

Women's Program, Status of Women

Management Response to the
Summative Evaluation of the
Women's Program, Status of Women

2012

Context

In support of the federal agenda for advancing the status of women, the Women's Program (WP) provides funding and professional assistance to organizations to carry out projects that advance equality for women across Canada through improvement of their economic and social conditions and their participation in democratic life.

Founded in 1973, the WP is a permanent program, with renewal of its Terms and Conditions occurring every five years. The Terms and Conditions that are the focus of this evaluation came into effect in 2006-07. The WP's current mandate is to advance equality for women across Canada through improvement of their economic and social conditions and their participation in democratic life. Its objective is to achieve the full participation of women in the economic, social and democratic life of Canada.

The program supports a range of community-based projects that address women's economic security, violence against women, and leadership. The program is delivered regionally through four offices, and an office that funds national projects and project with a focus on Aboriginal women. Women's Program funding is approximately \$19 annually.

In order to fulfill reporting requirements for federal grants and contributions programs originally identified under the Policy on Transfer Payments and reiterated in the Policy on Evaluation as identified by Treasury Board Secretariat, SWC engaged Ekos Research Associates Inc. to conduct a summative evaluation of the Women's Program for the period from 2006-2007 to 2010-2011. The final draft of the summative evaluation was submitted to Women's Program in January 2012. Several recommendations were made to improve the performance and program design and delivery based on the findings and conclusions of the evaluation which employed multiple lines of evidence.

In the table below, each of the five recommendations is presented accompanied by the WP's management response, areas of responsibility for completion and associated timelines to support implementing recommendations.

Target Area	Recommendation	Management Response and Planned Action	Timeline
<p>Program Performance</p>	<p>Recommendation 1: In order to improve the overall effectiveness of the program in achieving its ultimate intended outcome of equality for women, the program should identify any necessary program design changes to fund activities that the evaluation found to have greater potential reach and sustainable impact. These evaluation results and the program’s own internal analyses indicate that funded projects that include components that foster change at the level of policy or institutional practices have greater reach and sustainability.</p> <p>Funded projects that create resources or tools, or leverage proponents’ existing regional or national networks/membership also have advantages in terms of reach and sustainability. While projects led by women’s groups were also associated with greater reach and sustainability, any program design changes to organization eligibility must be balanced against the benefits of introducing gender equality programming into mainstream organizations.</p>	<p>Recommendation accepted.</p> <p>The Women’s Program has introduced two new intake mechanisms: a continuous-intake process in 2010, in which organizations are able to submit project proposals at any time during the year; and a targeted Call for Proposals process in 2011 which solicits applications to address specific issues or to test specific models .</p> <p>These new intake mechanisms balance responsive and directive programming in such a way that it creates opportunities for SWC to invest strategically in areas where there is potential to achieve increased reach and sustainability.</p> <p>SWC is currently undertaking a review of the intake mechanisms processes employed by the Women’s Program. Its findings will be used to refine the intake mechanisms.</p> <p>The WP will undertake a cluster evaluation of a subset of funded projects. This approach may include an ongoing evaluation component that will allow the Program to better understand the effects that projects funded by the Women’s Program have throughout their project lifecycle and beyond their completion, particularly the sustainability of project outcomes.</p>	<p>2012</p> <p>2012 - 2013</p>

<p>Design and Delivery</p>	<p>Recommendation 2: The program should clarify its theory of change from activities and outputs through to immediate, intermediate and ultimate outcomes. The program’s current logic model does not capture all activities carried out by the program, and the results chain does not reflect the program’s evolving understanding of social change – i.e., based on a multi-dimensional approach that supports social change at multiple levels, including the participation of individual women, capacity and connections among organizations or networks of organizations, and change within communities and at the level of policy.</p>	<p>Recommendation accepted. WP revised logic model developments are currently underway to more clearly articulate the Program’s theory of change. The Program’s activities, outputs and outcomes will be adjusted to better reflect in the logic model the diversity of funded projects.</p> <p>The Women’s Program will ensure close alignment between its logic model and the agency’s Program Activity Architecture (PAA).</p>	<p>Mid 2012 - 2013</p> <p>2012 - 2013</p>
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<p>Design and Delivery</p>	<p>Recommendation 3: The WP should continue to initiate and strengthen relationship-building with provinces and other federal departments and agencies to seek input on program funding priorities. WP project activity in areas such as immigration and skills development to remove barriers to women’s participation is diverting finite program funding to areas where other federal or provincial programs are in place and could address the participation of women. While other government departments are aware of the WP and have a favourable impression of the program, efforts moving forward would benefit from consultations with federal partners to ensure that WP’s limited funding is deployed in niche areas where there is an absence of other levers to address barriers to women’s participation.</p>	<p>Recommendation accepted. The WP will continue to develop and strengthen partnerships with federal (and other) partners to strengthen WP networks and work where possible horizontally on issues affecting women.</p> <p>In 2010, the WP implemented a new assessment process for projects received under the continuous intake mechanism. An assessment committee (DAC) with staff from Status of Women Canada, as well as from other relevant departments provides feedback on the proposed projects and identifies additional potential partnerships.</p> <p>Reciprocally, the WP participates and contributes to the assessment committees of other federal programs, horizontal initiatives (such as the Family Violence Initiative), and various interdepartmental working groups.</p> <p>These exchanges allow for greater flexibility in responding to emerging issues, support coherence of government action in addressing women’s issues and increase the potential for the reach and sustainability of projects.</p> <p>In partnership with SWC’s Policy and External Relations Directorate, the WP is actively engaging with federal and provincial/territorial officials to ensure that issues and best practices are being identified. In addition, WP informally consults with federal and provincial/territorial counterparts to inform funding priorities (e.g. consultations with OGDs regarding priorities for WP targeted calls).</p>	<p>Ongoing</p> <p>2010 and ongoing</p> <p>2011 and ongoing</p> <p>Ongoing</p>
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<p>Design and Delivery</p>	<p>Recommendation 4: The program should review deployment of its internal organizational resources to address significant capacity issues within the program, particularly a thinly-spread regional delivery structure. The program should continue its exploration of alternative delivery models or innovations with a view to addressing particular constraints in underserved regions (the West where applicant satisfaction levels tend to be lower and the North where there are few projects funded) (e.g., leveraging of provincial capacities, utilization of service delivery nodes in other federal departments, use of third party delivery for selected program focus areas).</p>	<p>Recommendation accepted. The WP has already made progress in exploring alternative delivery models. It has transitioned from a general call for proposal process to the targeted call process, and in June 2010, implemented a continuous intake mechanism.</p> <p>SWC is currently undertaking a review of the intake mechanisms processes employed by the Women’s Program. Its findings will be used to refine the delivery structure.</p> <p>Consideration of potential strategies to reach underserved areas is ongoing.</p>	<p>2010</p> <p>2012</p> <p>Ongoing</p>
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<p>Design and Delivery</p>	<p>Recommendation 5: The program should further leverage the project-level investments that it makes with enhanced mechanisms for knowledge building/sharing with and among stakeholders. Encouraging projects to share their results and embedding opportunities for dissemination and exchange at the program level would enhance the value of products developed by funded projects and keep the program funding focused on innovation. To support this:</p> <p>A. Consideration should be given to adjusting the current funding envelope (e.g., O&M dollars made available) to permit activities to support dissemination/exchange activities, including via web-site postings, workshops/meetings or other mechanisms.</p> <p>B. Review the program’s Terms and Conditions to remove any restrictive eligibility criteria related to organization eligibility (e.g., academic organizations, cooperatives) and activity eligibility that inhibit undertaking knowledge building/sharing activities.</p>	<p>Recommendation accepted. In order to leverage programming expertise to support SWC’s role as a knowledge broker, the WP will develop a knowledge management and dissemination strategy. The strategy will strengthen WP capacity to share knowledge. It will also assist organizations working to advance gender equality, by facilitating access to expertise, resources, tools and materials to help them work more effectively.</p> <p>WP will continue to facilitate networking of various groups that share a common goal at the national and regional levels. For example, creating opportunities for groups working on similar issues to connect and exchange knowledge/expertise.</p> <p>Targeted calls are allowing the Women’s Program to test innovative or promising models, including demonstrating how approaches can be best applied with various population groups or in various settings. Information gathered will be shared with others.</p>	<p>Currently under development. Expected completion in summer 2012.</p>
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