

Community-University Research Alliances

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Context

As globalization, the communications revolution and other forces continue to reshape the world, our communities are presented with an increasingly complex mix of opportunities and challenges with multiple social, economic and cultural dimensions. The phenomena transforming the lives of individuals and communities alike include changing patterns of employment and demands for skills in a knowledge-based economy, poverty and homelessness, an increasingly diverse social fabric, transformations in family life, changing values, young people entering the workforce, new constraints on organizations and public services, both urbanization and depopulation of rural areas and new rules of business competitiveness.

Many of these challenges are best addressed at the local and regional levels by the local and regional groups that best understand the needs of, and the factors affecting, particular communities. In addition, issues which cut across geographic boundaries are also best addressed by postsecondary institutions working closely with groups that represent particular communities of interest. In service of these goals, stronger alliances between community organizations and postsecondary institutions can be enormously effective and yield important benefits for them both.

Alliances between community organizations and postsecondary institutions will foster new knowledge, tools and methods to develop the best strategies for diverse aspects of intervention, action research, program delivery and policy development that will be appropriate for our rapidly changing times. Public or private community and voluntary organizations represent major sources of expertise and innovation that are based on front-line experience. For their part, postsecondary institutions offer breadth and depth of knowledge and skills in the social sciences and humanities disciplines, which shed vivid light on the changing human condition and thereby offer new approaches to problem-solving.

SSHRC believes that by working together as equal partners in a research endeavour, postsecondary institutions and community organizations can jointly develop new knowledge and capabilities in key areas, sharpen research priorities, provide new research training opportunities, and enhance the ability of social sciences and humanities research to meet the needs of Canadian communities in the midst of change. The Community-University Research Alliances (CURA) program is designed to facilitate such collaborations.

Objectives

The purpose of the program is to support the creation of alliances between community organizations and postsecondary institutions which, through a process of ongoing collaboration and mutual learning, will foster innovative research, training and the creation of new knowledge in areas of importance for the social, cultural or economic development of Canadian communities.

Specific objectives are to:

promote sharing of knowledge, resources and expertise between postsecondary institutions and organizations in the community;

enrich research, teaching methods and curricula in postsecondary institutions;

reinforce community decision-making and problem-solving capacity; and

enhance students' education and employability by means of diverse opportunities to build their knowledge, expertise and work skills through hands-on research and related experience.

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Description

A CURA:

is based on an equal partnership between organizations from the community and one or more postsecondary institutions; and

provides co-ordination and core support for planning and carrying out diversified research activities that reflect the CURA program objectives, are centred on themes/areas of mutual importance to the partners and are closely related to their existing strengths.

Each CURA's activities will include:

a research component (short-term and long-term projects, action research, etc.);

an education and training component (in the context of research projects, apprenticeships, activities credited as part of coursework, etc.); and

a knowledge-mobilization component (workshops, seminars, colloquia, policy manuals and other publications, public lectures, etc.) that meets the needs of both academic and community partners.

The project partners jointly define a CURA's research activities as well as the participatory arrangements under which individual researchers and research teams will carry out those activities. The partners should continue to develop and refine the research activities and, in addition to strengthening the original alliance, should, where necessary, also recruit new partners during the period of the grant.

SSHRC expects that partners will develop the capacity to work together effectively (i.e., community organizations will develop the capacity to shape research agendas and postsecondary institutions will develop the capacity to work with communities).

In each CURA, the partners will jointly define and bring together one or more academic disciplines in order to target one or more research themes or areas. These themes or areas should be sufficiently broad to lend themselves to the full range of activities described above. Possible examples include: youth, poverty, culture and the arts, tourism and recreation, First Nations issues, socialization,

integration of persons with disabilities, violence, the aging population, globalization, social justice, local and regional economic development, community capacity, social indicators, cultural heritage management, religion and society, gender issues and environment and sustainable development.

Depending on the CURA's governance structure, a researcher from a postsecondary institution or an individual from a community organization will direct (or co-direct) the CURA and champion its goals. The director (or co-directors) will:

provide leadership and contribute intellectual guidance for the development of the program of activities; and

be supported by researchers, by graduate and undergraduate students (where possible), by the partner organizations, and, as needed, by professional staff.

SSHRC plans to administer the program in a flexible manner and anticipates that adjustments may be made as the program continues to develop.

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Value and Duration

Applicants successful at the Letter of Intent stage are eligible for a development grant of up to \$20,000. At the Letter of Intent stage, eligible expenses are limited to travel, workshops, meetings, secretarial support and communication and dissemination activities.

An individual CURA can receive funding of up to \$200,000 annually for up to five years. CURA grants are subject to:

SSHRC's fiscal ability to provide the support;

satisfactory compliance with the program's reporting requirements; and

a positive mid-term (third-year) evaluation.

The grant may be used to cover non-physical infrastructure costs for the support and co-ordination of the research teams and for carrying out some of the research activities. Applicants should familiarize themselves with the regulations on eligible and ineligible expenses.

CURAs are expected to seek funding from sources other than SSHRC to help support their research activities.

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[Eligibility](#)

[Applicants](#)

Applications must be submitted jointly by one or more postsecondary institutions and one or more organizations from the community. "Community" may refer to either a geographic focus or an issue/interest focus.

This requirement reflects the fact that CURAs are partnerships between postsecondary institutions and organizations from the community established to jointly develop and implement research activities. While there may be cases where a single community partner is appropriate, it is expected that most CURAs will involve two or more community partners.

Institutions that propose to administer any grant awarded under this program must meet the requirements for managing SSHRC funds and must hold or obtain institutional eligibility.

Federal, provincial, territorial and municipal government departments and for-profit organizations are not eligible to administer SSHRC funds. These organizations may participate in SSHRC research projects as partners, and researchers from these organizations may participate as collaborators.

[Postsecondary Institutions](#)

CURAs must be closely associated with academic units (department, centre, faculty, institute) within the participating postsecondary institution or institutions. Specifically, a CURA must:

focus on an area of strength of the participating academic units as demonstrated, in particular, by a critical mass of researchers and students working in that area; and

have identified, at the time of the application, a sufficient number of researchers who will be actively involved in the program.

Organizations From the Community

Eligible organizations from the community sector may include public, community or other organizations that are active in social, economic or cultural fields relevant to the CURA's research and training objectives.

Not-for-profit organizations without research capacity are encouraged to create alliances with researchers from established research institutions, in order to explore the possibility of collaboration.

Institutional Eligibility for CURA Grants

The CURA program allows for either a postsecondary institution or a community-based organization to be the lead of a given project. However the grant funding, once awarded, may only be administered by an eligible institution.

An organization that wishes to administer SSHRC grant funding must apply for, and be granted, institutional eligibility with SSHRC. Once institutional eligibility is granted, the organization is invited to become a signatory to the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) on the Roles and Responsibilities in the Management of Federal Grants and Awards, which entails a commitment by the organization to adhere to the high legal, ethical and financial standards set out in the MOU's schedules, and ensures that the organization has the necessary structures and processes in place to achieve this objective. Please note that SSHRC will not release grant funding to an institution or an organization before it becomes a signatory of the MOU.

For questions related to institutional eligibility, or to receive an institutional eligibility application package, please contact Erin Skrapek, of SSHRC's Corporate Secretariat, at erin.skrapek@sshrc-crsh.gc.ca.

Multiple Applications

SSHRC will accept more than one Letter of Intent (LOI) application from any postsecondary institution or community organization. However, applicants are strongly encouraged to promote consultation and coordination within their organizations, as only one formal CURA application may be funded per postsecondary institution or community organization per competition.

While a given postsecondary institution or community organization may submit any number of LOI applications, only its highest-ranked proposal in the Formal Application competition will receive funding— provided that the adjudication committee recommends that application for funding.

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Evaluation and Adjudication

The CURA program involves a two-stage application process:

eligible applicants must submit, jointly with their partners, a Letter of Intent application form; and applicants whose LOIs are approved by the selection committee will be invited to submit, again jointly with their partners, a Formal Application.

Only those applicants who are successful at the LOI stage will be invited to submit a formal application. Candidates so invited will be provided with the required application material and instructions for completing their proposals. They will also be offered development grants of up to \$20,000 to help in the preparation of the formal application, i.e., to round out their network of partners and program of activities, and to consolidate their collaborative activities. For development grants, eligible costs are limited to travel, workshops, meetings, secretarial support, and communication and dissemination activities.

Note: Neither the applicant nor the lead organization can be changed between the LOI stage and the formal application stage.

Formal Application (by invitation only)

Formal applications will have to provide:

more extensive information on the research, training and knowledge-mobilization activities, on the full budget requirements, on the director(s) of the CURA and on the research teams in place (professors, students and community);

a framework for the ongoing evaluation of the CURA (including performance indicators); and

further information explaining the conditions under which each partner is participating and how the funds will be shared and administered.

For formal applications, the evaluation criteria are as follows:

strength and feasibility of the proposed research, including the clarity of the research questions;

rationale for, and quality of, proposed approaches to achieve the stated objectives of the CURA;

track records of academic and community-based partners, both individuals and organizations, in their respective fields of engagement;

demonstrated quality and strength of partnership (level of commitment and engagement throughout research cycle, clarity and balance of governance structure);

suitability, scope and timing of proposed knowledge dissemination and mobilization activities;

likelihood of producing significant results and impacts by the end of the five-year funding period;

appropriateness of budget and capacity to leverage resources (financial and/or in-kind) from additional sources; and

quality of evaluation framework and process: clarity and feasibility of specific measures (i.e., performance indicators) to meaningfully assess the performance of the CURA.

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Administrative Regulations

All CURA applicants and grant holders must comply with the Regulations Governing Grant Applications and with the regulations set out in the Tri-Agency Financial Administration Guide.

More Information

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