McMaster University

Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada

For more information about the Transformation Process, please visit the Social Sciences and Humanities Council Web site at www.sshrc.ca and/or McMaster's Web site at www.mcmaster.ca/research/sshrc.htm

Transformation/Consultation Process
sshrc@mcmaster.ca

Kelly Curwin, project manager, McMaster-SSHRC representative, grockwell@mcmaster.ca

Geoffrey Rockwell, professor, School of the Arts, and McMaster's SSHRC representative. Questions or comments can also be directed to: sshrc@mcmaster.ca.

McMaster stakeholders are invited to e-mail suggestions and comments to:

To contact us or make a submission

Maximum knowledge impact
Interactive engagement

Under its transformation plan, SSHRC proposes to add 2 new core values:

Accountability
Innovative continuity
Inclusiveness and openness
Competitive funding
Research excellence

SSHRC's core values
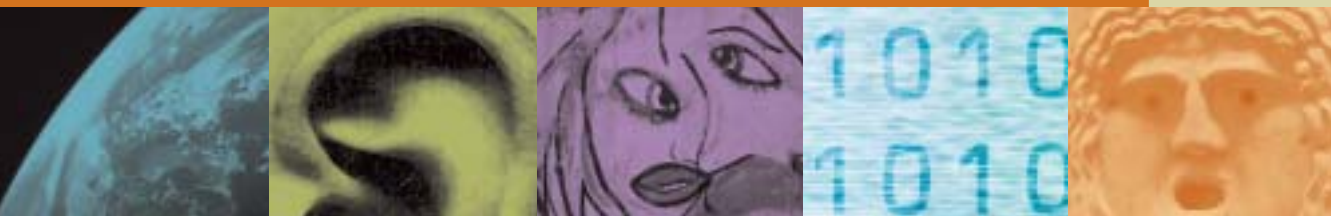
From granting council to knowledge council →
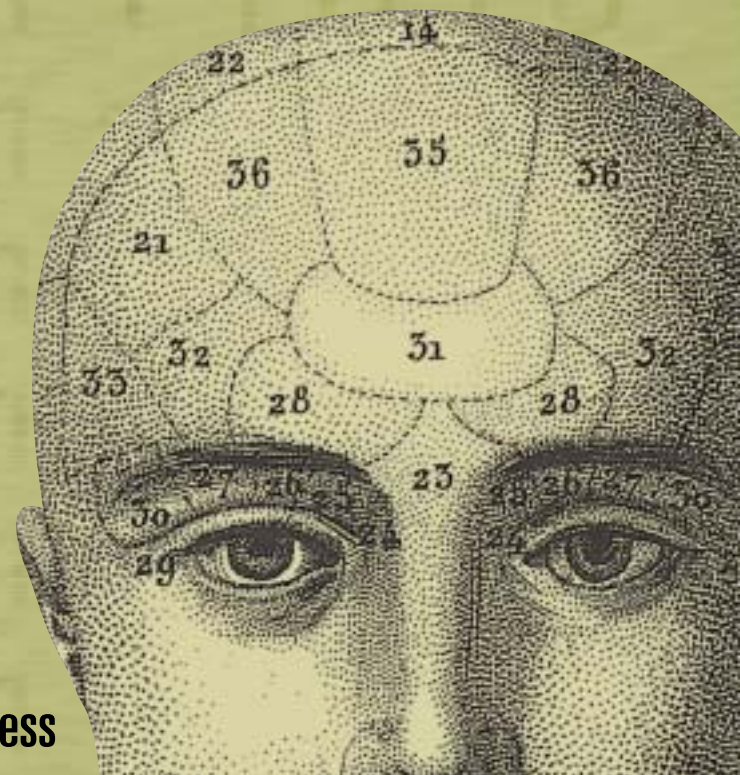
The Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council Transformation Process

Overview
The humanities and social sciences play an important role in our everyday lives. They help us to understand how and why we do things in and as a society. Researchers at universities across Canada conduct research everyday to help us better understand ourselves. Much of their work is funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC). In addition the council supports the work of graduate students at universities across the country. Today more than one half of all full-time graduate students are enrolled in the humanities and social sciences.

The transformation project
Much has changed in the 25 years that SSHRC has been funding researchers and scholars in the humanities and social sciences. Driving forces behind today's rapidly changing world include globalization and technology. These forces have prompted SSHRC to review its mandate and direction with a view to better meeting the needs of today's researchers and providing Canadians with greater knowledge and understanding of humanities- and social sciences-related issues. Over the next 12 months, universities across the country will be engaged in consultations with stakeholders over the future direction of this funding council. Feedback from the consultation process will be submitted to the funding body and will be integral to the development of future government policy for SSHRC. The process will help to transform SSHRC from a granting council to a knowledge council.

The McMaster consultation process
McMaster University is participating in the SSHRC Transformation Process by engaging in dialogue with its primary internal and external stakeholders, particularly SSHRC-funded researchers, graduate students and members of the non-academic community. Over the next several weeks, key groups and individuals both on and off campus will be asked for their advice and suggestions on how to rebuild SSHRC. The campus/community consultations will be used to prepare a report to be submitted to SSHRC by May 1. The document will highlight the key recommendations and direction endorsed by the McMaster/Hamilton communities.

SSHRC at McMaster
SSHRC and McMaster are seeking comments and suggestions about the future direction of the granting council from researchers, graduate students and other key stakeholders within the University community. The Transformation Process will involve a reassessment of SSHRC's basic goals and values, the creation of new adaptive structures, improvements to current programs, and an examination of ways to expand linkages to partners outside the university and to increase the flow of knowledge outside the university. Campus stakeholders will have an opportunity to express their views and opinions at Faculty drop-in sessions and open meetings, through individual and specialty group meetings, and in writing. The March and April consultations are led by McMaster's SSHRC representative Geoffrey Rockwell, associate professor in the School of the Arts and director of the Humanities Media and Computing Centre, with assistance from Kelly Curwin, project manager. The consultation process will help to strengthen SSHRC and will provide greater linkages between the University's researchers and graduate students and the granting council. The findings and recommendations will provide a stronger base for building a knowledge-based economy in Canada and enable SSHRC to better support its researchers and graduate students through the next 25 years.

The Questions

In preparing McMaster's response to SSHRC, we ask you to consider the following questions posed in the council's framework document. Your viewpoints are sought and appreciated.

1 How does the vision for SSHRC, presented in the transformation consultation framework, fit with your view of what needs to be done? 2 *What advantages and disadvantages do you see in the new structures that have been proposed for SSHRC? Which ones do you think will work? Which ones will not? Why?* **3 How can SSHRC modify its current programs to meet the transformation objectives? 4** Do you conduct research with partners from outside the university? How often? What kinds of support would help foster these relationships? **5** *If SSHRC does change, what structures should be created first? What should be the sequence of priorities thereafter?*

The Proposed Structures and New Programs

The framework document proposes and describes several new structures and programs the council is considering in transforming SSHRC. Following is a brief summary of the new structures and programs. We invite you to read the document fully to learn more about these new initiatives.

NEW STRUCTURES

Confederations of Learning: These bodies would be groupings of people who share common research interests beyond their disciplines, scholarly associations and universities and/or regions. These groupings would enable 20 to 30 researchers to interact regularly under the guidance of a scientific director. The Canadian Institute for Advanced Research is the best example of how such a confederation might work.

More formal institutes: These bodies would focus on cross-cutting issues of major and immediate social or political importance and would typically provide a home to very large (200-300) groups of researchers working on a given topic. The institute would have an academic director, a budget for strategic activities, and a finite period of operation. This model has been adopted by the Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR) for all of its activities. SSHRC is presently experimenting with this model through its Initiative on the New Economy program.

Knowledge mobilization units: These would be dedicated units within universities that ensure that research expertise is "made use of" in the best possible ways by organizations and groups outside academia. Many universities currently have tech or knowledge transfer offices for natural sciences research. This model would be adapted for and dedicated to the human sciences.

Web-facilitated communities of practice: SSHRC is currently experimenting with a Web-enabled knowledge network to increase synergies among large research teams that are funded through its Initiative on the New Economy. This model would be similar to that successfully developed by the World Bank. These web-communities would leverage the knowledge of human sciences researchers.

Clearinghouse for advanced expertise: In collaboration with the Knowledge Mobilization Units the Clearinghouse would operate as a central unit to co-ordinate such activities as researchers and experts discussing pressing issues with parliamentarians, participating in electronic town halls and developing a speaker's bureau. The organization would support evidence-based decision making.

Scholarly-based journals for lay audiences: These journals would render highly specialized knowledge into accessible prose for citizens and stakeholders. They would serve as the Canadian equivalents of the *New York Review of Books* and the *Harvard Business Review*.

A human sciences foundation: Endowments would support this initiative, which would focus on increasing Canada's capacity to "broker" or "mobilize" knowledge in the human sciences. The foundation would address a current Canadian deficit of broad-spectrum think tanks and other organizations.

OTHER PROPOSED NEW STRUCTURES
Exchange/Mobility Programs
Enriched and Connected Postsecondary Training Environments
(See framework document for full details)

NEW AND IMPROVED PROGRAMS
Smaller operating grants to more people: Should SSHRC handle the Standard Research Grants program like the Natural Sciences and Engineering Council's Discovery Grant program? Under this program, successful applicants/researchers are awarded annual seed money (e.g. $10,000 annually for three years or more) based on their track record. This model would enable SSHRC to support up to 70 per cent of applicants instead of the current 40 per cent within the existing envelope.

Larger grants to fewer people: This model would provide more support and money to the most excellent of research programs. This could mean, for instance, that much more money would be allocated to the Major Collaborative Research Initiatives program and less into the Standard Research Grants (SRG) program. This would mirror the direction CIHR has been taking.

Special support for young scholars: Currently SSHRC has no program dedicated to supporting young scholars at the beginning of their careers and it lacks a program to provide research training opportunities for undergraduates during the summer months. Should SSHRC be doing more to boost the careers of talented new researchers or to encourage young people to pursue a career in human sciences research?

Promote greater relevance, synergy and impact of strategic grants: Should SSHRC invest more in targeted research? Right now SSHRC's individual strategic grants programs operate in isolation from each other and from the council's other funding programs. Strategic programs are incubators for new research to inform decision making and to develop new research approaches and tools that change the way research is done. How can researchers funded under these different programs be linked where complementary topics exist to researchers funded under the Strategic Research Grants program?

Different/new support for research communications: SSHRC's programs for supporting research communications have remained essentially the same, with the same funding allocation, for the last decade. What new approaches are there to organizing conferences and congresses that could increase their effectiveness and impacts?

New or different support to institutions: Two programs currently help Canadian postsecondary institutions develop their research capacity (Institutional Grants and Aid to Small Universities). What, if any, role should such programs continue to play? Should SSHRC devolve to universities more responsibility for deciding what activities receive funding?

Development of more collective tools for research: Under the Canada Foundation for Innovation, a number of collective tools for human sciences research have been developed over the last few years (e.g. the Research Data Centres). Should SSHRC establish a pan-Canadian research data archiving system? Should SSHRC, in partnership with other organizations, be doing more to promote the development of collective tools and if so, how?

SSHRC at a glance

- Created in 1977, SSHRC is the only federal agency mandated by the federal government to support research, scholarship and graduate training in the social sciences and humanities.

- SSHRC's budget for 2003-04 is $197 million. That funding is allocated for various programs and initiatives. See the chart below for details of breakdown.

- In 2003 SSHRC supported over 4,800 researchers. While most researchers are university-based, researchers at some 200 Canadian community colleges are also included. The Council also funds not-for-profit organizations that have a mandate to conduct research and that have qualified researchers on staff.
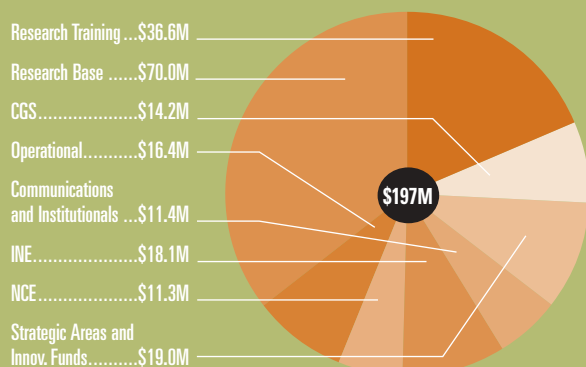
- In 2002-03 SSHRC allocated $37 million to support research in the area of economy, new economy and innovation. This was the largest allocation to an area of research. The second area with the largest allocation, $23 million, was arts and culture.

- In 2002-03 SSHRC funded 2,080 projects under its Standard Research Grants program, with an annual average award size of $24,979. The total amount allocated under this program was $51,955,572. The graph below shows SSHRC expenditures by major program or program cluster for 2002-03.

- Over the last five years, the number of applications to the SRG program has increased by 44 per cent. Over the same period, 27 per cent of the applications recommended for funding by peer-review committees were not supported due to a lack of available funds.

- Up until 2003, SSHRC supported an average of 1,425 doctoral fellows and 230 postdoctoral fellows each year. When the Canada Graduate Scholarships program is fully implemented, SSHRC will support an additional 2,400 doctoral and master's students. This will increase its total direct support to graduate students to 10 per cent from the current 3.5 per cent. The students receive a grant valued at $19,000 per year.
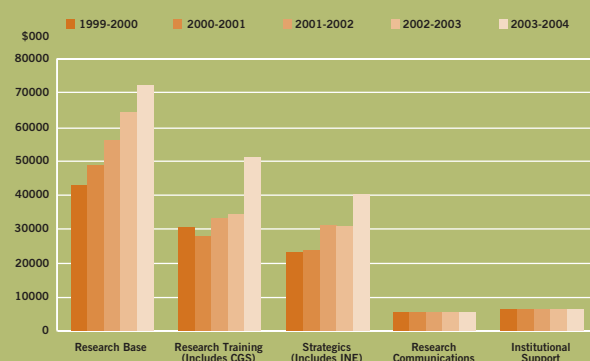
SSHRC at McMaster

- In 2003, 37 McMaster students at the master's and PhD level and postdoctoral fellows received $1.2 million in funding under a new national graduate program funded by SSHRC, the Canada Graduates Scholarships.

- In 2003-04, McMaster submitted 31 applications for SRGs and 14 were funded, resulting in a success rate of 45 per cent. The success rate and number of applications submitted have declined since five years ago when 37 applications were submitted and 22 were funded, for a success rate of 59 per cent.

- SSHRC grants are normally awarded for three years. The average grant is based on the full amount of the award over the three-year period. At McMaster for 2003-04, the average amount of an award from SSHRC was $71,113, up significantly from five years ago ($56,010).

- In 2001-02 McMaster's research enterprise was awarded $2.6 million from SSHRC, representing 6.67 per cent of the total amount ($39.1 million) McMaster received in funding from the federal granting councils that year.

SSHRC's Budget 2003-04

Research Training ...$36.6M
Research Base $70.0M
CGS $14.2M
Operational $16.4M
Communications and Institutionals ...$11.4M
INE $18.1M
NCE $11.3M
Strategic Areas and Innov. Funds..........$19.0M

$197M

CGS: Canada Graduate Scholarships   INE: Initiative on the New Economy   NCE: Networks of Centres of Excellence

Grants & Scholarship Budget by Program Cluster

Legend: 1999-2000 | 2000-2001 | 2001-2002 | 2002-2003 | 2003-2004

Categories: Research Base | Research Training (Includes CGS) | Strategics (Includes INE) | Research Communications | Institutional Support