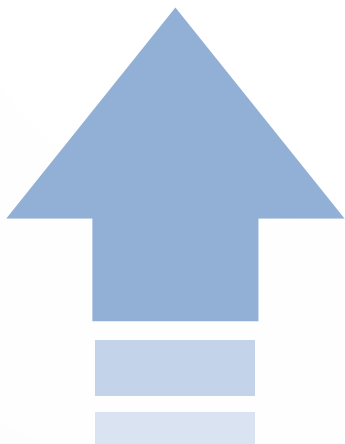


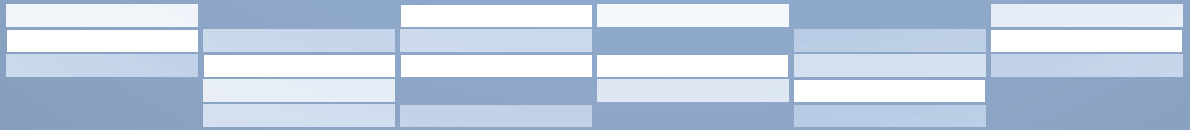
SSHRC  CRSH



# FRAMING OUR DIRECTION 2010-12

SOCIAL SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES RESEARCH COUNCIL OF CANADA

WE  
DEVELOP TALENT  
BUILD KNOWLEDGE



Social Sciences and Humanities  
Research Council of Canada

Conseil de recherches en  
sciences humaines du Canada

Canada

[www.sshrc-crsh.gc.ca](http://www.sshrc-crsh.gc.ca)

# We Develop Talent. We Build Knowledge.

Research and training in the social sciences and humanities provide the foundation for a vibrant, healthy and prosperous society. Such research builds knowledge about individuals, groups and societies, past and present—what we think, how we live and how we interact with each other and the world around us. In turn, this knowledge fosters understanding about how communities, businesses and governments can develop innovative solutions to critical social, cultural, economic, technological and environmental issues. It also underpins the development of the highly qualified workforce and engaged citizenry Canada needs to succeed in the 21st century.

SSHRC was created in 1977 with a legislative mandate to “promote and assist research and scholarship in the social sciences and humanities,” and “advise the Minister in respect of such matters relating to such research as the Minister may refer to the Council for its consideration.”

Within this mandate, SSHRC enables the highest levels of research excellence in Canada, and facilitates knowledge-sharing and collaboration across research disciplines and all sectors of society. As a federal research funding agency, SSHRC helps implement the Government of Canada’s science and technology (S&T) strategy, and contributes to many other government priorities to enhance the economic, social and cultural development of Canada, its communities and its regions. In fact, by funding excellent research on innovation, public safety, northern communities, the digital economy, Canada’s Aboriginal communities, the environment, and many other critical issues, SSHRC contributes to key policy debates across government and society.

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# Message from the President and Chair of Council

In 2007, the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) published *Framing Our Direction*. This document defined our three strategic ambitions of quality, connections and impact, and set out key objectives for the period of April 2008 to March 2010.

In pursuing these ambitions over the past two years, we have increased the contributions of the social sciences and humanities to Canada and the world. We have strengthened our governance structure, enhanced our peer review processes, improved connections across campus and with the larger society, and developed better ways to assess and mobilize our research and research training for the benefit of the private, public and not-for-profit sectors. Taken together, these steps have helped move the social sciences and humanities to centre stage in public discussion about how to build successful societies in the rapidly changing 21st century.

At the same time, we have become increasingly aware of the importance and urgency of our work. Indeed, the headlines each day have consistently emphasized how ideas and behaviour are at the heart of the economic, social, cultural and political challenges and opportunities across Canada and around the world. More than ever, knowledge and understanding about people in the past and present are needed to develop prosperous, just and resilient communities.

We are now looking ahead to 2012 and, thanks to deepened engagement with the research community and larger society, we have identified the next steps that will allow us to further pursue the enduring ambitions of quality, connections and impact. We invite you to collaborate with us in taking these steps and, thereby, to build on Canada's world-leading research capacity in the social sciences and humanities—for the benefit of all those in Canada and around the world.



**Chad Gaffield**

President



**Tom Kierans**

Vice-President and Chair of Council

# The World in 2010

Today's world is made up of increasingly complex and interconnected relationships, where knowledge and understanding about people—ideas and behaviour—are paramount to social, cultural and economic prosperity and resilience. The increasing demand for this knowledge, combined with changes across the research landscape, presents great opportunities for researchers and their partners, and for SSHRC as an organization. This has become particularly evident over the past two years. While many of the challenges and opportunities facing Canada in 2007, when SSHRC first published *Framing Our Direction*, remain the same, significant events have also changed how we, as individuals and as a society, think and act within the world.

## Priorities for Canadians

The global financial crisis that shook economies around the world during the past two years continues to threaten world stability, despite massive government interventions and renewed hope for economic balance. While Canada has weathered the economic downturn better than most, Canadians still believe the economy must be carefully managed to ensure economic recovery and future prosperity. Moreover, they sense the opportunities of the digital age, and the extent to which new technologies, content and skills will be needed to grasp them. Similarly, Canadians are aware that labour markets are changing, and that Canada's workforce must adapt quickly. They are equally concerned with the quality of education available for our young people, and the complex challenges and opportunities presented by an aging population.

Canadians are also contemplating Canada's place in the world. In 2010, the devastating earthquake in Haiti and the war in Afghanistan invited greater reflection on our contributions to stability and security in the face of intractable conflicts and catastrophic natural events. Canadians are concerned with how to balance the need for security and the need to protect human rights and freedoms. They are challenged with integrating multiple values related to the use of land, water, energy and other natural resources, and their effects on human and ecological health. They also recognize the social, economic and cultural determinants of our quality of life, both in cities and rural areas, north and south, and are becoming especially concerned with the health and vitality of our aboriginal communities.

In drawing upon the value of knowledge and understanding in the social sciences and humanities to address such key questions of the day, scholars and their research partners are helping Canadians reflect and act on what it means to be Canadian, and what it means to be human, in the 21st century.

## The Evolving Research Enterprise

The research landscape continues to change, keeping pace with the profound transformations we see in the world. As noted in *Framing Our Direction* (2007), social sciences and humanities researchers embrace both specialized and interdisciplinary approaches to research questions. There is a growing awareness that new, inclusive strategies for advancing knowledge must reflect a human dimension, especially for topics once considered exclusively scientific, medical or technological. An increasing number of partnerships are enabling the creation and sharing of research knowledge, and connections are being made across the public, private and not-for-profit sectors. Research collaborations across national borders are accelerating as well, enabled by new technologies. The result is that Canadian social sciences and humanities researchers are leading on the international stage, and the demand for Canadian researchers and graduate students to participate in international networks is greater than ever before.

Overall, research in the social sciences and humanities has developed a robust array of strategies to meet society's current demands for increased knowledge and understanding. World-class research is undertaken by individual researchers, by teams and by cross-sector partnerships that connect the campus with larger society. Researchers address questions that are local and global, that relate to today's headlines and those that may only appear many years from now. In all these types of research, scholars are creating and exploiting the digital world and the new computational power available to perform unprecedented analysis of words, images and sounds. New forms of research infrastructure are also being shared among social sciences and humanities researchers in expanded global research networks. The movement toward open access to research data and research insights is deepening the potential of all research, often in ways that cannot be predicted at the outset.

The intensification of research in postsecondary institutions has evolved over the last decade thanks in large part to significant increases in federal funding for research and research training. Universities have developed formal research plans that identify priority areas of research, and are now developing innovative ways to increase student participation in research so they can acquire the critical competencies needed in the knowledge-based economy and society. Colleges are similarly embracing a new model of learning and engagement with communities that includes research activities across the disciplines.

With the creation of such tri-agency programs as the Canada Graduate Scholarships, the Vanier Canada Graduate Scholarships, the Canada Research Chairs, and the Canada Excellence Research Chairs, Canadian institutions are developing, attracting and retaining more excellent research talent. With the expansion of support networks, including the Networks of Centres of Excellence, institutions are host to more multidisciplinary research networks developing knowledge and expertise relating to critical social and economic issues. With the Indirect Costs Program and the programs of the Canada Foundation for Innovation, institutions are enhancing their capacity to support excellent research through new facilities, infrastructure and research services. These programs reflect the increasing recognition that research excellence in the humanities, engineering and the social, health and natural sciences provides the foundation for a successful postsecondary landscape across Canada, and the foundation for a better world.

## Quality, Connections, Impact

In 2007, *Framing Our Direction* set out three strategic ambitions:

- \* **Quality:** to enhance the quality of, and support for, research and research training in the social sciences and humanities;
- \* **Connections:** to enable connections among disciplines, including those in engineering and the natural and health sciences, as well as between research and the larger community, in Canada and in the rest of the world; and
- \* **Impact:** to increase the impact of research and research training for the benefit of society.

During the past two years, SSHRC has worked closely with partners in government and the research community to achieve the objectives outlined in *Framing Our Direction*, and to pursue these three ambitions in all of its work. Key achievements include:



- \* a comprehensive examination of **SSHRC programs**, funding criteria, policies and procedures;
- \* the enhancement of peer review following an international **blue ribbon panel** on world-class adjudication (peer review) process;
- \* a **partnerships strategy**, which recognizes the growing importance of research partnerships across disciplines, fields of knowledge and national boundaries;
- \* a **knowledge mobilization strategy**, focused on connecting research to Canadian society;
- \* focused dialogue with the business community on how research can support Canada's **innovation, leadership and prosperity**;
- \* funding for **international collaboration**, including joint initiatives with the International Development Research Centre, and a digital media initiative offered in collaboration with research councils in the United States and the United Kingdom;
- \* launch of the new, tri-agency **Vanier Canada Graduate Scholarships** program, designed to attract the world's most promising doctoral students to Canada (the inaugural 166 Vanier scholars were announced in May 2009);
- \* launch of the new, tri-agency **Canada Excellence Research Chairs** program, with 19 Chairs performing world-class research in priority areas at Canadian universities;
- \* continuing development of an integrated framework for capturing and increasing the value of **SSHRC's investments** in research;
- \* strengthened relationships with Canada's research institutions, including the establishment of a standing body of university representatives, **SSHRC Leaders**, to sustain a structured dialogue on important program and policy issues; and
- \* streamlined administrative **policies and processes** across all three federal research funding agencies (Canadian Institutes of Health Research [CIHR], Natural Sciences and Engineering Council [NSERC] and SSHRC), including a tri-agency mandate review working group, the *Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans*, and planning for Phase 3 of the tri-agency *Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on the Roles and Responsibilities in the Management of Federal Grants and Awards*.

# Program Architecture Renewal

*Framing our Direction* (2007) set the continuous improvement of SSHRC programs, policies and processes as an objective for 2008-10. During this time, SSHRC examined every facet of its programs and services, including through a blue ribbon panel on peer review. These activities, alongside ongoing consultation with research communities and other sectors, evolved into a comprehensive project to renew SSHRC's programming.

By renewing its program architecture, SSHRC is creating a simpler, more flexible and effective system of application and assessment in the context of the changing research landscape and the increasing demand for social sciences and humanities research and training in all sectors of society. The development and gradual implementation of this renewed program architecture will be the key driver of SSHRC's efforts over the next two years.

Program architecture renewal at SSHRC has been guided by five principles: excellence, simplicity, flexibility, integration, and quality of service. Its first deliverable was the confirmation of three broad outcome areas, and the design of umbrella programs oriented to achieve these outcomes:

- \* **Developing talent:** To develop the next generation of researchers and leaders needed in academia and across the public, private and not-for-profit sectors by supporting graduate students and postdoctoral fellows. The *Talent* umbrella program is being designed as a framework for SSHRC's existing programming aimed at this goal.
- \* **Building knowledge and understanding:** To advance knowledge and understanding about people, societies and the world by supporting research activities according to the approach best suited to addressing the nature of the research. The *Insight* umbrella program is being designed to strengthen, integrate and consolidate SSHRC's programming aimed at this goal.
- \* **Mobilizing knowledge:** To realize the potential of social sciences and humanities research for intellectual, cultural, social and economic impact on and beyond the campus, by supporting activities and tools that facilitate the multidirectional flow of knowledge. The *Connection* umbrella program is being designed to strengthen, integrate and consolidate SSHRC's programming aimed at this goal.



Through these umbrella programs, SSHRC will provide more effective support to the new generation of scholars who represent the future of Canada’s social sciences and humanities community. It will embrace different types of research activity, scholarly traditions and sizes of proposals as equally prestigious and important, and move beyond distinctions such as, “pure” or “applied,” and “basic” or “strategic” research.

Further, SSHRC will recognize an inclusive definition of scholarly contribution that builds on the familiar emphasis on journal articles and books to include, as well, diverse means of mobilizing knowledge both on and beyond the campus. It will also continue to support research in all fields using disciplinary, interdisciplinary and cross-sector approaches. In this way, SSHRC’s new program architecture will enable scholarship that is as complex, diverse and creative as the changing world it examines.

# Strategic Priorities and Next Steps, 2010-12

## Developing Talent

Talented, skilled, creative people are at the heart of successful societies. Demand is growing across the private, public and not-for-profit sectors for highly qualified personnel who are creative, analytical and articulate, as well as sophisticated in their understanding of individuals, communities and societies in the past and present.

The social sciences and humanities nurture the intellectual assets of independent thinking, creative enquiry, analysis, interpretation and communication—skills and knowledge increasingly in demand as we make sense of our complex world. To invest in such training is to invest in Canada's continued supply of top-quality researchers in universities, and in innovative leadership across all sectors of society.

### SSHRC Priority for 2010-12

**Strengthen SSHRC programs and policies aimed at developing the next generation of leaders and thinkers, both within academia and across all sectors of the economy.**

### Next Steps

- \* **Examine SSHRC's programs of direct support for research trainees, with a view to strengthening their coherence.**

Canada's funding programs for direct support to graduate students and postdoctoral researchers have expanded significantly over the past decade. Currently, SSHRC administers three separate programs of direct support for doctoral students, each with distinct objectives, application requirements and adjudication processes. In order to ensure that Canada's federal programming for the direct support of research trainees is efficiently and effectively meeting Canada's needs for talent development in the social sciences and humanities, SSHRC intends to examine the coherence of its suite of programs of direct support to students, in consultation with other federal research funding agencies.

- \* **Strengthen SSHRC support for postdoctoral researchers by launching, with CIHR and NSERC, a new postdoctoral fellowships program, and by evaluating SSHRC's Postdoctoral Fellowships program.**

Postdoctoral fellowship awards support the most promising new scholars in the social sciences and humanities, and assist them in establishing a research base at an important time in their careers. Postdoctoral support allows recent PhD graduates to develop a program of research, publish research findings, and develop personal research networks. This support therefore contributes to the development of excellent research talent, as well as to Canada's "people advantage." Attracting the most promising research talent to Canadian institutions helps position Canada as a destination of choice for research and research training, and strengthens Canada's research capacity at home. Supporting Canada's most promising postdoctoral researchers to pursue research opportunities abroad is also an investment in Canada's research talent, and in facilitating exposure and access to expertise, ideas and methodologies being developed abroad. SSHRC will strengthen its support for postdoctoral researchers by launching, with CIHR and NSERC, a new postdoctoral fellowships program, and by evaluating SSHRC's Postdoctoral Fellowships program.

## Building Knowledge and Understanding

Social sciences and humanities research builds knowledge and understanding about the fundamental questions of human existence: who we are, where we come from and where we are headed as individuals, communities and societies. Social sciences and humanities research can be inspired by intellectual challenges, and oriented towards breaking new conceptual and methodological ground. It can also be inspired by social, economic and cultural challenges, and oriented towards practical solutions. Taken together, these inspirations mean that a world-class capacity in social sciences and humanities research helps ensure that Canada is equipped to identify and respond to the needs and challenges of today, as well as to those beyond the horizon.

Having world-class Canadian research capacity allows Canadian research and researchers to compete on the world stage and to participate in the international exchange of ideas and solutions. It broadens Canada's realm of influence, and strengthens Canada's access to the best, most promising ideas, regardless of where they are being developed.

## SSHRC Priority for 2010-12

**Simplify and consolidate SSHRC support for excellent research in the social sciences and humanities, for the benefit of Canadians now and in the future.**

### Next Steps

- \* **Launch *Insight*, a program of renewed funding opportunities for researchers and institutions undertaking research aimed at building knowledge and understanding, working as individuals, teams, and in formal partnerships.**

Funding excellent research in all social sciences and humanities disciplines and in all eligible subject areas is key to SSHRC's activities. SSHRC plans to reinforce its support for this research by restructuring its funding opportunities and optimizing its application and assessment processes.

- \* **Adjust SSHRC's peer review processes to support the objectives of the renewed program architecture, while maintaining SSHRC's internationally recognized standards of excellence.**

An international panel of experts recently concluded that SSHRC's peer review processes currently reflect the highest international standards, and made recommendations to further enhance this standing. In renewing its program architecture, SSHRC will ensure the integrity of this system while developing assessment criteria and processes for the specific objectives of the new programming. Adjudication will take into account the nature of the application, the level of funding requested and the complexity of the proposed activity.

- \* **Provide special support for Canada's current generation of new scholars, to strengthen and renew Canada's capacity for world-class research in the social sciences and humanities.**

New researchers make up a significant portion of faculty at Canadian universities, and of applicants to SSHRC's programs. This generation of new researchers has been trained in a culture of research excellence, and expects to have research-intensive careers. New researchers also experience a number of pressures particular to the early stages of their careers, including: exploring promising new avenues for research, establishing a publishing record, building partnerships in other sectors, assuming heavy teaching loads, supervising graduate students, pursuing sources of research funding, and performing faculty administrative roles. The success of these researchers at this critical time in their careers will define Canada's future capacity for research in the social sciences and humanities.

\* **Launch a process to renew SSHRC's priority areas.**

In addition to funding research and related activities through open competitions, SSHRC also offers support for specific research areas, themes and approaches. This support strengthens Canadian research capacity, builds cross-sector partnerships in priority areas, reinforces Canada's strengths and competitive advantage, and increases the impact of complementary research efforts. SSHRC currently has six research priorities: aboriginal research; the environment; the North; digital media; innovation, leadership and prosperity; and research/creation in the fine arts. In 2010-12, SSHRC will continue to invest in research and research-related activities in these areas, and will launch a process to renew its priority areas for the next period.

## Mobilizing Knowledge

Research knowledge flows in multiple directions—across disciplines, sectors and national borders—as well as among specialists and the general public. Success in the knowledge-based society and economy requires increased access to and use of research skills, expertise and results in order to enhance quality of life. “Knowledge mobilization” refers to a range of processes that help move research results into society, as well as bring new ideas into the world of research. From knowledge-brokering and outreach, to more effective dissemination through new technologies, to the “co-creation” of knowledge, these processes help ensure that public investments in social sciences and humanities research have the greatest possible impact—intellectually, socially and economically.

### SSHRC Priority for 2010-12

**Better connect social sciences and humanities research within and beyond academia, to maximize intellectual, cultural, social and economic impact.**

#### Next Steps

- \* **Launch *Connection*, a program of renewed funding opportunities for researchers and institutions to undertake knowledge mobilization activities, as individuals, teams, and in formal partnerships.**

Direct funding for activities that have knowledge mobilization as a primary objective allows researchers to devote significant time and energy to this facet of the research enterprise. Not only is this likely to improve the quality and success of these activities, and hence improve the impact of the research, but providing such funding also signals the value of knowledge mobilization within the research enterprise.

- \* **Promote knowledge mobilization objectives throughout SSHRC's programs, processes and policies, and align adjudication criteria and processes with these objectives.**

In offering funding for knowledge mobilization activities, SSHRC signals the value of these efforts, and their importance in maximizing the impact of research. In 2010-12, SSHRC will further integrate knowledge mobilization objectives within all SSHRC programming. This will include refining proposed adjudication criteria to value the knowledge mobilization components both of research projects and of the achievements of applicants, and providing clear guidance to applicants, assessors, reviewers, and institutions.

## Strengthening SSHRC's Business Practices

As a government organization, SSHRC is accountable to Canadians for the appropriate use of public funds. By ensuring robust governance and management structures, SSHRC ensures that it can deliver on its mandate effectively and efficiently, for the benefit of Canadians. By maintaining high standards of service delivery to its researchers and their partners, SSHRC ensures that the administration of funding programs facilitates the achievement of program objectives.

### SSHRC Priority for 2010-12

**Improve SSHRC's governance, management and service delivery, focusing on results for Canadians.**

#### Next Steps

- \* **Continue to engage SSHRC's stakeholders in dialogue on issues related to the design, development and implementation of SSHRC policies and programs, particularly those relating to program architecture renewal.**

SSHRC is committed to engaging its stakeholder communities on university and college campuses, in communities, in various levels of government, in private business, and in non-governmental organizations. Through engagement, SSHRC fosters interchange with and among key audiences to enhance informed decision-making on SSHRC programs, policies and directions, and earns the continued confidence of its stakeholder communities. Engagement remains a priority for SSHRC.



\* **Work with researchers, research institutions and partners to better capture and communicate the results and impacts of social sciences and humanities research.**

Fundamental to SSHRC's mandate is a responsibility to demonstrate to Canadians that the research and related activities we support lead to short-term and long-term benefits. These benefits are increasingly clear as we improve our measurement of the contributions that the social sciences and humanities make to our lives. As SSHRC develops and implements its new program architecture, SSHRC is articulating the expected outcomes of its programming, and working with researchers, research institutions and partners to develop new ways to capture and communicate the direct and indirect impacts of social sciences and humanities research.

\* **Improve service delivery by further developing electronic application and assessment processes, and by renewing award administration systems.**

SSHRC processes roughly 13,000 grant, scholarship and fellowship applications annually, and this number rises each year. It awards around 4,300 new grants, scholarships and fellowships annually, for a total of approximately 9,000 awards active at any given time. Its adjudication processes engage more than 500 committee members, and thousands of external reviewers. SSHRC's systems for receiving and tracking applications and monitoring awards must be extremely robust and must support excellence in service delivery, both for the applicants to SSHRC's programs and for Canadians at large, who are the ultimate beneficiaries of public investments in research and research training. SSHRC is working on renewing its systems for receiving and reviewing applications, and for administering awards, in order to maintain and improve their utility, security and robustness.

\* **Improve governance and management practices by building stronger links between strategic, operational, financial and human resource planning.**

Since 2006, SSHRC has taken significant steps to strengthen its corporate governance and management structures and practices. It has renewed the structure of its governing council to align with international best practices. It has also renewed the structure and mandates of its management committees, strengthened its internal audit capacity, and developed a People Strategy to guide human resource management. Work is now required to further integrate SSHRC's corporate planning functions.

# SSHRC Priorities at a Glance, 2010-12

## Developing Talent

Strengthen SSHRC programs and policies aimed at developing the next generation of leaders and thinkers, both within academia and across all sectors of the economy.

- \* Examine SSHRC's programs of direct support for research trainees, with a view to strengthening their coherence.
- \* Strengthen SSHRC support for postdoctoral researchers by launching, with CIHR and NSERC, a new postdoctoral fellowships program, and by evaluating SSHRC's Postdoctoral Fellowships program.

## Building Knowledge and Understanding

Simplify and consolidate SSHRC support for excellent research in the social sciences and humanities, for the benefit of Canadians now and in the future.

- \* Launch *Insight*, a program of renewed funding opportunities for researchers and institutions undertaking research aimed at building knowledge and understanding, working as individuals, teams, and in formal partnerships.
- \* Adjust SSHRC's peer review processes to support the objectives of the renewed program architecture, while maintaining SSHRC's internationally recognized standards of excellence.
- \* Provide special support for Canada's current generation of new scholars, to strengthen and renew Canada's capacity for world-class research in the social sciences and humanities.
- \* Launch a process to renew SSHRC's priority areas.

## Mobilizing Knowledge

Better connect social sciences and humanities research within and beyond academia, to maximize intellectual, cultural, social and economic impact.

- \* Launch *Connection*, a program of renewed funding opportunities for researchers and institutions to undertake knowledge mobilization activities, as individuals, teams, and in formal partnerships.
- \* Promote knowledge mobilization objectives throughout SSHRC's programs, processes and policies, and align adjudication criteria and processes with these objectives.

## Strengthening SSHRC's Business Practices

Improve SSHRC's governance, management and service delivery, focusing on results for Canadians.

- \* Continue to engage SSHRC's stakeholders in dialogue on issues related to the design, development and implementation of SSHRC policies and programs, particularly those relating to program architecture renewal.
- \* Work with researchers, research institutions and partners to better capture and communicate the results and impacts of social sciences and humanities research.
- \* Improve service delivery by further developing electronic application and assessment processes, and by renewing award administration systems.
- \* Improve governance and management practices by building stronger links between strategic, operational, financial and human resources planning.

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