The evaluation was guided by the following questions:

Relevance

- Is the National Cost-Sharing Program responsive to demonstrable needs?
- Is the National Cost-Sharing Program equally relevant across all eligible applicant groups?

Effectiveness

- To what extent is the application process equitable across applicant groups? Are there significant barriers?
- To what extent do the Program's guidelines and processes provide mechanisms to minimize barriers for potential applicants?

Key Findings

Relevance

Findings from multiple lines of evidence indicated that the National Cost-Sharing Program for Heritage Places broadly addresses the needs of federally recognized heritage places. In particular, an analysis of application trends found that requests to the Program consistently exceeded its funding capacity, indicating ongoing need for financial supports.

A benchmarking study also concluded that the Program's processes and guidelines reflect best practices, except for allotted project time, which was found to be shorter than those of comparable programs.

Analysis of the Program's relevance across applicant sub-groups found that recent updates to the Program's terms and conditions, as well as a set of pilot projects with Indigenous partners, were in alignment with Parks Canada's Indigenous Stewardship Framework. A review of program data identified opportunities to enhance applicant profiles and data collection practices, which would better allow for the identification and monitoring of barriers related to application processes and requirements.

PROGRAM DESCRIPTION

Parks Canada's National Cost-Sharing Program for Heritage Places helps non-federally owned or administered national historic sites, heritage lighthouses, and heritage railway stations to conserve and communicate their heritage value through financial contributions made towards conservation or heritage presentation projects.

Eligible recipients include not-for-profit organizations, regional, municipal, provincial, or territorial governments, and not-for-profit Indigenous organizations. Federal entities, private owners, or for-profit organizations may not apply.

Program applicants must provide proof of eligibility as well as detailed descriptions of project plans, financial capacity, and risks to sites' character-defining elements.

Effectiveness

Lines of evidence supporting the analysis of application processes and mechanisms to address barriers included a survey of program applicants, key informant interviews with Parks Canada staff, and analyses of program data.

While application requirements were generally perceived as clear and reasonable, survey findings identified challenges around application deadlines as well as timelines for funded conservation projects. Concerns about the Program's shorter project delivery time were also reported by program staff during interviews.

Survey findings also suggested that a portion of program applicants experience challenges in accessing the expertise needed to create robust proposals, leading to lower success rates than applicants with better access to conservation experts.

In terms of mechanisms to minimize barriers, pilot projects with Indigenous partners were the clearest example of efforts to provide supports for a specific sub-group. Flexibilities in the Program's general selection criteria were also noted, which reviewers can leverage to support submissions from less well-resourced organizations.



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Recommendations and Management Response

Recommendation 1

The Vice-President, Indigenous Affairs and Cultural Heritage, should review and adjust program metrics and performance measures of the National Cost-Sharing Program for Heritage Places with particular consideration given to:

- Creating key program indicators aligned with elements of Parks Canada's Indigenous Stewardship Framework and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People
- Collecting applicant information relevant to capacity levels, allowing the Cost-Sharing Program to better identify unintended outcomes and monitor the effectiveness of mechanisms designed to minimize barriers.



Management Response: Agreed. The Indigenous Affairs and Cultural Heritage Directorate will conduct a review of key metrics and program indicators to identify necessary changes to better align with Parks Canada's Indigenous Stewardship Framework and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous People Act and to address issues related to varying applicant capacity levels.

Recommendation 2

The Vice-President, Indigenous Affairs and Cultural Heritage, should review and adjust timelines of the National Cost-Sharing Program for Heritage Places with consideration given to better aligning project delivery deadlines with those of comparable funding programs.



Management Response: Agreed. The Indigenous Affairs and Cultural Heritage Directorate will conduct a review of mechanisms that could extend project delivery timelines for recipients.

