

**Evaluation of SSHRC's
Aid to Occasional Research
Conferences & International
Congress in Canada
Program**

Final Report

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Final Report

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February 18, 2004



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Note: Please see the companion document “Evaluation of SSHRC’s Aid to Occasional Research Conferences & International Congress in Canada Program, Final Report – Appendices”, for the appendices referred to in this report.

Executive Summary

Introduction

This report presents the results of an evaluation of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC)'s Aid to Occasional Research Conferences and International Congresses in Canada (Conferences and Congresses) Program conducted by Goss Gilroy Inc. (GGI) between October 2003 and January 2004.

The evaluation was designed to measure the Program's success in achieving its objectives and to assess the relevance and effectiveness of the Program's design features, in view of improving its design for the fall 2004 competition.

Program Description

The Program funds three types of events: occasional conferences, periodic international congresses (including symposia and colloquia), and workshops. Its stated objective is:

“to encourage and facilitate the communication of research, within and between disciplines, among Canadian researchers, international experts and foreign researchers through occasional regional and national conferences & workshops, as well as through congresses of international scholarly associations held in Canada.”¹

Implicit Program objectives found through Program documentation and presented in the Program Logic Model² include: 1) to foster interdisciplinarity and international linkages; 2) to train Canadian graduate students; 3) to advance and promote Canadian scholarship; and 4) to contribute to SSHRC's visibility/ profile.

¹ Aid to Occasional Research Conferences and International Congresses in Canada, *Program Description*, http://www.sshrc.ca/web/apply/program_descriptions/conferences_e.asp

² Aid to Occasional Research Conferences and International Congresses in Canada Program, *Program Logic Model, Final Draft*, May 21, 2003.



SSHRC's Grants and Fellowships budget for 2003-2004 is \$180 million. The budget for SSHRC's Aid to Occasional Research Conferences and International Congresses Program has remained constant at \$1,300,000 since its move to the Public Affairs division in 1998. It accounts roughly for 0.7% of SSHRC's budget for Grants and Fellowships.

Evaluation Methodology

The methodology used for this evaluation consisted of a document and file review, 10 key informant interviews, a review of the Program administrative database, and four online surveys with: 1) successful program applicants; 2) non-successful program applicants; 3) university research administrators; and 4) event participants.

The survey populations were selected from the last four years of the Program: competition years 1999-2000 to 2002-2003.

The results of this evaluation were validated at a stakeholder meeting held in January 2004. Stakeholders also assisted in developing the following conclusions and recommendations, based on the evidence presented.

Conclusions

- SSHRC's Conference & Congress Program is unique in its Canada-wide non-specific support to events in multiple disciplines. Few alternatives exist, especially for researchers from small universities. The Program also plays an effective role as a lever of additional sources of funding, particularly from academic institutions.
- Survey results confirm that conferences and congresses continue to play an important role in the professional work and development of Canadian scholars. In particular, conferences and congresses are considered necessary to understand current research trends in their discipline and to initiate new international and interdisciplinary collaborations.
- SSHRC is perceived as having an essential leadership and support role to play in the mobilization and dissemination of Canadian scholarly research results.
- The most significant changes affecting the context of the Program are an increased



focus on interdisciplinarity, rising expectations regarding the use of communications technologies during the events, globalization of scholarly research, and faculty renewal. These changes contribute to rising costs of holding events and to an increasing need on the part of scholars for opportunities to meet and network. Although other means of knowledge dissemination are deemed useful, stakeholders consider that face-to-face contacts are still necessary to their work.

- Evidence shows that, as currently designed, the Program encourages participation in the funded events from international scholars and graduate students, as well as, to a certain extent, scholars from different disciplines and non-academics. Survey respondents (n=275) reported approximately 43,000 attendees at their SSHRC-funded events between 1999 and 2002. Funded events occur mostly in Ontario, Quebec and British Columbia. The Program is perceived by adjudicators to not adequately serve scholars from small and/or isolated universities. Also, applicants who have limited access to other sources of funding for their events have less chances of being approved for SSHRC funding because their event is less likely to be in advanced stages of planning.
- The Program has a positive short-term impact on its target clientele. It has contributed to the scope, quality and diversity of conferences, congresses and workshops held in Canada and led to the publication of 50% more event proceedings than events that didn't receive SSHRC funding. Funded events benefited particularly from high participation of graduate students and international presenters.
- The majority of respondents believe that the Program is also achieving its long-term objectives, having contributed to the training of graduate students and new researchers, the creation of new pan-Canadian, interdisciplinary, and international linkages and collaborations, and the advancement of Canadian scholarship and promotion of scholarly research.
- The majority of stakeholders consider that SSHRC should increase its budget for the Program in order to adequately meet the increasing needs of Canadian scholars regarding the dissemination of research results.

Recommendations



Recommendation 1: That the total budget allocated to this Program be increased in proportion to the rising need and demand for the Program.

This recommendation is based on the following:

- While the Program's budget has not been increased since 1997, it has seen a 40% increase in applications between 1997 and 2002, and a further increase of 33% in 2003.
- Program adjudicators see eligibility criteria as being artificially restrictive due to limited availability of funds to distribute. An increase in the overall budget would enable the Program to fund more (as well as a broader range of) events.
- The return on additional investments in this Program would likely be high given that it is cost-effective, using less than 1% of SSHRC's grants and contributions budget while meeting its key strategic objectives³ and reaching a majority of SSHRC's target clientele.

Recommendation 2a: Depending on an increase of the overall Program budget, that the value of grants be slightly increased, particularly the value of conference grants.

This recommendation is based on the following:

- Overall, evidence tends to suggest that the value of grants is becoming too low to continue to have the generative, multiplier effect that SSHRC conference grants have had historically.
- Program adjudication practice has generally consisted of awarding the maximum amount for a given category of event to meritorious applications because the amounts are small (in the case of conferences and workshops) and because the task of setting the amounts would be too labour-intensive for the adjudicators. Adjudication Committee members agree that SSHRC should maintain maximum amounts for each of the three categories of events as these provide a guidance/reference point to applicants and make it easier for adjudicators to administer. However, the maximum amounts should be slightly increased (at least in the case of conferences) to address increases in the costs of holding the events.

³ Strategic objectives met by the Program include fostering interdisciplinarity and international linkages; training Canadian graduate students and new researchers; and advancing and promoting Canadian scholarship.

- Evidence shows that the most important category of expenses for events is national and international travel, which absorbs more than half of the events' budget. This high proportion highlights the importance of the impact of increased travel costs on the budgets of conferences, congresses and workshops.
- The costs of events have increased substantially due to rising travel and accommodation costs; increased participation in events; general inflation; decline in institutional support for knowledge dissemination activities; increased involvement of graduate students; and rising expectations regarding the use of communication technologies and high-profile speakers at events.
- The principal other sources of funding used to hold events are registration fees and support from academic institutions. Organisers of congresses have more access to other sources of funding than conferences and workshops. Although workshops appear to need less funds than conferences due to the generally smaller size and scope of their activities, they are more dependent on funds from the Program than are conferences or congresses.

Recommendation 2b: That applicants be allowed to request additional funds in consideration of external factors such as isolation and size of institution.

- Program adjudicators noticed that some categories of Program applicants were at a disadvantage when applying to the Program because of factors such as the small size of their institution and their relative isolation from major centres. These factors impact, namely, on their access to assistance in writing their grant proposal, as well as their access to alternative sources of funding, and the costs of mounting events (the costs of travel in particular).
- Program applicants located in small and/or isolated centres likely face higher costs for organising their event than applicants located in major Canadian centres. This may be taken into consideration in awarding higher amounts than the maximum set for a given event category to these Program applicants.

Recommendation 3: That eligibility criteria be clarified and made more precise.

- 3a. That the distinctions between workshops and conferences be clarified and that separate eligibility and selection criteria be developed for workshops,



with particular attention being paid to differences in terminology from French to English and between disciplines.

3b: That the Program clarifies in its application guidelines that graduate student conferences are eligible as long as the applications are signed and endorsed by a faculty member. These student-lead conferences should however still respond to the program's stated objectives, and involve both graduate students and researchers.

3c: That the rationale for restricting congress grants to international associations be revisited to envisage the possibility of accepting applications from Canadian scholarly associations and individuals.

Recommendation 4: That the Program review the terminology used in its application documents and include a glossary in its application documentation.

- Program adjudicators observed that the meaning of terminology used in Program applications varies according to discipline and between English and French. This may affect the way applicants prepare their grant proposal and the way their application is interpreted by adjudicators, thereby disadvantaging scholars from certain disciplines and Francophone scholars.

Recommendation 5: That Program selection criteria be clarified.

5a: That the Program makes more explicit, in its application guidelines, the need to provide exceptional justification for using an invitation-only rather than a call-for-proposals method for recruiting participants.

5b: That the Program makes more explicit, in its application guidelines, that the level of preparation of a proposed event (especially whether key speakers are confirmed and whether the budget is complete, well-justified, and accurate) will impact directly on its chances of receiving SSHRC funding.

Recommendation 6: That SSHRC revisits the strategic positioning of the Program within the organisation.

This recommendation is based on the following:

- SSHRC is perceived as having an essential leadership and support role to play for mobilization and dissemination of Canadian scholarly research results. It is perceived as not having fulfilled this role well due to a lack of strategic focus and insufficient resource investments.
- In its current location (within the Public Affairs Division), the Program is isolated from other grants programs and from inclusion in strategic and budgetary discussions, while not benefiting from the Division's expertise in public relations and promotion.

Recommendation 7: That SSHRC develops and implements a performance measurement system to monitor the implementation and results of the Program and bring design adjustments as needed.

This recommendation is based on the following:

- The current Program design does comprise a paper-based activity report, but does not comprise a performance measurement system nor does it have the resources to monitor Program results.
- Such a system would enable Program staff and managers to identify desirable Program adjustments to be made in order to more effectively achieve desired results and to be responsive to contextual changes. The ongoing data collected would also feed into future evaluations of the Program.

1.0 Introduction

This report presents the results of an evaluation of the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC)'s Aid to Occasional Research Conferences and International Congresses in Canada (Conferences and Congresses) Program⁴ conducted by Goss Gilroy Inc. (GGI) between October 2003 and January 2004.

The evaluation of this Program is part of SSHRC's 2002-2006 evaluation plan and must comply with the Government of Canada's policies on accountability reporting. This evaluation was designed to measure the Program's success in achieving its objectives and to assess the relevance and effectiveness of the Program's design features, in view of improving its design for the fall 2004 competition.

The evaluation was guided by the Program's evaluation framework and logic model and by Treasury Board's evaluation policy and guidelines for the development of Results-Based Management and Accountability Frameworks (RMAFs).

This report is divided in five sections. In addition to this Introduction, Section 2.0 presents a profile of the Program; Section 3.0 outlines the detailed methodology; Section 4.0 presents the evaluation findings according to each main evaluation issue; and Section 5.0 presents the evaluation team's conclusions and recommendations. Appendices contain the list of documents reviewed; the list of interviewees; interview guides and survey questionnaires.

⁴ Referred to in the remainder of this report as "the Program".



2.0 Profile of the Program

This section presents an overview of the context of the Aid to Occasional Research Conferences and International Congresses in Canada Program and a description of its main design characteristics and delivery mechanisms.

2.1 Context

The Aid to Occasional Research Conferences and International Congresses in Canada Program was created in 1994 by the merging of two similar programs, the *Aid to Occasional Scholarly Conferences* and the *Aid to International Congresses in Canada*.

The Canada Council initiated the *Aid to Occasional Scholarly Conferences in Canada* program in the 1960's, awarding small grants of roughly \$3,000 on a non-competitive basis. SSHRC took the Program over without modification in 1977. In the early 1980's, a committee system of adjudication was adopted with three competitions per year and SSHRC increased the average grant size to \$5,000. While in SSHRC's care the budget for the Program continued to grow from just under \$400,000 to over \$1,000,000.

The *Aid to International Congresses in Canada* program was created in the early 1980's. The Program held yearly competitions and the multidisciplinary selection committee responsible for the *Aid to Occasional Scholarly Conferences in Canada* program adjudicated event applications. Awards had a maximum value of \$50,000 and could be spread over the course of three years. Between the years 1989-1990, the budget for the Program rose from \$80,000 to \$130,000.

After the merger of the two programs in 1994, the Program objectives were clarified and greater emphasis was placed on training graduate students, conference impacts, and the importance of international linkages within the events. The focus of the Program shifted from annual meetings to occasional conferences. Fewer events per year were funded but the level of funding for each event was increased, and the number of competitions were reduced for three to two per year.

In 1998, the Program moved from the Research Grants division of SSHRC to SSHRC's Communications division (now Public Affairs). The budget for the Program has remained the same at \$1,300,000 (excluding staff and adjudication costs of approximately \$88,000) since its move. The rationale for the move involved the following points:

- narrowing the cultural gap between SSHRC's corporate and Program functions;
- making sure that the work of the Communications division is grounded on a solid understanding of how programs are administered; and
- making use of the Communications division's ability to capitalize on the various communication, promotion, and dissemination opportunities offered by funded events.

2.2 Program Objectives

The stated objective of the Program is:

“to encourage and facilitate the communication of research, within and between disciplines, among Canadian researchers, international experts and foreign researchers through occasional regional and national Conferences & workshops, as well as through congresses of international scholarly associations held in Canada.”⁵

The following implicit⁶ Program objectives were found through Program documentation and presented in the Program Logic Model⁷:

- foster interdisciplinarity and international linkages;
- train Canadian graduate students;
- advance and promote Canadian scholarship;
- contribute to SSHRC's visibility/ profile.

⁵ Aid to Occasional Research Conferences and International Congresses in Canada, *Program Description*, http://www.sshrc.ca/web/apply/program_descriptions/conferences_e.asp

⁶ I.e., objectives that are not explicitly stated in the program description, but can be extracted from program selection and adjudication criteria, as well as through discussions with program staff and management.

⁷ Aid to Occasional Research Conferences and International Congresses in Canada Program, *Program Logic Model, Final*

2.3 Administration

The Program remains within the Public Affairs division at SSHRC and is administered by a single Program officer with support from a _ FTE secretarial position. The Manager of External Relations, who reports directly to the Director of the division, supervises the Program officer. The Director of Public Affairs signs notices of award, although the Program's budget stems from the Grants and Scholarships purse.

2.4 Type, Amount and Tenure of Funding

The Program funds three types of events: occasional conferences, periodic international congresses (including symposia and colloquia), and workshops.

- The term occasional conference is defined as a special event, with a clearly defined theme, which takes place on an *ad hoc* basis.
- The term workshop is defined as a smaller event whose function is to produce a deliverable (book, policy position paper, etc.) or develop a particular research agenda.
- The term congress is defined as the formal, periodic meeting of an international scholarly association, which includes both a business and scholarly component.

Congresses funded by the Program have a tenure period of up to three years, whereas conferences and workshops have a one-year tenure period. The maximum value and period of tenure of a grant is \$10,000 for a conference or a workshop held within the twelve months following the announcement of results and \$50,000 for a congress held within three years following the announcement of results.

The Program runs two competitions each year, in the fall and in the spring. The actual amount of the grant depends on the merit of the application, the financial need, and the appropriateness of the proposed budget.

Eligible expenses include:

- administrative costs;
- personnel costs (student and non-student salaries and benefits);
- travel and subsistence fees for presenters and graduate student presenters (but not honoraria);
- translation and interpretation services;
- teleconferencing and videoconferencing;
- promotion and dissemination; and
- the publication of conference, workshop or congress proceedings (to be produced within one year of the date of the event).

Honoraria for guest speakers, hospitality expenses, and office equipment purchases are not eligible expenses.

2.5 Eligibility Criteria

For a conference/workshop to be eligible for funding, it must:

- take place after the date specified for SSHRC's announcement of competition results;
- have a defined theme and be devoted to scholarly research issues in the social sciences or humanities;
- be held in Canada or at a Canadian academic institution abroad;
- not be receiving support for the same activity under another SSHRC program;
- not be an association's annual general meeting.

Note: A conference that is held by an association and that coincides with that association's annual general meeting is eligible only if the organisers can demonstrate:

- > that the conference is a distinct, independent and self-contained event; and
- > that it will address an audience different from or broader than that of the annual general meeting.

For a congress to be eligible, it must:

- be sponsored by an international scholarly association:
 - > that has as its main objective the furthering of advanced scholarly research in a discipline of the social sciences or the humanities; and
 - > that shows evidence of a membership with broad international representation (a minimum of three countries).
- take place in Canada after the date specified for SSHRC's announcement of competition results;
- include a fully constituted business meeting of its members;
- have a defined research theme in areas within the association's purview

In addition, applicants for workshops or conferences must be researchers in the social sciences or humanities (Canadian citizens or permanent residents of Canada), not currently under SSHRC sanction, be affiliated with a Canadian university that is administering the grant, and be a member of the event organising committee.

Applicants for congress grants must be members of the international scholarly association hosting the congress.

2.6 Application Process

Applicants to the Program fill out their applications in a PDF format, appending their SSHRC Web-based CVs and the application checklist to their application. Both the applicant and the signing authority of the institution's research office must sign applications. The application deadlines for 2003 were May 1st and November 1st. The same application cannot be submitted for both spring and fall competitions.

The following pieces of information should appear on applications:

- the city in which the event will take place;
- the date(s) set for the event;
- the number and type of attendees (students, researchers, presenters etc) and their provinces, states, or countries of residence;
- method of selecting presenters and inviting attendees (open call for papers, invitation-only, or both);



- registration fee amount (waived for Canadian graduate students presenting and all graduate students at the host institution);
- discipline and area of research under which the proposed event falls;
- names and institutional affiliations for each of the event organisers and presenters including students, with citations of any previous event organisation and dissemination experience;
- name, department, and organisation for keynote speakers and event presenters, indicating with an asterisk the speakers supported by SSHRC funding; and
- listed names of graduate students participating in the event, their disciplines, roles, and institutional affiliations, indicating with an asterisk the students supported by SSHRC funding.

A section (maximum three pages) describing the event should be included with the application form. The details to be included in this section are the objectives of the event, its relationship to past, current and proposed research in its research area; its contribution to scholarship in Canada; ways in which it will foster international linkages; criteria used to select keynote speakers and presenters and role of graduate students. The plan for event proceedings and plans for the dissemination of results are presented separately, and the call for papers and preliminary program are included in appendix.

A balanced budget must also be submitted, including all anticipated costs associated with the proposed event and any anticipated revenues including support from public or private sector agencies, direct financial contributions (not in-kind) from affiliated universities, and registration fees.

2.7 Adjudication

Adjudication of the Program grants is conducted by a committee of peer scholars, with the assistance of the Program officer.

2.7.1 Adjudication Committee



The Adjudication Committee is composed of 8 to 10 scholars from a variety of universities and disciplines. Committee members are nominated by universities, professional associations and previous committee members. An elaborate process is followed by the Program staff to select committee members using the following criteria:

- the overall competence of the committee;
- individual members' scholarly stature;
- a balanced representation of areas of expertise, universities, regions, official languages and genders;
- members' appropriate knowledge of both official languages; and
- members' availability.

Members typically serve a three-year term and are then rotated, allowing for constant variety and vitality within the adjudication body. In order to protect committee members from applicant inquiries, members' identities are kept private until after results are made known to all applicants.

2.7.2 Adjudication Process

Twice a year, Adjudication Committee members are sent a binder of applications to review for their relative scholarly merit. The Program officer has screened applications for eligibility. Three committee members review each application. Using a grid, reviewers assign each application a preliminary score. They have one month to submit their scores by fax or e-mail to the Program officer. Once all preliminary scores are received, the Program officer ranks them, in preparation for the adjudication meeting.

The second stage of the adjudication process consists of a two-day meeting of the Adjudication Committee members. Using preliminary scores as a guide for discussion, committee members reach consensus on a final score for each application. Based on this final score, applications are ranked. Their ranking relative to the number of applications submitted and total budget available determines which applications are recommended for funding. However, committee members reserve the prerogative of not allocating the entire budget reserved for a given competition if the general quality of applications is deemed too low.

Funding recommendations are then submitted to the Council for approval.

The Program officer acts as secretary to the committee during adjudications, keeping track of budget recommendations, the rank order of applications, and the final scores given to applications.



2.7.3 Application Evaluation/Adjudication Criteria

As stated in the published program description⁸, the following criteria are used to evaluation applications:

- degree to which the proposed event fulfills the objectives of the Aid to Occasional Research Conferences and International Congresses in Canada program;
- contribution of the event to the advancement of Canadian scholarship in the social sciences or in the humanities;
- openness of the event to all interested researchers;
- involvement of both Canadian and international researchers; opportunities for Canadian researchers to foster relationships with their counterparts from abroad;
- active involvement of graduate students in both the intellectual and organizational aspects of the event;
- soundness of the planning and organization of the event;
- significance of the theme as well as the clarity and specificity with which it is expressed;
- quality and comprehensiveness of the event description;
- provisions made for sharing findings within and between disciplines;
- degree of interaction among participants;
- calibre of speakers and the mechanism for selecting them;
- cost-effectiveness of the event and appropriateness of the proposed budget;
- diversity of sources of funding;
- plans for publishing and disseminating results;
- importance and effectiveness of the international scholarly association as an agent for promoting advanced scholarly research and communication of research results (congresses only);
- appropriateness of workshop participants, including their scholarly qualifications and/or professional profiles (workshops only);
- quality and likely contribution of the proposed deliverable (workshops only).

Adjudication Committee members make use of a scoring grid in order to rate applications. The relative weight of each criterion is unknown to applicants.

⁸ http://www.sshrc.ca/web/apply/program_descriptions/conferences_e.asp#5

To ensure consistency within the selection process, SSHRC has developed a *Standardisation of Scores* table. As illustrated in the adjudication manual, the table breaks down proposal scores and characteristics in the following manner:

Table 2.7.3.2 *Standardisation of Scores*

Score Range	Characteristics of the Conference or Congress Proposal		
	Value of proposal	SSHRC Program Objectives	Priority
85-100	Excellent	Fully meets the objectives	Highest
70-84	Solid	Adequately meets objectives	Worthy of consideration
60-69	Marginal	Could have addressed objectives more convincingly	If funds are available
Less than 60	Insufficient merit	Problematic in 1 or more areas	Not considered worthy

2.7.4 Award Announcements

All matters discussed during adjudication meetings or teleconferences are confidential. Following the Council's approval of the Adjudication Committee's recommendations, the SSHRC Program officer notifies applicants of the results of the committee's deliberations.

The Chair of the Adjudication Committee summarises members' assessments of each application. SSHRC then forwards these written comments to non-successful applicants to provide them with a clear explanation of where their application was problematic.

2.8 Event Monitoring

The Program officer monitors whether funded events have taken place as planned by requesting grant recipients to submit a follow-up activity report. The Program officer provides the activity report form with the notice of award. It is to be returned 90 days following the completion of their event. Event hosts are asked to report on:

- The event's contribution to Canadian scholarship;
- Original goals versus fulfilled goals;

- Quality of the papers presented;
- Dissemination of results/ publication of proceedings;
- Participation in the event;
- Copy of the final event program;
- Copy of abstracts if available; and
- Any highlights hosts wish to share.

2.9 Program Budget

SSHRC's Grants and Fellowships budget for 2003-2004 is \$180 million. The budget for SSHRC's Aid to Occasional Research Conferences and International Congresses Program has remained constant at \$1,300,000 since its move to the Public Affairs division in 1998. It accounts roughly for 0.7% of SSHRC's budget for Grants and Fellowships.

2.10 Profile of Applications and Awards, 1997-2003

The following table outlines the number of applications received each year since 1997, the number of grants awarded and success rate, as well as the funding requested and awarded, and the funding rate.

Table 2.10.1 Profile of Applications⁹ and Awards, 1997-2003

Competition Year	Applications				Awards				Overall Success Rate (%)	Total Funding Requested (\$)	Total Funding Awarded (\$)	Overall Funding Rate (%)
	Conf.	Cong.	Work.	Total	Conf.	Cong.	Work.	Total				
1997	120	9	*	129	67	5	*	72	55.8	1,305,663	746,055	57.1
1998	144	10	*	154	112	9	*	121	78.6	1,593,895	1,287,890	80.8
1999	164	20	*	184	93	10	*	103	56.0	2,187,236	1,274,871	58.3
2000 ¹⁰	163	17	8	188	119	10	3	132	70.2	2,313,372	1,527,510	66.0
2001	176	5	22	203	109	4	8	121	59.6	2,054,178	1,211,320	59.0
2002	152	12	16	180	102	8	10	120	66.7	2,050,832	1,273,621	62.1
2003 (1 st comp)	72	4	20	96	46	4	11	61	63.5	1,030,289	637,345	61.9

⁹ Eligible applications only.

¹⁰ A surplus of \$200,000 was allotted to the November 2000 competition, resulting in a high success rate.



Evaluation of SSHRC's Conferences and Congresses Program

2003 (2 nd comp)	103	12	28	143						1,814,437		
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* = Workshops were not part of the Program until 2000.



3.0 Methodology

This Section presents the evaluation issues addressed by the study, followed by a detailed description of the methodology.

3.1 Evaluation Issues and Questions

This study addressed the following evaluation issues, questions, and sub-issues, as outlined in the Program's evaluation framework.

Table 3.1.1 Evaluation Issues, Questions and Sub-Issues

<p>Program Rationale and Relevance</p> <p>How has the context in which this Program operates changed and how have these changes impacted on the Program's rationale and relevance to the needs it is designed to address?</p> <p>Sub-Issues:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communities served and not served by the Program • Link/gaps between Program and needs • Reasons for increase in demand • Evolving event costs • Other sources of non-Program funding for events • Comparison of Program to other programs • What funds are used for
<p>Program Design and Delivery</p> <p>What are the limitations of current Program design and delivery and how can they best be addressed?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Program assumptions • Consistency between assumptions and design • Design limitations and solutions • Performance measurement and monitoring to date
<p>Program Impact</p> <p>What impacts have been facilitated by this Program?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Short-term impacts <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Occurrence of new conferences, congresses or workshops • Communication of research • Interdisciplinary and international participation • Canadian graduate student participation • Activities enhancing SSHRC profile/visibility • Longer-term impacts <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Training of Canadian graduate students and new researchers • Pan-Canadian linkages and collaboration



<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interdisciplinary linkages and collaboration • International linkages and collaboration • Advancement of Canadian scholarship • Promotion of advanced scholarly research • Contribution to SSHRC's visibility/profile
General Context Issues
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Role SSHRC should play and how well it plays it • Relative importance of various research dissemination activities/media • Target audiences for research results dissemination • Adequacy of available events to Canadian scholars' needs • Relevance of conferences and congresses to the needs of Canadian scholars

3.2 Data Collection Methods

The methodology used for this evaluation consisted of a document and file review, key informant interviews, a database review, and online surveys.

3.2.1 Document and File Review

The document and file review was conducted to draw a descriptive profile of the Program and to develop/revise data collection instruments, building on the work already conducted as part of the evaluation design.

The key documents reviewed were the Terms of Reference for this assignment, the Program's evaluation framework and logic model, the information on the Program contained on SSHRC's Website, and the Program's *Manual for Adjudication Committee Members*. Documents gathered by SSHRC for the development of the evaluation framework were also consulted.

The evaluation team also reviewed a sample of applicant files from 1999 to 2003, including files from successful, non-successful and ineligible applicants. These files contained the event proposal, the SSHRC letter of reply and score received, and, when applicable, the activity report submitted by the event organiser. A list of documents reviewed is included in Appendix A.

3.2.2 Key Informant Interviews



A total of 10 interviews were completed with representatives from the Program (n=2), current and past Adjudication Committee members (n=4), and other external stakeholders knowledgeable about the Program and/or the context of Canadian scholarly research dissemination (n=4). Key informants were selected from a short list submitted by the Project Authority.

These key informant interviews allowed the evaluation team to obtain in-depth qualitative information on the rationale, relevance, design, delivery, impacts and future of the Program. They lasted from 30 minutes to 90 minutes and were conducted by phone or in person, in the official language of choice of the respondents.

The list of key informants interviewed is included in Appendix B. The interview guides used for each category of informant are included in Appendix C.

3.2.3 Online Surveys

The primary line of evidence for the evaluation consisted of four web-based surveys of the following groups of Program stakeholders:

- Successful Program applicants (event organisers)
- Non-successful Program applicants (event organisers)
- University research administrators or directors of Research Services
- Event participants

A separate questionnaire was developed for each group, addressing both contextual and Program-specific questions identified in the evaluation framework. Survey questionnaires are included in Appendix D. Surveys were administered via a web site where all four survey questionnaires were hosted. They took between 10 and 30 minutes to complete.

3.2.3.1 Survey Sampling Approach for Program Applicants and Research Administrators

The survey populations were selected from the last four years of the Program: competition years 1999-2000 to 2002-2003. Given the relatively small size of the survey populations (less than 1,000) and the negligible incremental costs associated with adding cases with a web-based survey, a census approach was chosen, whereby all members of the survey populations were asked to participate. The survey frame for the first three groups of respondents (successful, non-successful and research administrators) was drawn from the Program database. Successful and non-successful applicants were entered only once, according to their most recent successful or non-successful application. For research administrators, only one representative per institution was included in the survey frame.

3.2.3.2 Email Notifications

Potential survey respondents were sent an initial e-mail note from SSHRC announcing the upcoming survey. This note was followed by a direct invitation, sent by GGI, to participate in the survey. This invitation contained a hyper-link to the survey website, as well as a unique password which allowed the evaluation team to link the survey responses to the individual's administrative data, and ensure the respondent was directed to the appropriate questionnaire. Respondents were invited to visit the survey web site using the provided link and password and were asked to submit their responses within a specified time limit. They were also offered to receive a paper copy of the questionnaire if they preferred. A few respondents (3.5%) availed themselves of this option.

In order to increase the response rate, two follow-up reminder e-mails were sent to non-respondents.

3.2.3.3 Issues Addressed by the Surveys

Program applicants were asked some specific questions about the most recent event for which they have submitted a successful or non-successful application, followed by questions on their overall impressions about the Program and on the context of

scholarly research in general. Research administrators were asked about their overall impressions about the Program and the general context of scholarly research.

In addition, successful applicants were asked if they would volunteer names and e-mail addresses of participants to their funded event.

3.2.3.4 *Survey of Event Participants*

The evaluation team contacted every survey respondent who indicated that they were willing to provide names and contacts for past event participants. These participants were sent an e-mail invitation to participate in the survey. Event participants were asked questions about the event they attended as well as general questions on the context of Canadian scholarly research and dissemination.

3.2.3.5 *Survey Timelines and Response Rates*

The timeframe for administering the surveys and for reporting on results was very short. Potential respondents to the first three surveys were sent a first e-mail invitation on November 10, 2003. Successive waves of e-mail invitations were sent to event participants as their names were being submitted by respondents to the successful applicants' survey. All surveys concluded on December 15, 2003. Given the short timeframe, the response rates obtained were reasonable for the purposes of the evaluation.

The following are final response rates¹¹ for each of the four surveys administered:

- Successful applicants: 279 of 417 (67%)
- Non-successful applicants: 118 of 237 (50%)
- Research administrators: 56 of 142 (39%)
- Event participants: 82 of 282 (29%)

¹¹ The total numbers against which response rates were calculated correspond to the number of applicants who submitted at least one application between 1999 and 2003. For the purpose of these surveys, the database of applicants was edited so that each applicant would appear only once, for the most recent successful or non-successful application submitted.

The following are final response rates by type of event:

Table 3.2.3.5.1 Response rates by type of event

	Conferences	Congresses	Workshops	Total
Successful	243 of 366 (66%)	24 of 32 (75%)	12 of 19 (63%)	279 of 417 (67%)
Non-successful	101 of 195 (52%)	5 of 17 (29%)	12 of 25 (48%)	118 of 237 (50%)
Total	344 of 561 (61%)	29 of 49 (59%)	24 of 44 (55%)	397 of 654 (61%)

3.2.3.6 Profile of Survey Respondent, Successful and Non-Successful Applicants

The following tables provide a profile of the respondents to the surveys of successful and non-successful applicants, by category of disciplines.

Table 3.2.3.6.1 Profile of respondents by category of disciplines

Discipline¹²	Social Sciences	Humanities	Interdisciplinary Studies¹³	Other	Total
Successful	110	137	29	3	279
Non-Successful	54	38	15	11	118
Total	164	175	44	14	397

3.2.4 Database Review

Administrative data contained in the Program's database of successful and non-successful applicants was used by the evaluation team as part of the analysis of survey results. Information from the database used includes, among others, categories of Program funding expenditures and statistics on where funded events took place. Administrative data also enabled the evaluation team to create cross-tabulations between some impact results and the discipline categories of successful and non-successful applicants.

¹² The categories of disciplines used here correspond to those used by SSHRC. For the purpose of this classification, Social Sciences include Law. Humanities include Communications and Media Studies and Library and Information Science.

¹³ Interdisciplinary Studies include Women's Studies.

3.3 Stakeholder Meeting

The final stage of this evaluation process consisted of a stakeholder meeting designed to validate the results of this evaluation and to assist in developing conclusions and recommendations based on the evidence presented.

The meeting was held on January 20, 2004, and was facilitated by members of the evaluation team. It was attended by Program staff, SSHRC managers and evaluation officers, and external stakeholders, primarily members of the Adjudication Committee. Meeting participants were sent in advance a copy of the draft evaluation report, along with a guide for reviewing the report and preparing their comments for discussion. The conclusions and recommendations in Section 5 of this report are based on the results of the evaluation and the feedback received during this stakeholder meeting.

3.4 Methodological Limitations

As indicated in the Terms of Reference, this evaluation was designed to be formative in nature, that is, to focus principally on relevance, design, and delivery issues, and identifying areas where the Program could be improved. Although some questions were asked about perceived impacts of the Program and achievement of its objectives, this evaluation was not expected to provide an in-depth impact analysis.

During key informant interviews and the stakeholder meeting, participants indicated that geographical isolation has a significant impact on the number of applications and on the success rates of applicants from isolated universities. Unfortunately, the evaluation team could not quantitatively verify this hypothesis, nor expand upon it because the Program's administrative database does not currently contain data on proximity to major urban centres.

It must also be noted that, with the exception of administrative data on the number of events funded and survey respondents' estimates of the number of persons who attended their event, most data collected as part of this evaluation are based on self-reporting. As a result, evaluation findings are limited to the extent to which self-

reporting can have potential biases and reliability issues, and can be difficult to validate. This was one of the main reasons for holding a stakeholder meeting, so that findings could be validated whenever possible. It should however be noted that stakeholder meeting participants were not representative of all stakeholder groups.

In some instances, cross-tabulations should be interpreted with caution, given that several cells possess small sample sizes.

When possible, evaluation issues were addressed using both quantitative and qualitative sources. Qualitative sources were used mostly to illustrate findings from the surveys.

4.0 Evaluation Findings

This section presents the study findings and the evaluation team's analysis of the findings under each of the evaluation issues. Overall conclusions are provided after each evaluation issue.

4.1 Program Rationale and Relevance

This section of the report addresses the continued rationale and relevance for the Program, including which communities it serves and doesn't serve, contextual issues that impact on the need for the program, gaps between needs and the Program, alternatives to this Program, and how the Program funds are being used.

4.1.1 Communities Served and Not Served by Program

A key aspect of the Program's relevance is the scope of its clientele, both direct and indirect. Certain groups of scholars are granted funding while others are excluded due to the Program's eligibility and selection criteria. The impact of these criteria on who is served by the Program is discussed later in the program design and delivery section of the report (see Section 4.2.5). The current section examines external factors affecting direct beneficiaries of the Program, funding recipients, and those who benefit indirectly from it, the event participants.

Direct Beneficiaries: Funding Recipients

The evaluation team examined the distribution of SSHRC-funded events across Canadian provinces. As shown in Table 4.1.1.1, among survey respondents, the majority of funded events took place in Ontario (39%), Quebec (25%) and British Columbia (13%). However, events that did not receive funding and were held anyway took place in these provinces in the same proportions, which indicates that the Program funding allocation process does not favour events in certain provinces over others.

Table 4.1.1.1 Distribution of events across Canadian provinces, successful and non-successful

Province	Successful		Non-successful	
	Number of events	Percentage	Number of events	Percentage
Other country	1	0.4	0	0
AB	23	8	10	9
BC	36	13	16	14
MB	8	3	4	3
NB	6	2	4	3
NL	6	2	0	0
NS	17	6	7	6
ON	108	39	45	38
QC	69	25	30	25
SK	5	2	2	2
Total	279	100	118	100

Several Program adjudicators observed that scholars from some universities were more successful than others at obtaining Program funding due to factors such as the size of the university, which likely affects the amount of resources available to help them prepare grant applications. As can be seen in Table 4.1.1.2, large universities put in 42% more applications than medium & small universities combined. However, the size of the university does not appear to have a significant impact on success rates. In fact, in some competition years, applications from small & medium universities experienced a slightly higher success rate than those from large universities.

Table 4.1.1.2 Successful and non-successful applications by university size, 1997-2003¹⁴

Year	Large				Medium				Small				Un-known Size	Total
	Succ.	Non Succ.	Tot.	Succ. Rate (%)	Succ.	Non Succ.	Total	Succ. Rate (%)	Succ.	Non Succ.	Total	Succ. Rate (%)		
1997	44	34	78	56	15	16	31	48	13	7	20	65	0	129
1998	83	13	96	86	23	8	31	74	15	12	27	56	0	154
1999	53	44	97	55	36	24	60	60	14	13	27	52	0	184
2000	92	32	124	74	29	12	41	71	10	12	22	45	1	188
2001	74	50	124	60	27	19	46	59	20	13	33	61	0	203
2002	76	35	111	68	29	15	44	66	15	10	25	60	0	180
2003	93	57	150	62	35	29	64	55	17	8	25	68	1	240
Total	515	265	780	66	194	123	317	61	104	75	179	58	2	1278

Adjudicators were also concerned that the program does not adequately serve scholars from isolated areas. Program administrative data does not include information on the level of isolation of the various universities from which applications were submitted, thereby preventing the evaluation team from verifying whether applicants from these institutions are disadvantaged by the Program.

Program adjudicators also observed that scholars who had more support from their universities were better able to time their grant applications with their event planning. Applicants whose research work and event planning is well advanced when they apply have better chances of obtaining funding because their application is likely to contain a more precise and detailed budget and list of presenters.

“The Committee sees a big difference between people that know their timing and those that don’t”. (Program Adjudicator)

Some universities are viewed by several adjudicators to be more systematically successful in obtaining Program funds because of the timing of their applications; that

¹⁴ University size was calculated according to the number of full-time professors in 2002. Large corresponds to 500 and more professors; medium to 250-499 professors; and small to less than 250 professors.

is, because their events are in an advanced stage of planning when they submit their funding applications. An analysis of success rates by region demonstrated that there were not large differences in success rates among regions with conferences. Some differences did exist for congresses and workshops, however the overall sample size is small.

Table 4.1.1.3 Success Rates for Conferences by Region, 1997 to 2002

Region	Applications	Awards	Success Rate (%)
Atlantic	70	41	58.6
Québec	189	126	66.7
Ontario	329	210	63.8
Prairies	88	58	65.9
British Columbia	91	65	71.4
Total	767	500	65.2

Table 4.1.1.4 Success Rates for Congresses by Region, 1997 to 2002

Region	Applications	Awards	Success Rate (%)
Atlantic	3	2	66.7
Québec	33	23	69.7
Ontario	13	5	38.5
Prairies	5	3	60.0
British Columbia	7	5	71.4
Total	61	38	62.3

Table 4.1.1.5 Success Rates for Workshops by Region, 1997 to 2002

Region	Applications	Awards	Success Rate (%)
Atlantic	3	2	66.7
Québec	4	2	50.0
Ontario	15	5	33.3
Prairies	2	1	50.0
British Columbia	6	1	16.7
Total	30	11	36.7

As part of the stakeholder meeting held on the first draft of this report, Program adjudicators made several suggestions as to how SSHRC could ensure that scholars from small and/or isolated universities are better served by this and other SSHRC programs. For instance, it was suggested that a SSHRC officer make visits to remote or small campuses to demonstrate key issues and considerations when completing

applications. Another suggestion was for SSHRC to more actively promote the importance of the Program with university administrators and to encourage them to support and compensate time spent by successful applicants on mentoring others on how to prepare a successful application. A third suggestion was to increase the number of application rounds to three per year (this suggestion was also made by a few survey respondents and key informants), thereby increasing the opportunities for applicants to time their applications favourably. However, all of these suggestions imply the investment of additional resources into the Program.

Indirect Beneficiaries: Event Participants

Overall, successful applicants surveyed (n=275) reported approximately 43,000 attendees at their SSHRC-funded events between 1999 and 2002. Successful applicants were also surveyed on the categories of stakeholders who took part in the activities funded by the Program. The same question was asked of non-successful applicants who went ahead with their proposed event without SSHRC funding.

As shown in Table 4.1.1.6, successful applicants report more diversified participation in their event than non-successful applicants, in particular when it comes to scholars from other disciplines.

According to survey results, Program funding is used by successful applicants to hold events in which scholars from various disciplines and countries, as well as graduate and undergraduate students and non-academics, participate. It is possible that this difference in participation between SSHRC-funded and non-SSHRC-funded events may be attributed to the Program's selection criteria, which could favour interdisciplinarity, internationality, and participation from students. However, it will be noted later in the report (Section 4.1.2) that the consequences of not receiving SSHRC funding include a reduction in the number of international participants and graduate students.

Overall, survey results show that graduate students, as indirect beneficiaries, are well served by the program and that scholars from the discipline of the event are exposed to international scholars. Scholars from other disciplines, undergraduate students, and non-academics are also served by the Program, although in smaller proportions.

Table 4.1.1.6 Groups having participated in event, successful and non-successful applicants (multiple answers accepted)

Groups having participated in event	Successful (n=279)	Non-successful (n=110)
International Scholars	97%	85%
Scholars of other disciplines	60%	46%
Graduate students	97%	90%
Undergraduates	52%	35%
Non-academics	60%	50%
Other	13%	10%

Conclusion: Evidence shows that, as currently designed, the Program encourages participation of international scholars and graduate students, as well as, to a certain extent, scholars from different disciplines and non-academics in funded events. Non-funded events report a less diversified participation. Funded events occur mostly in Ontario, Quebec and British Columbia, although there is overall very little difference in the success rates of events by region. The Program is perceived by adjudicators to not adequately serve scholars from small and/or isolated universities, who may be at a disadvantage given the lack of resources to help them prepare an adequate and timely grant application.

4.1.2 Link/Gaps Between Program and Needs

Context

A premise of this evaluation is that the context in which this Program operates has changed over the past years. The evaluation sought to identify some of these changes and the impact they may have on the rationale and relevance of the Program and its current design. When asked how they thought the context of the Program had changed, key informants identified a number of factors.

Interdisciplinarity: Several key informants from SSHRC, the Program's Adjudication Committee and other stakeholders noticed a breakdown of disciplinary barriers in academic research and an increase in collaborative work between disciplines.

“What has changed for the better is increased collaborative work between disciplines.” (Program Adjudicator)

“A key change has been the globalization of knowledge and interdisciplinarity” [translation] (SSHRC Representative)

“There has been a breakdown of disciplinary barriers and researchers are convening.” (Other Stakeholder)

Communication technologies: Another significant change observed is the increased availability, use of, and demand for, new communication technologies (i.e. teleconferences, web-based conferences) for knowledge dissemination and collaborative scholarly research. It is possible that the availability of new means to work collaboratively from remote locations, and of new means to connect people from various locations without bringing them together in the same physical location, may have an impact on the relevance of conferences, congresses and workshops, which are designed to do just that.

However, interview and survey results (answers to open-ended questions) showed that Canadian scholars (from all categories) still consider conferences, congresses and workshops as important means for knowledge dissemination. Several respondents stated that interacting in person with other scholars remains a very important part of their work.

“In spite of huge expansion in web and email communication, the face-to-face interaction with researchers in one's discipline that is obtained via conferencing remains crucial to the research enterprise.” (Successful Applicant)

In fact, survey respondents reported a general increase in their interest in and need for knowledge sharing, networking and communication with other researchers.

“Conferences are one of the main motors of research in the academic community of which I am a part. They motivate and promote research in any number of ways. They also allow scholars to judge their work against the backdrop of what their peers are saying and publishing in the field.” (Non-successful Applicant)



Survey results show that rather than having an impact on the relevance of conferences and congresses, increased access to communications technologies has affected the level of expectations with regard to the way knowledge is disseminated at these events, resulting in an increase in the cost of the events. With the increased availability of new technologies for presenting research materials such as PowerPoint, web-based presentations, CD ROM hand-outs of presenters' papers, etc., event participants expect more and more from events.

“Translation is very expensive as are all of the other technological innovations that are now seen as ‘musts’ for conferences.” (Successful Applicant)

Globalization: Another key change observed is the increased globalization of scholarly research. According to several respondents, Canadian scholars can no longer limit themselves to Canadian scholarship and need to position themselves internationally. This results in the need for more funds to support international events and more flexible budgets.

Faculty renewal: Finally, key informants and survey respondents have observed a demographic shift in universities, where there is a larger proportion of new academics, which means that an increasing number of new researchers are presenters at conferences and an increasing number of researchers need opportunities to create networks and build their portfolio of presentations and publications.

“Older generations are retiring to be replaced by a much younger demographic.” (Other Stakeholder)

“A lot of hiring has been done in the past ten years. The younger people are hitting their stride.” (Successful Applicant)

Generally, survey respondents also observed increasing competition among researchers and students, and pressure to present and share the results of their research.

“The number of faculty and the number of students have grown tremendously. As more faculty are hired and going through the tenure process, they require conferences for networking and for sharing their research.” (Non-successful Applicant)

Institutional support: Institutional support for these activities however appears to be declining. As university budgets are reduced due to government cutbacks, they are increasingly resorting to cost recovery practices, forcing scholars to seek alternative sources of funding.

“With the squeeze in university budgets, universities are increasingly looking for cost-recovery use of facilities.” (Non-successful Applicant)

Evolving event costs: Key informants and survey respondents were also asked for their opinion as to which factors contribute to evolving event costs. Responses were consistent across all categories of respondents.

Rising travel and accommodation costs were cited as the most importance source of increase in the costs of holding a conference, congress or workshop. This factor was deemed particularly important given an observed increase in participation in events, including international participation.

*“The costs of travel, accommodations, meals have increased significantly.”
(Successful applicant)*

*“The need for our activities to branch out internationally has likely played an important role in increasing the costs of organizing events. We all want international speakers at our activities as this adds to the events credibility. This leads to additional spending in order to best accommodate our guests.”
[translation] (Successful applicant)*

Several respondents also referred to general inflation, noticing that the Program has not increased the amount of funding support in proportion with inflation. With the rising cost of living were associated a general increase in the costs of rental facilities, technical equipment, promotion of the event, and honoraria/salaries.

Respondents also reported having less time to organise conferences and resorting more to hiring external resources (including graduate students) for that purpose.

Finally, rising expectations regarding events (as mentioned above) are seen as having an impact on costs. Events are expected to be bigger, involve high-profile keynote speakers, and make increased use of communication technology. In the context of competition for attendance at conferences and congresses, these factors were deemed particularly important.

“The need for expensive, high-end technological equipment (projection screens, projectors, electronic networks, and specialized software for event registration and accounting...)[...] the need to create a congress site that is satisfying: social functions, music, decorations, signs, etc., if not, people will go to other congresses.” [translation] (Successful Applicant)

Combined, these factors contribute to an increase in potential demand for support to conferences and congresses and competition for limited available funds. These observations are consistent with those made at the framework stage of the evaluation¹⁵, and confirm that the context in which the program operates has evolved faster than the program.

Need for the Program

Overall need: When asked for their opinion on the continued relevance of the Program, given the current context of scholarly research in Canada, key informants reported an increasing need for the Program, especially in light of the trend towards increased collaborative research and declining institutional support for results dissemination activities¹⁶.

¹⁵ Evaluation Framework: Aid to Occasional Research Conferences and International Congresses in Canada, Final Draft, May 21, 2003.

¹⁶ Gaps between the program design and existing needs will be further discussed in the design and delivery section of this report (see Section 4.2).

This increased need is reflected in program statistics, which reveal an overall increase in the demand for the Program over the last six years. The number of applications has risen from 129 in 1997, to 239 in 2003. However, it should be noted that the trend in increased demand is variable from year to year.

Table 4.1.3.1 Profile of Applications, 1997-2003

Competition Year	Applications	Increase (%)
1997	129	Base Year
1998	154	19%
1999	184	43%
2000	188	46%
2001	203	57%
2002	180	40%
2003	239	85%

When asked for factors explaining this 85% overall increase in demand since 1997, key informants and survey respondents from all categories provided responses that were consistent with the contextual observations made above (i.e., the wave of faculty renewal and the pressures associated with launching an academic career; a general decline in institutional support for knowledge dissemination events; and a general increase in need and interest for this type of networking opportunities).

Consequences of not receiving SSHRC funds: In order to further gauge the need for this Program, the evaluation team examined the potential and actual consequences of not receiving SSHRC funding.

When asked how their proposed event would have likely proceeded if they had been refused SSHRC funding, the majority of successful applicants reported that their event would not have proceeded (35%) or proceeded with major changes (57%) (Table 4.1.2.1). As shown in Table 4.1.2.2, applicants for a conference or congress grant provided similar responses whereas organisers of a workshop were more categorical in stating that their event would not have proceeded without SSHRC funding. Responses were relatively stable across categories of disciplines (Table 4.1.2.3).

Table 4.1.2.1 How event would have likely proceeded without Program funding

Event would have likely	Successful (n=279)
Proceeded with no changes	1%
Proceeded with minor changes	8%
Proceeded with major changes	57%
Event would not have proceeded	35%

Table 4.1.2.2 How event would have likely proceeded without Program funding, by type of event

Event would have likely	Conferences (n=243)	Congresses (n=24)	Workshops (n=12)
Proceeded with no changes	1%	0%	0%
Proceeded with minor changes	8%	11%	0%
Proceeded with major changes	58%	58%	27%
Event would not have proceeded	33%	32%	73%

Table 4.1.2.3 How event would have likely proceeded without Program funding, by discipline

Event would have likely	Social Sciences (n=110)	Humanities (n=137)	Interdisciplinary Studies (n= 29)
Proceeded with no changes	0%	2%	0%
Proceeded with minor changes	11%	5%	4%
Proceeded with major changes	51%	59%	69%
Event would not have proceeded	38%	34%	27%

In contrast with successful applicants' speculations on the possible impacts of not receiving SSHRC funding on the outcome of their event, a large majority (92%) of non-successful applicants reported that they had in fact gone ahead with their proposed event. As seen in Table 4.1.2.4, 31% reported that their event proceeded without changes. A larger proportion of workshops (25%) did not go ahead without SSHRC support, compared with conferences.

Table 4.1.2.4 How event proceeded despite not receiving Program funding

Impact	Conferences (n=101)	Congresses ¹⁷ (n=5)	Workshops (n=12)	Total (n=118)
Event <i>did not proceed</i>	6%	–	25%	8%
Event proceeded with <i>major changes</i>	26%	–	17%	25%
Event proceeded with <i>minor changes</i>	37%	–	42%	36%
Event proceeded with <i>no changes</i>	32%	–	17%	31%

As shown in Table 4.1.2.5, the consequences of not receiving SSHRC funding most often mentioned by non-successful applicants were fewer keynote speakers (35%), fewer participants (33%), less or no international participation (32%), less promotion of the event (31%), and fewer or no graduate student participants (28%). With the exception of conferences, sample sizes were too small to identify how these consequences varied according to the type of event for which non-successful applicants had requested funding.

Table 4.1.2.5 Consequences for non-successful applicants of not receiving Program funding, by type of event (multiple responses accepted)

Impact	Conferences (n=95)	Congresses (n=5)	Workshops (n=9)	Total (n=109)
Shorter event	14%	–	–	13%
Fewer keynote speakers	36%	–	–	35%
Less or no international participation	32%	–	–	32%
Less or no grad student participation	27%	–	–	28%
Less or no undergraduate participation	11%	–	–	11%
Increased registration fees	19%	–	–	19%
Fewer participants overall	30%	–	–	33%
Fewer or no publications	16%	–	–	17%
Event not as heavily promoted	28%	–	–	31%

There was little variation in the consequences reported across categories of discipline. Generally, a larger proportion of non-successful applicants from interdisciplinary studies reported impacts when compared with humanities or social sciences.

¹⁷ Data is not presented for cross-tabulations showing sample sizes smaller than 10.

Table 4.1.2.6 Consequences of not receiving Program funding, by discipline

Statement	Social sciences (n=54)	Humanities (n=38)	Interdisciplinary Studies (n=15)
Shorter event	7%	16%	20%
Fewer keynote speakers	33%	29%	47%
Less or no international participation	28%	29%	47%
Less or no grad student participation	28%	24%	33%
Less or no undergraduate participation	11%	8%	7%
Increased registration fees	15%	24%	27%
Fewer participants overall	28%	32%	53%
Fewer or no publications	13%	21%	29%
Event not as heavily promoted	24%	32%	47%

Conclusion: Evidence shows that the most significant changes affecting the context of the Program are an increased focus on interdisciplinarity, rising expectations regarding the use of communications technologies during the events, globalization of scholarly research, and faculty renewal. These changes contribute to rising costs of holding events and to an increasing need on the part of scholars for opportunities to meet and network. Although other means of knowledge dissemination are deemed useful, stakeholders consider that face-to-face contacts are still necessary to their work. Evidence indicated that while the Program is often not necessary for events to occur, it does have a positive impact on the quality and reach of the events. Of the three types of events, workshops appear to be most dependent on SSHRC funding support.

4.1.3 Other Sources of Non-Program Funding for Events

Successful and non-successful applicants were asked to identify which sources of funding, other than the Conferences and Congresses Program, they had accessed for their events.

As shown in Table 4.1.3.1, the majority of successful applicants used registration fees (80%) and support from their institution (and/or a partner university) (76%) as additional sources of funds for their event. Fewer non-successful applicants reported having benefited from these sources of funds (50% and 57% respectively). There are a number of possible interpretations for this difference between the events of successful and non-successful applicants. It may be attributable to Program selection

criteria favouring more diversified budgets. On the other hand, this might be seen as evidence of the Program's leverage effect.

It must also be noted that data on other sources of funding collected through this survey might be inaccurate due to indirect sources of funding not being reported, such as economies of scale made when speakers do not charge their travel costs because these are being covered for their participation at another concurrent event or another research-related project.

A very small proportion of both successful and non-successful applicants report having used other SSHRC funding. Other SSHRC Program funding used included Standard Research Grants and the Federations and Federalism Program.

Table 4.1.3.1 Other sources of funding used to hold the event, by successful and non-successful

Funding Sources	Successful applicants (n=279)	Non-successful applicants (n=110)
Registration fees	80%	50%
Other SSHRC funds	5%	3%
Provincial departments	17%	15%
Federal departments	16%	12%
Scholarly associations	20%	14%
Non-scholarly assoc.	10%	8%
Funds from academic inst.	76%	57%
Private sector	18%	14%
Other	13%	13%

Table 4.1.3.2 shows that successful applicants have more success securing additional funding from federal and provincial governments, scholarly associations, and private sector sources for holding congresses than for holding conferences. Evaluation data does not provide an explanation for this difference; however, it is likely related to the relative size of the two event types. Scholars holding workshops depend more on academic institution support.

Table 4.1.3.2 Other sources of funding used by successful applicants to hold the event, by type of event

Funding Sources	Conferences (n=243)	Congresses (n=24)	Workshops (n=12)
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Registration fees	81%	83%	67%
Other SSHRC funds	4%	17%	0%
Provincial departments	15%	42%	0%
Federal departments	15%	29%	8%
Scholarly associations	17%	50%	8%
Non-scholarly assoc.	11%	8%	0%
Funds from academic inst.	75%	75%	92%
Private sector	17%	33%	8%
Other	14%	4%	0%

Table 4.1.3.3 examines the differences in other sources of funding for successful applicants by categories of disciplines. Twenty-four percent (24%) of successful applicants in the social sciences received support from provincial departments compared to 9% in the humanities and 14% in interdisciplinary studies. Similar proportions received support from federal departments.

Table 4.1.3.3 Other sources of funding used by successful applicants to hold the event, by discipline

Funding Sources	Social Sciences (n=110)	Humanities (n=137)	Interdisciplinary Studies (n=29)
Registration fees	77%	83%	76%
Other SSHRC funds	6%	3%	7%
Provincial departments	24%	9%	14%
Federal departments	25%	7%	14%
Scholarly associations	20%	20%	10%
Non-scholarly assoc.	10%	10%	7%
Funds from academic inst.	70%	82%	69%
Private sector	22%	12%	24%
Other	14%	12%	10%

Among the most frequently cited federal government sources of additional funding were the Canadian International Development Agency, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, Canadian Heritage, and Human Resources Development Canada. Other most often cited sources include the Canada Council, professional associations, scholarly associations, unions, professional journals, embassies and consulates, research institutes and networks, and private foundations.

As shown in Table 4.1.3.4, on average, 45% of event funding for successful applicants came from the Program, the proportion ranging from as low as 2% to as high as 95%. Workshops and conferences are more dependent on Program funding (69% and 44% respectively) than congresses (31%).

Table 4.1.3.4 Average proportion of overall event budget provided by Program, by type of event

Type of event	Proportion of funding from Program
Conference	44%
Congress	31%
Workshop	69%
Total	45%

Conclusion: The principal other sources of funding used to hold events are registration fees and support from academic institutions. The fact that non-successful events made less use of these other sources is consistent with the finding that SSHRC funding acts as a lever for additional funds. Organisers of congresses have more access to other sources of funding than conferences and workshops. Workshops are much more dependent on funds from the Program than conferences or congresses.

4.1.4 What Funds Are Used For

Successful applicants to the Program were asked for which categories of expenses they used the funds obtained from the Program. As shown in Table 4.1.4.1, a majority used the funds to cover travel and subsistence costs of their presenters for Canadian (79%) and foreign travel (73%), as well as the Canadian travel and subsistence costs of their graduate student presenters (56%). Nearly one-half the respondents used the funds to cover administrative costs (49%) and publication of event proceedings (42%). Out of a desire to limit response burden on the part of survey participants, they were not asked to specify the proportion of funds allocated to each of these expense categories.

Table 4.1.4.1 Primary uses of Program funds by successful applicants (multiple answers accepted)

Category of expense	Percentage of respondents
Personnel costs: Student salaries and benefits	
Undergraduate	21%
Masters	32%
Doctorate	31%
Non-Student salaries and benefits	
Post-doctoral	3%
Other	9%
Travel and Subsistence Costs presenters	
Canadian travel	79%
Foreign travel	73%
Travel and Subsistence Costs graduate student presenters	
Canadian travel	56%
Foreign travel	20%
Administrative costs	49%
Translation/ Interpretation	13%
Teleconferencing/ videoconferencing	4%
Promotion and Dissemination	51%
Publication of Proceedings	42%
Other	7%

Table 4.1.4.2 shows actual expenditures, as reported by funding recipients and entered in the Program's administrative database. Data indicates that more than half the funds were spent on travel expenses.

Table 4.1.4.2 Actual expenditures of successful applicants, 1999-2002

Category of expense	Amount (\$)	Proportion overall
Equipment	43,114	1%
Fringe benefits	24,499	0.6%
Materials, supplies and other expenditures	872,510	22%
Professional and technical services	219,348	6%
Salaries to non-students and others	315,354	8%
Salaries to students	197,160	5%
Travel	2,343,351	58%
Other	1,062	0.0%
Total	4,016,398	100%

Conclusion: Evidence shows that the most important category of expenses for events is national and international travel, which absorbs more than half of the events' budgets. This high proportion highlights the importance of the impact of increased travel costs on the budgets of conferences, congresses and workshops.

4.1.5 Comparison of Conferences and Congresses Program to Other Programs

Although administrative data shows that the Program contributed less than half the budget of conferences and congresses held, key informant testimonies from all categories of respondents clearly and consistently indicated that SSHRC's Conferences and Congresses Program constitutes a rare and unique source of support for scholarly knowledge dissemination activities.

“The Conferences and Congresses program is absolutely vital and rare. There is no other program like it”. (Program Adjudicator)

A key characteristic of this Program that makes it unique is its multi-disciplinary dimension. Other sources of funding, in particular funding from scholarly and non-scholarly associations and private sources, are usually focussed on specific research topics.

SSHRC offers three programs that provide direct support to knowledge dissemination activities:

- Research Development Initiatives (RDI), focusing on workshops and networking activities for initial stages of research;
- Federalism and Federations Program, which funds conferences on topics related to federalism; and
- Image, Text, Sound and Technology Program, which supports conferences, workshops or summer institutes on topics related to the use of technology in research development and dissemination.

These three programs all have a narrow focus and therefore support knowledge dissemination activities for a limited range of scholars. It should however be noted

that all three programs offers grants that are different in size and tenure than those offered under the Conferences and Congresses program¹⁸.

Other SSHRC programs, such as Standard Research Grants' support to workshops, include indirect support to knowledge dissemination activities in that this type of activity is considered an eligible expense. However, eligibility and selection criteria for these programs do not focus on conferences or congresses.

Finally, the travel component of SSHRC's Aid and Attendance Grants to Scholarly Associations (AAGSA) Program provides grants to scholarly associations to help defray the travel costs of members who wish to attend the association's annual general meeting. A recent review of this program¹⁹ shows that there is no duplication between these grants and the funding provided by the Conferences and Congresses program.

Several respondents also highlighted the Program's role as a lever for obtaining additional funding. SSHRC support is often a condition for obtaining institutional support for a conference or a congress. The peer-review process involved in the selection of winning applications for this Program lends credibility to the proposed event, thereby helping its organisers secure additional funding from other sources.

*"Conferences that don't need the funding want the prestige of SSHRC funding."
(Program Adjudicator)*

"That the Program is peer reviewed should also be viewed as a strength. The program is unique in the Humanities and Social Sciences." (Other Stakeholder)

Some disciplines such as Economics and Psychology were reported as often having access to other sources of funding for conferences and congresses, and therefore have less need for SSHRC's Conferences and Congresses Program.

¹⁸ See Appendix B, *Evaluation Design for the SSHRC's Conferences and Congresses Program, Final Report*, September 12, 2003.

¹⁹ Review of the Travel Component of SSHRC's Aid and Attendance Grants to Scholarly Associations (AAGSA) Program, Draft, January 29, 2004.

Key informants and survey respondents observed that researchers from smaller universities are particularly dependent on the Program, as their institution is less able to provide complementary funding. Respondents have observed decreasing institutional support in general, thereby increasing the relative contribution of SSHRC's Program.

“This program gives small, rural universities access to resources that they wouldn't have access to otherwise. Smaller centres are relatively impoverished compared to larger universities.” (Other stakeholder)

Also, as previously mentioned, a majority of key informants and survey respondents from all categories underlined the need for a program supporting events that bring scholars together, as the face-to-face aspect of these events cannot be replaced by other means of knowledge dissemination.

Conclusion: SSHRC's Program is unique in its Canada-wide non-specific support to events in multiple disciplines. Few alternatives exist, especially for researchers from small universities. The Program also plays an effective role as a lever of additional sources of funding, particularly from academic institutions. The specific differences between this program and other programs offering similar funding within SSHRC should be further discussed, in order to streamline the various mechanisms in which SSHRC supports knowledge dissemination.

4.2 Program Design and Delivery

This Section examines various aspects of the Program design and delivery, addressing whether they are consistent with the Program's underlying assumptions, and identifying limitations and how best to address them.

4.2.1 Link between Program Design and Objectives

The Program's official objective is to "encourage and facilitate the communication of research, within and between disciplines, among Canadian researchers, international experts and foreign researchers through occasional regional and national conferences and workshops, as well as through congresses of major international scholarly associations held in Canada".²⁰

The Program also pursues four implicit objectives²¹, as outlined in the Program Logic Model:

1. fostering interdisciplinarity and international linkages;
2. training Canadian graduate students and new researchers;
3. advancing and promoting Canadian scholarship; and
4. increasing SSHRC's visibility and profile.²²

Objectives 1 to 3: According to key informants from SSHRC, Adjudication Committee and other stakeholders, the Program is well designed to meet the first three implicit objectives but not the fourth: increasing SSHRC's visibility and profile.

Objective 4: The transfer of the Program to SSHRC's Public Affairs Division in 1998 was intended to increase the Program's profile. The expectation was that the Division's expertise in promotion and public relations would contribute to making the Program a vehicle for increasing SSHRC's profile and visibility. However, SSHRC representatives consider that the budget and resources allocated to the Program are insufficient to ensure its effectiveness in this respect. Also, there does not appear to be a clear strategy or mechanism to support the Program in meeting this particular aspect of its mandate. Program adjudicators report not being aware that this is a Program objective and do not consider it when selecting applications for funding.

²⁰ Aid to Occasional Research Conferences and International Congresses in Canada, Program Description, http://www.sshrc.ca/web/apply/program_descriptions/conferences_e.asp

²¹ I.e., objectives that are not explicitly stated in the program description, but can be extracted from program selection and adjudication criteria, as well as through discussions with program staff and management.

²² SSHRC, *Aid to Occasional Research Conferences and International Congresses in Canada Program, Program Logic Model, Final Draft*, May 21, 2003.

Nonetheless, evaluation findings show that a large proportion of the Canadian social sciences and humanities scholars community attended SSHRC-funded events over the past few years and that several were aware of SSHRC's contribution to these events. This is further discussed in Section 4.3.1.5.

Conclusion: The Program is considered well designed to meet its implicit objectives of fostering interdisciplinarity and international linkages, training graduate students and advancing and promoting Canadian scholarship. Its limited resources and budget and lack of a clear strategy are seen by key informants as obstacles to meeting its objective of increasing SSHRC's visibility and profile, although survey findings indicate that the Program is relatively well known among Canadian social sciences and humanities scholars.

4.2.2 Program Budget and Resources

All key informants consider that the Program is important and relevant to the needs of Canadian scholars. Given SSHRC's investment in supporting scholarly research, it is considered also important to support the dissemination of research results. The majority of key informants suggest that the Program should be given more priority within SSHRC, as well as a larger budget, more commensurate with the general increases in event costs reported by Canadian scholars and the various factors impacting on the academy.

Since 1998, the Program budget has remained the same at \$1,300,000, whereas budgets for many other SSHRC programs have increased in proportion to inflation. Currently, the Conferences and Congresses Program receives 0.7% of SSHRC's total budget for grants and contributions.

Conclusion: The large majority of survey and interview respondents suggest that SSHRC increase its overall budget for the Program in order to adequately meet the needs of Canadian scholars regarding results research dissemination, in proportion to the rise in costs of holding knowledge dissemination events and other contextual changes.

4.2.3 Grant Values and Distribution of Funds

Although the majority (84%) of successful applicants reported that they were “very” to “somewhat satisfied” with the level of funding received, an increase in funding allocations for individual events was the Program improvement most often cited by survey respondents. As indicated in the stakeholder meeting, this apparent contradiction may be due to respondents having misinterpreted the question on their satisfaction with the level of funding received. They may have interpreted the question to mean the amount *received* versus *requested* rather than the adequacy of the amount to address their needs.

When asked if the grant amounts provided by the program were still appropriate, research administrators' opinions were evenly split. Several expected that SSHRC would not cover the cost of the entire event and found the level of funding acceptable, while stating that more funding would certainly help, in particular to enable more student participation. Several others stated that the small amounts of funding limited the scope of the events.

As previously identified, contextual issues such as the increase in the cost of organizing events, as well as the fact that 58% of program funds are currently used for travel, seem to indicate the need to re-examine grant amounts and ensure that they still meet the needs of the Programs clients. Program adjudicators who attended the stakeholder meeting however disagreed with the need for increasing individual grant amounts. They argued that the Program is not designed to cover the entire expense of holding an event but rather to help cover part of the costs and to lever other funds. They considered that priority should be put on increasing the number of grants awarded rather than individual grant amounts.

Conclusion: Overall, evidence tends to suggest that the value of grants has not increased proportionally to the increases in expenses, and should be re- examined.

4.2.4 Application Process



A frequent complaint received by Program administrators targets the amount of work required to complete the Program application. Also, simplifying the application process was the second most frequently mentioned improvement required of the Program according to Program applicants, research administrators and event participants.

“These applications are a ton of work. I spent as much time applying to you as I did in organizing the event.” (Non-successful Applicant)

“Application effort is onerous in comparison with the amount of the reward.” (Research Administrator)

Nevertheless, as shown in Table 4.2.4.1, 77% of successful conference grant applicants reported being somewhat to very satisfied with the work required to prepare their grant application.

On the other hand, applicants for a workshop grant appear to be generally less satisfied with this aspect of the Program. This raises the question that the application process may not be well adapted to the particular characteristics of workshops compared to the other types of events. This will be further discussed in the following Section of this report.

Table 4.2.4.1 Satisfaction with level of work required to prepare grant application, by type of event

Percentage “very” or “somewhat satisfied” with work required to prepare grant application	Conferences (n=101) (n=243)	Congresses (n=5) (n=24)	Workshops (n=12) (n=12)
Non-successful	34%	–	25%
Successful	77%	68%	33%

Table 4.2.4.2 Satisfaction with level of work required to prepare grant application, by discipline

Percentage “very” or “somewhat satisfied” with work required to prepare grant application	Social Sciences (n=54) (n=110)	Humanities (n=38) (n=137)	Interdisciplinary Studies (n=15) (n=29)
Non-successful	30%	47%	23%
Successful	67%	69%	63%

Program Adjudication Committee members and Program administrators report that the amount of information requested is necessary to enable the Committee to make appropriate decisions. Efforts have already been made to streamline the application process such as reducing the length of presenters’ profiles and limiting the number of profiles required for main presenters. Areas where the application process could be improved are in providing applicants the possibility of filling out and submitting their application online.

Conclusion: Qualitative evidence strongly suggests that the amount of work required to prepare grant applications is excessive and should be a focus of improvement of the Program. To the contrary, survey results show that the majority of successful applicants are generally satisfied with this aspect of the Program, except for successful and non-successful workshop applicants who are mostly dissatisfied.

4.2.5 Eligibility Criteria²³

The current Program design includes two categories of eligibility criteria: for events and for applicants. Key informants and survey respondents²⁴ were asked for their opinion on the event eligibility criteria that SSHRC wished to re-examine in light of the Program’s evolving contextual environment: the requirement that an eligible congress be sponsored by an international scholarly association, and the exclusion of annual general meetings of an association or serial/recurring events.

²³ Eligibility criteria are presented in Section 2.5 of this report.

²⁴ It should be noted that respondents are eligible for the program. Therefore these findings are not representative of all Program stakeholders who may not be eligible with the current criteria.

The second category of eligibility criteria applies to the applicants themselves. The criteria examined as part of this evaluation requires that an applicant be a researcher affiliated with a Canadian university that agrees to administer the grant. This effectively excludes from possible applicants members of NGOs and of post-secondary institutions that are not universities. Also, although student participation is encouraged and rated as one of the Program's selection criteria, students are not eligible applicants to this Program, nor are post-doctoral researchers.

When asked about their satisfaction with event eligibility criteria, 87% of successful applicants versus 26% of non-successful applicants reported being somewhat to very satisfied. Level of satisfaction did not vary substantially across type of event or discipline except for successful workshop grant applicants, where only 33% reported being satisfied (Tables 4.2.5.1 and 4.2.5.2).

Table 4.2.5.1 Satisfaction with event eligibility criteria, by type of event

Percentage "very" or "somewhat satisfied" with event eligibility criteria	Conferences (n=101) (n=243)	Congresses (n=5) (n=24)	Workshops (n=12) (n=12)	Total (n=118) (n=279)
Non-successful	26%	20%	25%	26%
Successful	87%	92%	33%	87%

Table 4.2.5.2 Satisfaction with event eligibility criteria, by discipline

Percentage "very" or "somewhat satisfied" with event eligibility criteria	Social Sciences (n=54) (n=110)	Humanities (n=38) (n=137)	Interdisciplinary Studies (n=15) (n=29)
Non-successful	24%	29%	23%
Successful	87%	87%	79%

Similarly, as shown in Table 4.2.5.3, more successful applicants (88%) than non-successful ones (31%) reported being satisfied with applicant eligibility criteria. Successful and non-successful applicants to congresses were generally more satisfied than those who had applied for a conference grant. Applicants for a workshop grant were the least satisfied with applicant eligibility criteria. Results were relatively consistent across categories of disciplines (Table 4.2.5.4).

Table 4.2.5.3 Satisfaction with applicant eligibility criteria, by type of event

Percentage “very” or “somewhat satisfied” with applicant eligibility criteria	Conferences (n=101) (n=243)	Congresses (n=5) (n=24)	Workshops (n=12) (n=12)	Total (n=118) (n=279)
Non-successful	30%	60%	22%	31%
Successful	86%	100%	67%	88%

Table 4.2.5.4 Satisfaction with applicant eligibility criteria, by discipline

Percentage “very” or “somewhat satisfied” with applicant eligibility criteria	Social Sciences (n=54) (n=110)	Humanities (n=38) (n=137)	Interdisciplinary Studies (n=15) (n=29)
Non-successful	29%	33%	31%
Successful	87%	88%	79%

Survey respondents were also asked for their opinions on specific event and applicant eligibility criteria. As shown in Table 4.2.5.5, across categories of respondents, less than half expressed support in favour of including researchers from non-university institutions and NGOs, graduate students, and post-doctoral researchers. Opinions were slightly more favourable to the inclusion of serial/recurring events and conferences held in the context of an annual general meeting. Generally, event participants tended to favour more inclusiveness than the organisers of the event, in particular the inclusion of graduate students (49% vs. 25%), of conferences held as part of an annual general meeting (66% vs. 45%), and of post-doctoral researchers (68% vs. 48%).

Participants at the stakeholder meeting highlighted the fact that the current Program design allows graduate students to participate in that they can submit an application to the Program as long as it is endorsed by a faculty member. They do not consider that there is a need for changing Program criteria to allow direct applications from graduate students.

Table 4.2.5.5 Opinions on inclusiveness of eligibility criteria

Eligibility criteria should include:	Successful (n= 279)	Non-successful (n=118)	Research administrators (n=56)	Event participants (n=82)
Researchers affiliated with post-secondary institutions that are not universities	32%	26%	32%	38%
Researchers affiliated with NGOs	23%	21%	18%	29%
Graduate students	25%	28%	30%	49%
Post-doctoral researchers	48%	40%	50%	68%
Serial/recurring events	60%	65%	49%	63%
Conferences held in context of an annual general meeting	45%	56%	48%	66%

Program administrators and adjudicators commented on the risk that revising the criteria to allow serial/recurring events and annual general meetings will result in a marked increase in the demand for the Program. On the other hand, several mentioned a need to clarify eligibility criteria, given that some recurring events succeed in receiving Program funding due to the vagueness of the criteria definitions. Several respondents to both interviews and surveys also recommended that eligibility criteria for congresses be changed to include applications proposed by Canadian associations and scholars who are not necessarily members of an Association. The current criteria limiting funds to international associations is deemed too restrictive.

Conclusion: Workshop applicants are generally dissatisfied with the eligibility criteria. This lends weight to other evidence indicating that the Program design may not be sufficiently tailored for this particular type of event. Otherwise, there is general consensus that criteria need to be clarified and tightened, in particular the distinctions between events and which annual/serial events are eligible. Less than half the respondents support opening the program to include non-university researchers, NGOs, graduate students and post-doctoral researchers. On the other hand, there is strong support for allowing Canadian associations and individuals to apply for congress grants.

4.2.6 Application Evaluation/Adjudication Criteria

As shown in Table 4.2.6.1, the majority (88%) of successful Program applicants reported being “somewhat” to “very satisfied” with the application evaluation criteria. (Please see Section 2.7.3 for list of criteria). Successful workshop grant applicants were less satisfied (67%). As can be expected, non-successful applicants were the least satisfied with evaluation criteria (15%). Levels of satisfaction with this aspect of the Program did not vary much across categories of disciplines (Table 4.2.6.2).

Table 4.2.6.1 Satisfaction with application evaluation criteria, by type of event

Percentage very or somewhat satisfied with application evaluation criteria	Conferences (n=101) (n=243)	Congresses (n=5) (n=24)	Workshops (n=12) (n=12)	Total (n=118) (n=279)
Non-successful	15%	0%	22%	15%
Successful	87%	100%	67%	88%

Table 4.2.6.2 Satisfaction with application evaluation criteria, by discipline

Percentage very or somewhat satisfied with application evaluation criteria	Social Sciences (n=54) (n=110)	Humanities (n=38) (n=137)	Interdisciplinary Studies (n=15) (n=29)
Non-successful	13%	16%	14%
Successful	88%	88%	84%

A particular issue creating difficulties for applicants is the distinction between events with a call for proposals and events by invitation only. The current Program design allows both types of events to be funded. According to the Program’s administrative database, between 1999 and 2002, 29% of the applications submitted were for events by invitation only and, of those, 50% were successful. However, non-successful respondents feel that there is a bias in favour of events with call for proposals. Adjudication Committee members report that the need for a call for proposals is not an evaluation criteria in itself, however applications for events by invitation-only are expected to include a convincing justification for not using a call for proposals in order to be granted funding. Non-successful applicants consider that if it is maintained, this expectation should be made more explicit in the Program application guidelines.

Finally, several key informants also recommended clarifying the distinctions and developing specific evaluation criteria for each category of event. In particular, workshops would benefit from different criteria because they do not involve the same

volume of participants and may not lend themselves to multidisciplinary as much as conferences and congresses. Given these particular characteristics, their level of dependence on the Program (69%), lower levels of satisfaction with the application process and selection criteria, and the limited number of grants awarded each year (between 8 and 48 since 2000), workshops may not be as well served by the Program as other types of events.

Related to the clarification of selection criteria, the issue was raised during the stakeholder meeting of the need to clarify terms and criteria in both official languages and for various disciplines, given that the terminology is sometimes interpreted differently by various applicants and adjudicators.

Conclusion: Respondents are generally satisfied with the Program evaluation criteria, with the exception of workshop applicants, both successful and non-successful, and non-successful applicants in general. Non-successful applicants feel that there is a bias in favour of events with a call for proposals over events by invitation only. Several informants requested a clarification of the distinctions and evaluation criteria between types of events, especially for workshops, as well as of the terminology used to describe the events.

4.2.7 Adjudication Process

Adjudication members and Program staff consider that the Program adjudication process is effective and adequate, although time consuming.

There is general agreement that the quality of funded events should be maintained and that funding should not be given to non-meritorious projects. For this reason, several key informants recommended that some flexibility be maintained between event budget envelopes for each event type, so that funds can be distributed where they are the most deserved.

In survey responses, successful and non-successful applicants raised some concerns about the adjudication process. The most frequently mentioned concern regards the timing of application to the Program.

“The biggest problem is with the timing of the application in relation to the conference planning process. Because of the information required in the application, it can't be done any earlier than 6-9 months or so before the conference. Results of the competition then become available very shortly before the planned date of the conference, making it hard to re-adjust the budget on short notice depending on whether the application is successful or not.” (Successful Applicant)

“Timing is sometimes awkward because grants occasionally have to be applied for before conference details are firm.” (Non-Successful Applicant)

The Program is seen to favour applications with confirmed lists of presenters. However, potential presenters often require confirmation of event funding before committing. Advantage is effectively being given to applicants who are further along in the planning stages of their event, thereby favouring events that might have less need for SSHRC funding to go ahead or applicants willing to take risks in organising an event that might be cancelled at the very last minute if SSHRC funding is refused.

“Given that there is such a gap between the time of application and the time of receipt of the award it is sometimes not possible to have all the details in place as asked for in the application. This means that the application is probably to get additional funding for a conference that is already going to take place as opposed to getting funds for a newly planned conference.” (Research Administrator)

Another possible effect of this constraint is that some applicants may include names of presenters that have not yet confirmed their participation.

Another area of concern is the feedback provided on the non-successful applications. Seventy-two percent (72%) of non-successful applicants reported being “somewhat” to “very dissatisfied” with the explanations received on why their event was not funded.

Several survey respondents had issues with a perceived lack of transparency on the part of the Adjudication Committee. This perception may be related to a lack of clarity of eligibility and selection criteria. Both successful and non-successful

applicants mentioned widening and clarifying selection criteria as a main area of the Program requiring improvements.

“An improvement would be greater transparency regarding the evaluation process. How are applications ranked?” (Successful Applicant)

Conclusion: The adjudication process is deemed to be generally effective and adequate to ensure that quality applications are selected. Flexibility in the allocation of budget envelopes is deemed important to maintain this quality. Concerns were expressed by respondents regarding the timing of applications, which favours events in more advanced stages of planning (and therefore those that can afford not to obtain SSHRC funding) but also creates an incentive for applicants to list presenters that have not been confirmed, which might affect ultimately the quality of the event. Other concerns were about the feedback provided on refused applications and a perceived lack of transparency regarding selection criteria.

4.2.8 Program Administration

Many sources have high levels of praise for the current Program administration and the preparation work completed by the Program administrator in preparation for the Adjudication Committee review and deliberations.

“The thoroughness of the Staff impresses me [...] there was so much support for me as a Committee member [...]” (Program Adjudicator)

Eighty-seven percent (87%) of successful Program applicants reported being “somewhat” to “very satisfied” with the helpfulness of SSHRC staff. In contrast, only 27% of non-successful applicants reported being satisfied. However, open-ended comments provided on this issue indicate that this may be attributed to their dissatisfaction with the outcome of the adjudication process.

The great majority (93%) of successful applicants were satisfied with the grant payment schedule and reporting requirements.

Conclusion: Evidence indicates that the majority of stakeholders are satisfied with the program's administration. It should be noted that administrative program processes were not examined as part of this evaluation.

4.2.9 Monitoring and Performance Measurement

According to Program administrators, no mechanism exists for monitoring and measuring the performance of the Program.

At the project level, funding recipients are required to submit activity reports 90 days after completion of their event, enabling Program administrators to monitor outputs of conferences, congresses and workshops. However, given the level of resources available to the Program, and the fact that the report is paper-based, fairly open-ended and qualitative, the information collected through activity reports cannot be used to adjust Program design.

Basic statistics on the number of applications and success rates are produced and reported after each round of applications.

Conclusion: The current Program design does not comprise a performance measurement system nor does it have the resources to monitor Program results. Such a system would enable Program staff and managers to identify desirable Program adjustments to be made in order to more effectively achieve its desired results and to be responsive to contextual changes. The ongoing data collected would also feed into future evaluations of the Program.

4.3 Program Impacts

This Section presents the short-term and long-term impacts of the Program, as reported by survey respondents and key informants. Questions were asked about expected Program impacts identified in the Program logic model.

4.3.1 Short-Term Impacts



Short-term impacts measured as part of this evaluation include the occurrence of new events; communication of research; interdisciplinarity, internationality, and graduate student participation; and activities enhancing SSHRC's profile/visibility.

4.3.1.1 Occurrence of New Conferences, Congresses or Workshops

One of the key short-term impacts of the Program was to enable conferences, congresses and workshops to occur that would otherwise not have taken place. As already outlined in Section 4.1.2 of this report, successful program applicants reported that, without SSHRC funding, 35% of their events would likely not have proceeded and 57% would have proceeded but with major changes. This finding must however be read in light of what actually happened to events that were refused Program funding. According to respondents from the non-successful applicant group, only 8% actually did not proceed with their event and 30% of the events proceeded with no changes. However, evidence presented throughout this report showed that the Program has a clear impact on the quality and diversity of the events. The main consequences of not receiving Program funding were fewer keynote speakers, fewer participants, less international and graduate student participation, and less event promotion.

4.3.1.2 Communication of Research

A second expected short-term impact of the Program is increased communication and dissemination of the results of scholarly research. Successful applicants and non-successful applicants whose event took place were asked if the following outputs were produced as a result of their event: published conference proceedings, articles in research journals, books, web-publications, newsletter/press releases, and media exposure. As shown in Table 4.3.1.2.1, systematically more successful than non-successful applicants reported that their event had led to the production of these outputs. In particular, nearly 50% more successful applicants than non-successful applicants reported having published the proceedings of their event.

Table 4.3.1.2.1 Outputs produced as a result of the event, successful and non-successful (for those that took place without SSHRC funding) (multiple answers accepted)

	Successful (n=279)	Non-Successful (n=110)
Published conference proceedings	44%	24%
Article(s) in research journals	40%	35%
Book(s) or book chapter(s)	37%	28%
Web-publication(s)	23%	14%
Newsletter/press release	29%	18%
Exposure in media (e.g., radio, television, newspapers)	40%	30%

Table 4.3.1.2.2 also shows that successful congresses are generally more likely to produce communication outputs than conferences or workshops.

Table 4.3.1.2.2 Outputs produced as a result of the event for successful applicants, by type of event (multiple answers accepted)

	Conference s (n=243)	Congresses (n= 24)	Workshops (n=12)
Published conference proceedings	44%	54%	33%
Article(s) in research journals	39%	54%	25%
Book(s) or book chapter(s)	36%	46%	25%
Web-publication(s)	23%	29%	8%
Newsletter/press release	28%	54%	8%
Exposure in media (e.g., radio, television, newspapers)	40%	63%	25%

4.3.1.3 Interdisciplinary and International Participation

Successful applicants' events show significantly and consistently more geographically diverse, interdisciplinary, and international participation than those not funded by the Program. As shown in Table 4.3.1.3.1, a high percentage (92%) of successful applicants' events had international presenters, compared to 66% for non-successful applicants. Approximately 54% of successful applicants' events had presenters from more than four different disciplines compared to 45% of non-successful applicants. Finally, successful applicants' events had better national coverage in terms of attendees and presenters from various Canadian regions. It must be noted that the Program selection criteria may have influenced this disparity between successful and

non-successful applicants' event outcomes, thereby showing that the Program is effective in reaching its objectives.

Table 4.3.1.3.1 Scope of interdisciplinary and international participation in the event for successful and non-successful (multiple responses accepted)

	Successful (n=279)	Non-Successful (n=110)
Researchers from 3 or more regions across Canada presented at the event	81%	55%
Researchers from 3 or more regions across Canada attended the event	69%	48%
International researchers presented at the event	92%	66%
International researchers attended the event	68%	42%
Researchers from more than 4 disciplines presented at the event	54%	45%
Researchers from more than 4 disciplines attended the event	52%	35%

Events from interdisciplinary studies show more diverse geographical and multi-disciplinary participation than in social sciences and humanities.

Table 4.3.1.3.2 Scope of interdisciplinary and international participation in the event for successful applicants, by discipline

	Social Sciences (n=110)	Humanities (n=137)	Interdisciplinary Studies (n=29)
Researchers from 3 or more regions across Canada presented at the event	82%	78%	90%
Researchers from 3 or more regions across Canada attended the event	73%	63%	76%
International researchers presented at the event	91%	95%	83%
International researchers attended the event	75%	63%	62%
Researchers from more than 4 disciplines presented at the event	54%	50%	72%
Researchers from more than 4 disciplines attended the event	54%	46%	72%

The profile (Table 4.3.1.3.3) of non-successful applicants' events by categories of discipline is slightly different. Events held in the social sciences show systematically

higher interdisciplinary and international participation than in the humanities and interdisciplinary studies.

Table 4.3.1.3.3 Scope of interdisciplinary and international participation in the event for non-successful applicants, by discipline

	Social Sciences (n=54)	Humanities (n=38)	Interdisciplinary studies (n=15)
Researchers from 3 or more regions across Canada presented at the event	67%	53%	47%
Researchers from 3 or more regions across Canada attended the event	59%	45%	47%
International researchers presented at the event	83%	63%	53%
International researchers attended the event	61%	32%	27%
Researchers from more than 4 disciplines presented at the event	52%	42%	60%
Researchers from more than 4 disciplines attended the event	50%	24%	33%

4.3.1.4 Canadian Graduate Student Participation

As shown in Table 4.3.1.4.1, the Program appears to have a significant impact in encouraging student participation in knowledge dissemination events. Successful applicants' events report significantly more presentations (23% more), attendance (23% more), and assistance (21% more) from graduate students than non-successful applicants' events. Again, the difference between successful and non-successful applicants may be a result of Program selection criteria, confirming that the appropriate events are being selected.

Table 4.3.1.4.1 Level of graduate student participation in the event for successful and non-successful applicants

	Successful (n=279)	Non-Successful (n=110)
Graduate students attended the event	93%	70%
Graduate students assisted in organising the event	77%	56%
Graduate students presented at the event	80%	57%

4.3.1.5 *Activities Enhancing SSHRC Profile/Visibility*

As shown in Table 4.3.1.5.1, applicants mostly heard of the Program through word of mouth (34% of successful), through their university research administration office (35% of non-successful), and from SSHRC Website/brochures/newsletter (18% of successful and 20% of non-successful). Ninety-five percent (95%) of research administrators report being “somewhat familiar” to “familiar” with the Program and 71% estimate that scholars in their institution are “somewhat familiar” or “very familiar” with the Program.

Given the number of participants who attend funded activities (on average 157 per event, and between 12 and 4,086), the Program shows great potential for increasing Canadian scholars' awareness of SSHRC. Eighty-three percent (83%) of event participants reported that they knew of SSHRC's contribution to the event they attended, although the sample of respondents might be biased in favour of event participants who decided to answer the survey because they were aware of SSHRC's contribution to the event.

Table 4.3.1.5.1 How respondent first heard of the Program

	Successful (n=279)	Non-Successful (n=118)
SSHRC website/brochures/newsletter	18%	20%
University research office	23%	35%
Association website/newsletter	0%	1%
Colleagues/word of mouth	34%	27%
Attendance at a Program sponsored event	10%	5%
Faculty/Department	4%	5%
Other (<i>please specify</i>)	11%	6%

Conclusion: According to the evidence presented, the Program has a positive short-term impact on its target clientele. It has contributed to the scope, quality and diversity of conferences, congresses and workshops held in Canada and led to the publication of 50% more event proceedings than events that didn't receive SSHRC funding. Funded events benefited particularly from high participation of graduate students and international presenters.

4.3.2 Long Term Impacts



The long-term impacts expected of the Program include training of Canadian graduate students and new researchers; pan-Canadian, interdisciplinary and international collaboration; advancement of Canadian scholarship; promotion of advanced scholarly research; and contribution to SSHRC's visibility/profile.

4.3.2.1 Training of Canadian Graduate Students and New Researchers

Beyond simple participation or attendance of graduate students to the knowledge dissemination events, the Program aims to support the training of graduate students and new researchers. Ninety-two percent (92%) of successful applicants reported that graduate students had received training as part of or as a result of the funded event, and seventy-nine percent (79%) of successful events led to training of new researchers. Event participants are less likely than event organisers to conclude that training actually occurred. This may be attributed to event participants' incomplete knowledge of the training that occurred or to a different interpretation of what could be defined as training of graduate students.

Table 4.3.2.1.1 Likelihood that training of graduate students and new researchers occurred as a result of the event, according to successful applicants and event participants

Definitely or Very Likely Occurred	Successful (n=279)	Event Participants (n=82)
Training of Canadian graduate students	92%	71%
Training of new researchers	79%	73%

4.3.2.2 Pan-Canadian Linkages and Collaboration

Successful event organisers (93%) and participants (95%) agree that the event likely or very likely contributed to pan-Canadian linkages and collaboration between Canadian researchers in the same discipline. Results are also consistent across categories of disciplines.

4.3.2.3 Interdisciplinary Linkages and Collaboration



A majority of successful event organisers (75%) and event participants (61%) consider that linkages and collaboration were established between Canadian researchers from different disciplines as a result of the event. Results are consistent for event organisers in social sciences (70%) and humanities (72%) and, as can be expected, much higher for interdisciplinary studies (96%).

4.3.2.4 *International Linkages and Collaboration*

The Program is also considered to have very likely or definitely contributed to linkages and collaboration between Canadian and non-Canadian researchers by successful event organisers (93%) and participants (88%).

4.3.2.5 *Advancement of Canadian Scholarship and Promotion of Scholarly Research*

The great majority of successful event organisers (98%) and most event participants (83%) also consider that the event has contributed to the advancement of Canadian scholarship. Similar results were observed for promotion of scholarly research. Findings were consistent across categories of disciplines.

4.3.2.6 *Contribution to SSHRC's Visibility/Profile*

As discussed earlier, some qualitative evidence suggests that due to limited resources the Program makes a limited contribution to increasing SSHRC's visibility and profile, whereas survey results show that a large proportion (83%) of event participants were aware of SSHRC's support to the event they attended.

Conclusion: Overall, respondents are very positive regarding the Program's achievement of long-term objectives. The wide majority believe that the Program contributed to training of graduate students and new researchers, the creation of new pan-Canadian, interdisciplinary, and international linkages and collaborations, and the advancement of Canadian scholarship and promotion of scholarly research. Overall, with the exception of its less conclusive contribution to SSHRC's visibility and profile, the Program appears to be effective and successful at achieving its intended results.

4.4 General Context Issues

As part of this evaluation, the opportunity was also taken to examine more general issues, not directly related to the Program, concerning the role of SSHRC and Canadian scholar's needs and priorities regarding knowledge dissemination. These findings are expected to inform SSHRC's role in its transformation from a granting to a knowledge Council responsible for effecting change through mobilization of Canadian researchers and the mobilization and transfer of knowledge.

4.4.1 Role SSHRC Should Play and How Well it Plays It

According to key informants from SSHRC, Program adjudicators and other stakeholders, SSHRC has an important role to play in funding and validating Canadian scholarly research, as well as in mobilizing information and supporting its dissemination. Informants agree on the essential role for SSHRC to make research results publicly accessible and to provide Canadian scholars with opportunities to network. SSHRC is also expected by some to play a leadership role among universities in the current context of globalization, with breaking down of disciplinary silos and the creation of international fora.

According to most key informants from all categories, SSHRC's performance in fulfilling this role could be improved. In particular, SSHRC is perceived to not invest sufficient efforts and resources in promoting and supporting knowledge dissemination. Among the various suggestions made, SSHRC's role as knowledge disseminator needs to be made clearer to outsiders, the budgets invested need to be increased, and a larger public needs to be made aware of the research being funded.

Conclusion: SSHRC is perceived as having an essential leadership and support role to play for mobilization and dissemination of Canadian scholarly research results. It is perceived as not having fulfilled well this role due to a lack of strategic focus and insufficient resource investments.

4.4.2 Relative Importance of Various Research Dissemination Activities/Media

As shown in Table 4.4.2.1, over 90% of respondents, across disciplines and categories of respondents, consider that presentations at international conferences are “somewhat” to “very important”. Similar levels of importance are given to national conferences. Less importance is attributed to regional conferences. Conducting workshops also receives considerable interest on the part of survey respondents, with the exception of respondents from the humanities. Available data does not allow the evaluation team to suggest an explanation for this particular difference.

Articles in peer-reviewed journals and books or book chapters were also considered important by over 90% of respondents from all categories. Databases or datasets are the knowledge dissemination approach that garners the least interest overall.

Table 4.4.2.1 Perceived importance by successful and non-successful applicants of types of research dissemination activities/media, by discipline

Very important to somewhat important	Social sciences		Humanities		Interdisciplinary studies	
	Successful (n=110)	Non (n=54)	Successful (n=137)	Non (n=38)	Successful (n=29)	Non (n=15)
Presentations at regional conferences	70%	56%	64%	71%	92%	71%
Presentations at national conferences	95%	84%	97%	85%	100%	93%
Presentations at international conferences	99%	100%	99%	91%	100%	100%
Conducting workshops	72%	65%	49%	47%	76%	71%
Popular media	56%	44%	44%	50%	73%	60%
Articles in peer-reviewed journals	98%	100%	99%	97%	92%	93%
Articles in professional or trade journals	75%	67%	50%	52%	58%	71%
Books or book chapters	94%	96%	99%	97%	92%	93%
Web publications	73%	62%	61%	62%	76%	73%
Textbooks	63%	47%	46%	58%	65%	54%
Conference proceedings	64%	50%	85%	74%	73%	50%
Database or datasets	58%	32%	45%	34%	40%	62%

The following is a list of other types of knowledge dissemination activities considered important by some survey respondents:

- Websites, listservs, and on-line or web debated and forums



- Art exhibits in galleries and museums
- Formal and informal discussions with researchers from other institutions
- Colloquia or invited speakers; seminars
- Non-referred alternative press
- Teaching courses (both graduate and undergraduate)
- Special issues of journals; monographs; published conference essays
- Sound recordings
- Human contact / personal communications
- CDs/DVDs/videos
- Encyclopaedias

Conclusion: Presentations at international and national conferences, as well as publications in peer-reviewed journals and books/book chapters are the means of knowledge dissemination considered the most important by respondents. Of particular significance is the fact that conferences are considered as important as publications. This is consistent with the previous finding that, although other means of knowledge dissemination are deemed useful, stakeholders consider that face-to-face contacts are still necessary to their work.

4.4.3 Target Audiences for Research Results Dissemination

The majority of successful program applicants report disseminating their research results primarily for researchers in their own discipline, followed by researchers in other disciplines. Very few scholars in the humanities target their research dissemination activities towards non-academic users, decision-makers and policy-makers while over half of researchers in social sciences and interdisciplinary studies do. Except for interdisciplinary studies, less than half the respondents disseminate their research results to the general public. On the other hand, testimonies from key informants indicated interest in seeing events reach a wider audience and an expectation that SSHRC play a leadership role in supporting the wider dissemination of research results.

Table 4.4.3.1 Target audiences for successful applicants' research results dissemination, by discipline (multiple answers accepted)

Target audience	Social Sciences	Humanities	Interdisciplinary
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	(n=110)	(n=137)	Studies (n=29)
Researchers in own discipline	86%	89%	86%
Researchers in other disciplines	71%	77%	76%
Non-academic users of research	66%	37%	66%
Decision-makers and policy-makers	56%	15%	52%
General public	44%	48%	66%
Other	12%	7%	10%

Conclusion: The main targets of Canadian scholars' research remain other researchers in their own discipline, but three quarters of respondents also seek to disseminate their results to researchers in other disciplines and several also target non-academic users of research, decision-makers and policy-makers. SSHRC is expected to support the dissemination of scholarly research to a wider audience.

4.4.4 Adequacy of Available Events to Canadian Scholars' Needs

Opinions are relatively consistent across categories of respondents regarding the adequacy of available knowledge dissemination events. Over 80% express a need for more interdisciplinary conferences or congresses. A need is also expressed for more local workshops and conferences in their own discipline, as well as more national conferences and international congresses. Less than half the respondents express a need for more emphasis on dissemination through journals and books.

Table 4.4.4.1 Level of agreement with a need for more various knowledge dissemination events

Strongly Agree and Agree	Successful (n=279)	Non-successful (n=118)	Event Participants (n=82)
Need for more local workshops in my field	55%	60%	61%
Need for more local conferences in my discipline	60%	59%	65%
Need for more national conferences in my discipline	66%	70%	77%
Need for more int'l congresses in my discipline	72%	79%	72%
Need for more interdisciplinary conferences/congresses	81%	83%	81%
Need for more emphasis on dissemination through journals and books	27%	44%	41%

As outlined earlier, comments submitted through open-ended questions provided some additional means of knowledge dissemination. However, the great majority of

comments focused on the need for larger budget envelopes for the events and a larger budget overall so that more meritorious proposals are approved for funding.

Conclusion: Respondents generally agree that there is a need for more of every type of knowledge dissemination event, particularly interdisciplinary conferences and congresses. There appears to be little need for more emphasis on traditional means such as journals and books.

4.4.5 Relevance of Conferences and Congresses to Needs

Table 4.4.5.1 Relevance of conferences and congresses to needs

Strongly Agree and Agree	Successful (n=279)	Non-successful (n=118)	Event Participants (n=82)
To understand current research trends in my discipline, it is necessary for me to attend conferences and congresses	94%	85%	90%
Most valuable feedback on my research comes from participants at these events	85%	88%	76%
Productive int'l research collaborations resulted from connections made at these events	96%	89%	84%
Productive interdisciplinary research collaborations resulted from connections made at these events	81%	79%	71%
Conferences play an essential role in training of graduate students	98%	93%	95%
Conferences play an essential role in training of undergraduate students	49%	39%	43%

A very strong majority of survey respondents consider that attendance at conferences and congresses is necessary to understand current research trends in their discipline. Participants at these conferences and congresses are said to be a source of the most valuable feedback on their research. Over 90% of successful event organisers report that they have made connections and contacts with other researchers at congresses that have resulted in productive international research collaborations. Several also report having initiated interdisciplinary research collaborations. Conferences are said to play an essential role in training of graduate students but less of undergraduates.

Conclusion: Survey results confirm that conferences and congresses continue to play an important role in the professional work and development of Canadian scholars. In particular, conferences and congresses are considered necessary to understand current research trends in their discipline and to initiate new international and interdisciplinary collaborations.

Overall Conclusion: Survey findings regarding the general context of Canadian scholarly research indicate that there is an important role for SSHRC to play in supporting the dissemination of knowledge, particularly through conferences and congresses, which are considered to be as important means of dissemination as publications. These findings confirm the Program's relevance and support arguments in favour of increasing its budget.

5.0 Conclusions and Recommendations

The following are the evaluation teams' conclusions and recommendations, based on the findings presented in this evaluation report and the results of discussion and deliberation at the stakeholder meeting held on January 20, 2004. Recommendations are presented in order of priority. Priority was established in consultation with stakeholder meeting participants.

Overall Conclusions

- SSHRC's Conferences and Congresses Program is unique in its Canada-wide non-specific support to events in multiple disciplines. Few alternatives exist, especially for researchers from small universities. The Program also plays an effective role as a lever of additional sources of funding, particularly from academic institutions.
- Survey results confirm that conferences and congresses continue to play an important role in the professional work and development of Canadian scholars. In particular, conferences and congresses are considered necessary to understand current research trends in their discipline and to initiate new international and interdisciplinary collaborations.
- SSHRC is perceived as having an essential leadership and support role to play in the mobilization and dissemination of Canadian scholarly research results.
- The most significant changes affecting the context of the Program are an increased focus on interdisciplinarity, rising expectations regarding the use of communications technologies during the events, globalization of scholarly research, and faculty renewal. These changes contribute to rising costs of holding events and to an increasing need on the part of scholars for opportunities to meet and network. Although other means of knowledge dissemination are deemed useful, stakeholders consider that face-to-face contacts are still necessary to their work.
- Evidence shows that, as currently designed, the Program encourages participation in the funded events from international scholars and graduate students, as well as, to a certain extent, scholars from different disciplines and non-academics. Survey respondents (n=275) reported approximately 43,000 attendees at their SSHRC-

funded events between 1999 and 2002. Funded events occur mostly in Ontario, Quebec and British Columbia. The Program is perceived by adjudicators to not adequately serve scholars from small and/or isolated universities. Also, applicants who have limited access to other sources of funding for their events have less chances of being approved for SSHRC funding because their event is less likely to be in advanced stages of planning.

- The Program has a positive short-term impact on its target clientele. It has contributed to the scope, quality and diversity of conferences, congresses and workshops held in Canada and led to the publication of 50% more event proceedings than events that didn't receive SSHRC funding. Funded events benefited particularly from high participation of graduate students and international presenters.
- The majority of respondents believe that the Program is also achieving its long-term objectives, having contributed to the training of graduate students and new researchers, the creation of new pan-Canadian, interdisciplinary, and international linkages and collaborations, and the advancement of Canadian scholarship and promotion of scholarly research.
- The majority of stakeholders consider that SSHRC should increase its budget for the Program in order to adequately meet the increasing needs of Canadian scholars regarding the dissemination of research results.

Recommendations

Recommendation 1: That the total budget allocated to this Program be increased in proportion to the rising need and demand for the Program.

This recommendation is based on the following:

- While the Program's budget has not been increased since 1997, it has seen a 40% increase in applications between 1997 and 2002, and a further increase of 33% in 2003.
- Program adjudicators see eligibility criteria as being artificially restrictive due to limited availability of funds to distribute. An increase in the overall budget would enable the Program to fund more (as well as a broader range of) events.
- The return on additional investments in this Program would likely be high given that it is cost-effective, using less than 1% of SSHRC's grants and contributions

budget while meeting its key strategic objectives²⁵ and reaching a majority of SSHRC's target clientele.

Recommendation 2a: Depending on an increase of the overall Program budget, that the value of grants be slightly increased, particularly the value of conference grants.

This recommendation is based on the following:

- Overall, evidence tends to suggest that the value of grants is becoming too low to continue to have the generative, multiplier effect that SSHRC conference grants have had historically.
- Program adjudication practice has generally consisted of awarding the maximum amount for a given category of event to meritorious applications because the amounts are too small (in the case of conferences and workshops) to start “nickel and diming” and because the task of setting the amounts would be too labour-intensive for the adjudicators. Adjudication Committee members agree that SSHRC should maintain maximum amounts for each of the three categories of events as these provide a guidance/reference point to applicants and make it easier for adjudicators to administer. However, the maximum amounts should be slightly increased (at least in the case of conferences) to address increases in the costs of holding the events.
- Evidence shows that the most important category of expenses for events is national and international travel, which absorbs more than half of the events' budget. This high proportion highlights the importance of the impact of increased travel costs on the budgets of conferences, congresses and workshops.
- The costs of events have increased substantially due to rising travel and accommodation costs; increased participation in events; general inflation; decline in institutional support for knowledge dissemination activities; increased involvement of graduate students; and rising expectations regarding the use of communication technologies and high-profile speakers at events.

²⁵ Strategic objectives met by the Program include fostering interdisciplinarity and international linkages; training Canadian graduate students and new researchers; and advancing and promoting Canadian scholarship.

- The principal other sources of funding used to hold events are registration fees and support from academic institutions. Organisers of congresses have more access to other sources of funding than conferences and workshops. Although workshops appear to need less funds than conferences due to the generally smaller size and scope of their activities, they are more dependent on funds from the Program than are conferences or congresses.

Recommendation 2b: That applicants be allowed to request additional funds in consideration of external factors such as isolation and size of institution.

- Program adjudicators noticed that some categories of Program applicants were at a disadvantage when applying to the Program because of factors such as the small size of their institution and their relative isolation from major centres. These factors impact, namely, on their access to assistance in writing their grant proposal, as well as their access to alternative sources of funding, and the costs of mounting events (the costs of travel in particular).
- Program applicants located in small and/or isolated centres likely face higher costs for organising their event than applicants located in major Canadian centres. This may be taken into consideration in awarding higher amounts than the maximum set for a given event category to these Program applicants.

Recommendation 3: That eligibility criteria be clarified and made more precise.

- 3a. That the distinctions between workshops and conferences be clarified and that separate eligibility and selection criteria be developed for workshops, with particular attention being paid to differences in terminology from French to English and between disciplines.
- 3b. That the Program clarifies in its application guidelines that graduate student conferences are eligible as long as the applications are signed and endorsed by a faculty member. These student-lead conferences should however still

respond to the program's stated objectives, and involve both graduate students and researchers.

3c: That the rationale for restricting congress grants to international associations be revisited to envisage the possibility of accepting applications from Canadian scholarly associations and individuals.

Recommendation 4: That the Program review the terminology used in its application documents and include a glossary in its application documentation.

- Program adjudicators observed that the meaning of terminology used in Program applications varies according to discipline and between English and French. This may affect the way applicants prepare their grant proposal and the way their application is interpreted by adjudicators, thereby disadvantaging scholars from certain disciplines and Francophone scholars.

Recommendation 5: That Program selection criteria be clarified.

5a: That the Program makes more explicit, in its application guidelines, the need to provide exceptional justification for using an invitation-only rather than a call-for-proposals method for recruiting participants.

5b: That the Program makes more explicit, in its application guidelines, that the level of preparation of a proposed event (especially whether key speakers are confirmed and whether the budget is complete, well-justified, and accurate) will impact directly on its chances of receiving SSHRC funding.

Recommendation 6: That SSHRC revisits the strategic positioning of the Program within the organisation.

This recommendation is based on the following:

- SSHRC is perceived as having an essential leadership and support role to play for mobilization and dissemination of Canadian scholarly research results. It is

perceived as not having fulfilled this role well due to a lack of strategic focus and insufficient resource investments.

- In its current location (within the Public Affairs Division), the Program is isolated from other grants programs and from inclusion in strategic and budgetary discussions, while not benefiting from the Division's expertise in public relations and promotion.

Recommendation 7: That SSHRC develops and implements a performance measurement system to monitor the implementation and results of the Program and bring design adjustments as needed.

This recommendation is based on the following:

- The current Program design does comprise a paper-based activity report, but does not comprise a performance measurement system nor does it have the resources to monitor Program results.
- Such a system would enable Program staff and managers to identify desirable Program adjustments to be made in order to more effectively achieve desired results and to be responsive to contextual changes. The ongoing data collected would also feed into future evaluations of the Program.

