

COLLEGE & COMMUNITY INNOVATION PROGRAM: MANAGEMENT RESPONSE TO THE AUDIT RECOMMENDATIONS

The Audit of the College and Community Innovation Program is a valuable contribution to enhancing and growing this successful tri-agency initiative.

As noted in the audit, this program “is relatively young compared to other tri-agency programs (i.e., Networks of Centres of Excellence), {and} the audit found that key areas were well managed”. This aligns with management’s perspectives of this innovative program which addresses the needs of a new research community. This important finding also supports the positive result of the [2013 Evaluation of the College and Community Innovation program](#), namely, that “the CCI program IE Grant is achieving or is on track to achieve its expected immediate and intermediate outcomes.”

In addition to finding the program is well managed, the audit provides valuable advice to NSERC on possible enhancements to this program. Management has agreed to all of the audit recommendations and notes that some of these recommendations have relevance to how NSERC manages and delivers its broader suite of programs. For example, recommendations 1 & 2 are consistent with recommendations made in the recent [Audit of the Networks of Centres of Excellence Program](#). In fact, recommendations 1, 2, 3, 4 & 6 may be relevant to other partnership programs. As noted below, management’s actions in response to these recommendations are anticipated to have impact across NSERC Research Partnership programs.

Details of management’s response to the recommendations in the Audit of the College & Community Innovation program are presented below.

ITEM	*URGENCY RATING	RECOMMENDATION	MANAGEMENT RESPONSE	TARGET DATE
1.	12 months	<p>It is recommended that management enhance efforts to formalize the CCI Program’s governance and clarify the following:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roles and responsibilities of the Research Partnerships Management Committee, particularly in relation to risk and performance; • Research Partnerships Management Committee’s reporting relationships with CCI Program management, other pertinent NSERC committees and external advisory committees; and 	<p>The authorities and responsibilities of managing the CCI program, as with all NSERC programs, lie with the individuals in roles rather than the terms of reference for a committee. Notwithstanding, a Terms of Reference for the Research Partnerships Management will be established. The Directorate will further clarify the responsibilities for escalating emerging issues and risks in the CCI program.</p>	Dec. 15, 2015

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Escalation process for emerging issues and risks. 		
2.	12 months	It is recommended that the CCI Program formalize its risk management process to ensure that key risks that may prevent the program from meeting its objectives are systematically identified, mitigated and monitored.	NSERC has an integrated risk management process that systematically and formally identifies, mitigates and monitors key risks. The CCI program's risks are considered when developing NSERC's key risks. NSERC will formalize the risk management process for the CCI program and other partnership programs. These risk assessments will be used as part of the corporate risk planning and will form part of the directorate's business planning process.	Dec. 16, 2015
3.	12 months	It is recommended that the CCI Program maintain supporting documentation of all CCI Review Committee's discussions / decisions in order to ensure that evidence justifying significant funding recommendations is clear and available.	NSERC will ensure that the CCI Program provides and maintains documentation that supports the funding recommendations of its review committee.	July 1, 2015
4.	12 months	It is recommended that CCI Program management develop a process for reviewing the CCI Review Committee assessments prior to signing Funding Memos. This process could include both the review of award justifications provided by the CCI Review Committee to ensure they are complete, thorough and aligned with the objectives of the program, and retention of the evidence of this review, prior to signing the Funding Memos.	NSERC staff are involved throughout the proposal evaluation process and provide assurance to support funding decisions by NSERC management. Staff are responsible for assuring that award justification information (see the previous recommendation) is complete, thorough, and aligned with the objectives of the program – and documented in the application files. NSERC will ensure that the program staff attest in funding recommendations that the committee's funding recommendations are complete, based on thorough discussions of the proposals, and aligned with the objectives of the program. This attestation will be reflected in the Funding Memos that are signed by management.	July 1, 2015
5.	18 months	It is recommended that the CCI Program develop a formal template for the request of both grant holder budget amendments and grant	A formal template and defined processes will be developed for grant extensions and	April 1, 2015

		extensions. These templates should require each college to document justification for the request and provide their amended budget. Based on the receipt of each request, the CCI Program should implement a formal, consistent process to complete an appropriate assessment of the request and document the results and decisions.	amendments. As above, best practice in other programs will be considered in implementing the template and associated processes.	
6.	18 months	It is recommended that the CCI Program establish continuous measurement of achievement against program objectives and communicate the results to management on a periodic basis.	The CCI Program has developed and utilizes an in-depth set of performance indicators that measures its achievement against program objectives. The information collected in grantee reports and company comments supports management's assessment of performance against objectives. This provides measurement of grant performance – however this approach has limitations in terms of timeliness. Annually, Research Partnerships presents its advisory committee (the Committee on research Partnerships), with summary information on the performance of each program, including the CCI Program. NSERC anticipates implementing a timelier means of gathering key grant performance information that will allow better periodic monitoring of program performance, allowing program performance to be regularly communicated to management on a periodic basis.	April 1, 2016

***Urgency Rating** of recommendations refers to the urgency of the recommendation based on the Agency's/Agencies' exposure to risk. Based on the "Urgency Rating", CIA Division recommends management actions associated with the recommendation be completed using the following timeline:

	6 months or less
	12 months or less
	18 months or less