

MANAGEMENT RESPONSE SUMMARY

Final Evaluation Report: The Initiative on the New Economy (INE)

Date: March 17, 2010

INE program context

As part of the Government of Canada's plan to strengthen education, research and innovation, the minister of Finance announced in 2000 new research funding to SSHRC of \$100 million over five years to establish the INE program. The initiative was aimed at better understanding the changes and dynamics of a new reality and optimizing our ability to benefit from and influence the future for the broader good.

In 2001, the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council launched the INE as a cluster of support mechanisms for research on the new economy. Rather than prescribing a specific definition of "new economy," the INE allowed for a range of research topics across the four broadly defined areas of: general issues concerning the new economy, management and entrepreneurship, education, and lifelong learning.

The overall objectives for the INE were aimed at:

- fostering excellent research on the new economy, with emphasis on innovative multidisciplinary approaches;
- extending and developing new research partnerships in the public, private and not-for-profit sectors; and
- informing decision-making in the public and private sectors.

INE summative evaluation, and management response

In accordance with SSHRC's evaluation plan, and as detailed in the initiative's Results-based Management and Accountability Framework, the objectives of the summative evaluation of the INE were to: examine the program's relevance; assess program achievements and results, including the quality of research results in light of program objectives; and outline lessons learned.

Key findings from this evaluation are detailed in eight "lessons learned."

The information drawn from the evaluation will be instrumental in informing current and future SSHRC initiatives. On the basis of the lessons learned, SSHRC management agreed that the unique program design elements and organizational support that were important to the production of excellent research under the INE will be considered and, where possible, incorporated into SSHRC's proposed renewed program architecture.

The management response presented below therefore considers how lessons learned from the INE can be applied in the renewed program architecture, especially to the proposed Partnerships and Alliances Initiative, and the Innovation, Leadership and Prosperity research strategy.

**SSHRC Management Response
to the Final Evaluation Report: The Initiative on the New Economy (INE)**

Lesson Learned	Management Response
<p>1. In order to fairly administer the funding of programs with a broad mandate, key criteria need to be defined and communicated. It is important to identify boundaries of the mandate and selection criteria so that researchers are able to assess whether their projects fall within the bounds of fundable research. Selection criteria are usually linked to program objectives, as a result these objectives must also be clearly defined.</p>	<p>Partially Agree.</p> <p>Clearly defined criteria will be included in the renewal of SSHRC’s program architecture. Communication of criteria was also recommended by the Blue Ribbon Panel on Peer Review.</p> <p>In some instances, it is important to have broad program objectives in order to encourage innovation and to gauge receptor capacity. For example, for the Management, Business and Finance (2007 to 2009) special call, SSHRC communicated a strategy with broad objectives and criteria that focused on excellence. This approach provided sufficient information for potential applicants to determine whether their project was within the bounds of fundable research.</p>
<p>2. Key program and project objectives must have clear definitions and identified success criteria to achieve both accountability and learning. These definitions and success criteria should be built into program documents, particularly reporting requirements.</p>	<p>Agree.</p> <p>Communicating criteria for a program increases the probability that grant holders will achieve both expected and unintended outputs and outcomes, and be able to report on them. In 2010-11, the program divisions, with the support of Corporate Performance and Evaluation, will examine the feasibility of developing an integrated reporting mechanism, including common indicators to measure the value of partnerships in achieving the program objectives and related outcomes.</p>

<p>3. While clearly defined objectives and success criteria are important, retaining adequate flexibility in certain program design elements can allow for project-level creativity and responsiveness, as well as learning within funded research teams.</p>	<p>Agree.</p> <p>SSHRC's proposed renewed program architecture will provide more flexibility by supporting creative ways to facilitate well-established as well as emerging kinds of research partnerships, talent development and knowledge mobilization activities.</p>
<p>4. In general, the project management skills of the funded Principal Investigators, as well as the strength of the research teams, were strongly correlated with how the research projects were executed. In order to better support Principal Investigators leading other large-scale projects, guidelines or suggestions for team composition, including a project manager and a knowledge mobilization expert, could be provided.</p>	<p>Agree.</p> <p>SSHRC has taken steps to emphasize in its program criteria the importance of management and governance structures required for large-scale projects, i.e., Major Collaborative Research Initiatives and Community-University Research Alliances. However, SSHRC could underline the importance of this aspect, and its significance for the success of the project, in its program literature. This could also be further stressed at the start-up meetings.</p> <p>Furthermore, given the proposed renewed program architecture, discussions will take place with Finance to discuss eligible expenses, especially regarding honoraria. It will be explored whether costs for administering projects need to be more clearly articulated.</p> <p>Finally, as part of moving towards the further implementation of SSHRC's open-access policy, grant applicants could be asked to describe in their project summary how they intend to manage their project. This will provide useful information and models for future grant applicants.</p>

<p>5. Different types of non-academic partnerships require different policies to support them and should have different measures of success.</p> <p>a. Programs should be designed to place emphasis on genuine and appropriate non-academic partnerships, where partner organizations’ capacity and attributes determine their contribution. This would encourage better use of resources by focusing on productive and mutually beneficial partnerships, without precluding building new partnerships.</p> <p>b. Reporting requirements should capture the value that partnerships bring to a project. In particular:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – Capture the names and roles of partners mid-stream and at the end of the project, not just at the beginning; – Identify the type of partner organization, describe their capacity and role on the project; – Record the value of non-financial contributions of partner organizations; – Identify non-academic partner-oriented outputs; – Include partner feedback reports or summaries if the impact of the research on the partner organization is to be captured. 	<p>Agree.</p> <p>a. Applicants to the short-term and longer-term grants of the proposed Partnerships and Alliances Initiative will be required to demonstrate evidence of the “genuineness” of formal partnerships and alliances by including evidence of either their governance structure, strategic plans, letters of participation and engagement, and/or memorandums of understanding. This requirement will allow for an informed evaluation of the quality and level of commitment of the proposed partnerships.</p> <p>b. SSHRC will investigate ways to ensure that the value of partnerships are captured by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – developing a logic model and performance management framework for the proposed renewed program architecture, in collaboration with Corporate Performance and Evaluation, that includes indicators to measure the value of partnerships; – forwarding the mid-term report directly to partners, so that they can comment on the quality of the partnerships from their perspective; and – investing appropriate time and resources to conduct reporting activities.
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<p>6. A comprehensive and customized approach to reporting will improve the performance measurement of new and/or innovative programs. A comprehensive ongoing performance measurement strategy should include qualitative and quantitative measures and be clearly linked to program and project objectives, as well as features (such as innovative approaches) that are expected to yield new learning.</p>	<p>Partially agree.</p> <p>There should be an ongoing performance measurement strategy. However, customization should be minimized so that reporting can be easily tracked, monitored and communicated. A suggested approach is to develop a framework that reports on common indicators that are clearly linked to a program and its objectives, as well as an option for including additional, unique reporting indicators that would provide specific results for thematic research areas. SSHRC will assess the feasibility of this suggestion, especially in the context of its ongoing renewal of its program architecture structure.</p>
<p>7. In order to lead or coordinate program-level knowledge mobilization, a knowledge mobilization strategy, with significant input from stakeholders and an internal resourcing and performance plan, is required.</p>	<p>Agree.</p> <p>SSHRC has taken significant steps to strengthen its ongoing knowledge mobilization strategy, including the creation of a Knowledge Mobilization and Program Integration Division (KMBPI). In addition, a knowledge mobilization strategy was tabled at the November 2009 meeting of SSHRC's governing council.</p> <p>Through to 2011, the KMBPI Division will continue to focus its efforts on:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> – improving knowledge mobilization guidelines, adjudication criteria and program design; – increasing social sciences and humanities use of knowledge mobilization infrastructure and tools; and – building a knowledge mobilization community of practice at SSHRC and externally.

<p>8. The innovative aspects of the INE can be retained, and research on the new economy can be sustained through less targeted funding programs.</p>	<p>Partially agree.</p> <p>SSHRC's proposed renewed program architecture will encompass the innovative elements of the INE, including emphasis on research excellence, non-academic partnerships, student training, and knowledge mobilization in the public and private sectors.</p> <p>While targeted funds will be integrated in the proposed program architecture, it will remain important to communicate to scholars and partners that additional funding is available for all areas of research.</p>
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