



Social Enterprises
Knowledgeable Economies
and Sustainable Communities

Evaluation of Saskatoon Urban Aboriginal Strategy

Cara Spence
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**A research report prepared for the Northern Ontario, Manitoba,
and Saskatchewan Regional Node of the Social Economy Suite**

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Entreprises sociales
économies intelligentes
et communautés durables

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A Research Report

Cara Spence and Isobel M. Findlay



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

March 30, 2007, marks the end of the pilot phase for the Urban Aboriginal Strategy (UAS) in Saskatoon. Implemented as a result of the *Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples* (1996) and the subsequent governmental response *Gathering Strength: Canada's Aboriginal Action Plan* (1997), the UAS is a component of the official strategy to raise the capacity and better the life chances of Canadian urban Aboriginal peoples. Introduced in 1998 by the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC), through its Office of the Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians (OFI), the UAS is a horizontal initiative with a collaborative approach to improve policy development and program coordination at the local level.

As one of the eight urban centres selected as pilot sites, the UAS in Saskatoon received a portion of the \$25 million available in federal funding to administer UAS objectives. In 2004, the pilot phase was extended, doubling the federal commitment to \$50.025 million across twelve pilot sites. Focusing on local community engagement and collaborative partnerships, the organizational structures of the UAS were uniquely developed by each of the urban sites. This flexible, “bottom-up” approach allowed for the local community to shape the direction of the initiative and focus on individual community needs, while building capacity and leadership within the Aboriginal community.

The UAS in Saskatoon went through much development throughout the course of the pilot stage. The structure is composed of an Advisory Committee, Steering Committee, and a Project Coordinator, all Aboriginal people. The management of the Contribution Agreements and the directing of funds to various projects and community-based organizations were facilitated by the federal department of Service Canada. By the end of the pilot phase, UAS Saskatoon had successfully dispersed \$3.2 million dollars to 15 organizations who serve the Aboriginal community in Saskatoon. Furthermore, through several community consultations, the UAS Saskatoon developed *A Model for Aboriginal Collaborative Planning and Granting in the Saskatoon Community* (2006).

The purpose of this comprehensive evaluation is to review the administrative structure and processes that have been established by the UAS Saskatoon project, and

provide recommendations to assist in the future success of the UAS as it moves beyond the pilot stage. In consideration of the UAS mandate to identify local needs of Aboriginal people and to develop innovative ways to address these needs, this report aims to evaluate whether the UAS project was managed and delivered as it was designed; in turn, meeting the needs of the people it was intended to serve. The evaluation was conducted by an impartial third-party, the Community-University Institute for Social Research (CUISR) by researcher, Cara Spence; academic supervisor, Isobel Findlay; and community research liaison, Maria Basualdo.

Results of questionnaires, focus groups, and interviews with individuals representing the various components of the UAS project are organized around the following themes:

- The substantial contribution of UAS funds in building capacity and strategic planning for the community
- Communication and relationship building among the Steering Committee, Service Canada, and the community
- Allocation and delivery of funds
- Transparency and accountability issues
- Long-term commitment of the UAS to the community
- Partnerships and collaboration between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities and organizations

In the context of these themes, the following recommendations have been developed:

1. Facilitate long-term funding options through the security of the UAS as a sustained community presence.
2. Enhance the awareness of the UAS project within the larger community including: the UAS mandate, structure, committee representatives, and funding opportunities.
3. Develop a comprehensive communication strategy.
4. Formalize clear criteria, guidelines, deadlines, reporting mechanisms, and contact information for the funding process.
5. Ensure flexible and expeditious fund allocation.

6. Develop a formalized process, including Terms of Reference, Steering Committee requirements, Project Coordinator qualifications, evaluation protocol, and Conflict of Interest guidelines.
7. Establish a local, third-party organization to manage and distribute funds.
8. Enhance capacity within the UAS structure in order to better provide services and to enhance local control in administering the UAS.
9. Secure commitment of support from all levels of government.
10. Refine and institute the Sustainable Collaborative Community Model in the city of Saskatoon.

INTRODUCTION

i. Background of Initiative

The report of the *Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples* (1996) highlights the urgent need to reduce the large inequalities between Canadian Aboriginal¹ people and their non-Aboriginal counterparts in terms of quality of life and overall socio-economic conditions. Identifying the necessity to reconcile not only the injustices of the past, but also to address the present and future sustainability of the country and its urban centres, the Royal Commission recommends the joint commitment of all levels of government to work with the Aboriginal community to reduce these gaps and inequalities. In acknowledgement of this commitment, the Government of Canada published *Gathering Strength: Canada's Aboriginal Action Plan* (1997) as an official strategy for collaboration among all federal, provincial, municipal, and Aboriginal levels of government, the private sector, and community-based organizations with a mandate to serve the Aboriginal community. Acknowledging that many Aboriginal communities lack the appropriate institutions, resources, and expertise needed to deal effectively with the serious socio-economic problems facing the community, the Canadian Government's action plan has four objectives (Government of Canada, 1997):

- Renewing the Partnerships;
- Strengthening Aboriginal Governance;
- Developing a New Fiscal Relationship;
- Supporting Strong Communities, People, and Economies.

As one means to meet these objectives, the Urban Aboriginal Strategy was developed as part of the *Gathering Strength* action plan, envisioned as a way in which the Federal Government can make the necessary linkages with the urban Aboriginal communities of Canada, to strengthen partnerships, and to support local initiatives and priorities in providing the necessary tools to build the means and capacity of the Aboriginal community to influence change.

1. For the purpose of this document, the term Aboriginal describes descendants of the original peoples of the sovereign territory now called Canada. Aboriginal people include those who identify themselves as First Nation, status or non-status, Métis, or Inuit.

The Urban Aboriginal Strategy (UAS) is led by the Department of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC), through its Office of the Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-Status Indians (OFI). The UAS was introduced in 1998 as a horizontal initiative and a collaborative approach to improve policy development and program coordination at the federal level and other levels of government with partnership of the community². The federal department responsible for the administration of the UAS in British Columbia, Alberta, and Manitoba is Western Economic Diversification (WD), while Service Canada delivered the program in Saskatchewan and Ontario. The total federal funding allocation for the Strategy, beginning in 1998 and extended to 2007, was secured at \$50.025 million. The initial commitment of \$25 million in funding was given to undertake pilot projects in eight urban centres: Vancouver, Edmonton, Calgary, Saskatoon, Regina, Winnipeg, Thunder Bay, and Toronto. In 2004, the federal funding to the UAS was doubled to allow implementation of pilot projects in four new cities: Prince George, Prince Albert, Lethbridge, Thompson, extending the UAS program to March 2007.

With collaboration and community engagement as driving principles, the UAS is designed to better respond to local needs through the support of projects and priorities that have been identified by the local community. More specifically, the initial objective of the UAS was to: raise awareness about the needs of local communities; improve access to federal programs and services; and improve horizontal linkages among federal departments and other sectors (INAC, 2005). As such, each UAS site has developed its own governance structure, as well as the design and implementation of its strategic planning. The collaborative partnerships that have developed within each of the UAS sites are intended to provide the foundation for long-term solutions to address the needs of their local Aboriginal communities. The intent is to use and capitalize on existing programs and policies to address the situation of local Aboriginal people. Furthermore, using a flexible, “bottom-up.” and collaborative approach to policy and program initiatives, the UAS encourages community members to participate in the decision-making process alongside governmental actors.

2. However, no formal support, financial or otherwise has been extended to the UAS by the provincial level of government (INAC, 2007).

ii. Pilot Project: UAS Saskatoon

As one of the eight initial urban centres selected as pilot sites, UAS Saskatoon was included in the first round of federal funding resulting from the *Gathering Strength* (1997) action plan. As determined by the Office of the Federal Interlocutor, Service Canada operates as the federal department administering the UAS in Saskatoon. As such, it is Service Canada that handles the Contribution Agreements with all community projects in receipt of federal funding through the UAS in Saskatoon. Since the inception of the project, 32 community-based projects have been approved for funding, totalling \$3.2 million in federal dollars spent.

The UAS Saskatoon embodies a structure with two organizational committees: the Advisory Committee and the Steering Committee. The Advisory Committee (of federal, provincial, municipal, First Nations and Métis government, other agencies and organizations) was established at the outset of the project to develop the initial structure and strategy for the UAS. Through a series of community consultations, the Advisory Committee established a Steering Committee³ that would review project proposals, communicate directly with Service Canada, and work with the community in setting and realizing the objectives for the UAS in Saskatoon. The Steering Committee is composed entirely of Aboriginal members including: four First Nations representatives, four Métis representatives, one Friendship Centre representative, two youth, and two elders. The UAS Saskatoon also employs one full-time Project Coordinator who arranges and facilitates all meetings, as well as manages the budget for support costs and expenditures.

The mandate established for the UAS Advisory Committee for Saskatoon is to “distill and identify opportunities for action in Saskatoon in order to support the achievement of Aboriginal capacity building and to close the gap in life chances between urban Aboriginal people and the mainstream populations” (UAS, 2006: 6).

Through several community forums, the UAS Saskatoon has developed its strategic planning around five community priorities or “pillars”: Economic Development, Health, Capacity Building, Justice, and Youth⁴ (Merasty, 2006).

3. Members of the Steering Committee are also members of the Advisory Committee.

4. Economic Development, Health, Youth, and Poverty were identified as pillar priorities as a result of the community consultations held in 2004. In 2005, the Capacity Building priority was added by the Steering Committee as it was seen as a necessary component for any level of Aboriginal advancement. In 2006, the pillar priorities were finalized, adding Justice as a priority, and removing Poverty as a

Through facilitating numerous community consultations, setting UAS pillar priorities, developing an Aboriginal Collaborative Planning and Granting Model (UAS, 2006), and funding various projects, the UAS Saskatoon has engaged the participation of all levels of government, intergovernmental agencies including the Regional Intersectoral Committee for Human Services, existing community-based organizations, and Aboriginal communities. The collaborative mechanisms, partnerships, and initiatives supported by the activities of the UAS have contributed to the coordination of efforts (now and in the future) in addressing the needs of the Aboriginal community in Saskatoon.

iii. Purpose of Report

The purpose of this report is to conduct a comprehensive evaluation, highlighting strengths and weaknesses of the administrative structure of the UAS pilot project in Saskatoon. The UAS initiative was mandated to find new and innovative ways to address Aboriginal people's needs. This evaluation seeks to ensure that the program was managed and delivered as it was designed, reaching the clients that it was intended to serve. The focus of this evaluation is on the management and delivery of the UAS project in Saskatoon, with Service Canada as the delivery agent of the agreement. It reviews the administrative structure and process and includes recommendations that may improve delivery of the UAS in Saskatoon for the next stage of the initiative. This evaluation is designed to identify themes relevant to the experience of all sectors involved.

EVALUATION

i. Introduction

The overall purpose of this publication is to evaluate the administrative process and structure of the UAS pilot project in Saskatoon. The specific objectives include:

1. To determine whether the processes and structures developed by the UAS Saskatoon are efficient and function to meet the federal UAS mandate to strengthen partnerships, and to support local initiatives and priorities to build the capacity of the local Aboriginal community.

specific pillar. Poverty was seen by the community as an overarching issue encompassed within all of the pillars.

2. To focus on the operations and communications among all levels: the Steering Committee, the Project Coordinator, Service Canada, and the funding recipients. As such, the evaluation is designed to incorporate these varied perspectives.
3. To provide recommendations for improvement in the structure and process for the delivery of the UAS project beyond the pilot stage.

ii. Methodology

In order to conduct an impartial evaluation of the UAS, the Community-University Institute for Social Research (CUISR) was commissioned as a third party to conduct the evaluation on behalf of the UAS. CUISR representatives developed and implemented the evaluation design, which consisted of a multi-method approach including: survey questionnaires, focus groups, and semi-structured face-to-face interviews. The researchers began the investigation by contacting the coordinators of the various projects that had been in receipt of UAS funding monies through the means of survey questionnaires sent electronically via e-mail. However, as a result of a relatively limited response rate of funding recipients that is required to do a comprehensive evaluation of the UAS project, subsequent focus groups and interviews were incorporated into the methodology. Furthermore, it also quickly became clear to the researchers that the perspectives of the Steering Committee, the UAS Project Coordinator, and Service Canada project representatives were also necessary in order to construct a holistic and inclusive understanding of the funding process and general operation of the UAS project. Since they wanted to hear from project recipients about how to improve the Steering Committee work, the Steering Committee did not participate in interviews in order to maintain an arm's length relationship to the evaluation process.

The confidentiality of participant responses is respected in the reporting of the evaluation results. However, direct quotations are incorporated in the reporting process. As a result of the small sampling frame available for this research, there is the risk that participants may be identifiable based on their responses, particularly in regards to those responses solicited from Service Canada and the Project Coordinator. This potential risk has been communicated to participants.

iii. Questionnaires

The thirty-two projects funded by the UAS entailed fifteen organizations in receipt of UAS monies. All fifteen organizations were initially contacted via e-mail from the

CUISR office with the use of the contact information provided by the UAS Project Coordinator. Since many of those in charge when projects were funded were no longer with the organizations, the current executive directors of the organizations became the contact persons. Respondents were sent electronic versions of the Letter of Introduction (Appendix A), Questionnaire (Appendix B), and Consent Form (Appendix C) and asked to respond by the date indicated. This process was repeated twice in order to ensure that those who wished to participate had the opportunity. As a follow-up, participants were also contacted by phone and material was faxed for them. Of the fifteen organizations contacted by CUISR, seven completed and submitted electronic questionnaires.

Questionnaires were composed of six questions, each with several subsections. Questions attempted to address these issues: how the organization was enabled to contribute to the Aboriginal community as a result of the UAS funding; how funding helped to meet organizational mandates and build organizational capacity; what level of support was secured from the UAS for the strategic planning for funded organizations; what suggestions they had as to how the Steering Committee could better meet the needs of the Aboriginal community; what strengths and weaknesses they perceived in the UAS structure and process; how efficient they perceived the communication strategy of the Steering Committee to be with community organizations, as well as with the public; how effective was relationship building between the Steering Committee, the community, and various agencies; how efficient were reporting mechanisms of the Contribution Agreement with Service Canada; and the how efficient were the delivery of funds, funding allocation, and timelines. Questionnaires took approximately 30 min to complete and were later analyzed for themes, including strengths and challenges of working with the UAS in the allocation of funds for community projects.

iv. Focus Groups

As a result of the insufficient response rate necessary to conduct the evaluation, CUISR again solicited organizations with funded projects with an invitation to participate in a focus group. The objective of the focus group was to further draw out any issues that agencies were willing to highlight as a result of working with and receiving funding through the UAS. Funded agencies were contacted by the CUISR office and by the UAS coordinator, asking them to participate in the focus group. Of the fifteen organizations contacted, seven organizations expressed the intention to participate in the focus group,

while only two organizations attended and participated in the process. The focus group was timed to extend one hour in length, and was tape-recorded in order to ensure the accuracy of reported findings. Tapes were reviewed and thematically coded by identifying pertinent themes. Although the focus group was guided by a set of pre-determined questions based upon the previous questionnaire, which were distributed prior to the focus group (Appendix D), the discussion was semi-structured in order to allow participants to speak on any issue of perceived relevance. This approach allowed for an extensive and rich discussion on a variety of issues. Furthermore, several of the issues that were raised from the focus group became the topic for discussion in subsequent interviews with other branches of the UAS structure.

v. Interviews

Interviews were arranged with Service Canada and the Project Coordinator in an attempt to balance perspectives that were included in the evaluation of the UAS project. Interviews with key informants involved in the UAS project were open-ended and semi-structured. Interview lengths ranged from one hour, to one and a half hours and were tape-recorded. Tapes were later reviewed and thematically analyzed to address issues emerging from the evaluation process.

Two federal representatives from Service Canada involved with the UAS project were contacted via e-mail and invited to participate in an interview regarding the structure and process of the UAS Saskatoon pilot project. Both representatives participated in the process. Questions covered in the interview with Service Canada included issues such as: UAS support for or building of capacity in the Aboriginal community through the funding of various projects; the perceived efficiency of the overall structure and organization of UAS Saskatoon, including the roles of the Steering Committee, Project Coordinator, and Service Canada; the process of calling for proposals and the allocation of funding monies; the transparency and representation of the UAS to the community and community based organizations; and the processes of communication among Service Canada, the UAS, and funding recipients (Appendix E). As with the other research methods employed in the evaluation, the interview was completed with an open-ended question that allowed respondents to add anything to their comments, particularly in regards to the perceived strengths, weakness, and future direction of the UAS Saskatoon project.

Interview questions were further refined and directed to the Project Coordinator in order to flesh out emerging themes. Questions discussed the development and the process of calling for Letters of Intent and full proposals for project funding; the criteria used in determining successful applications; processes for communication and updates on project progress; and the representation of the Steering Committee of the Aboriginal community in Saskatoon, and the extent to which the visibility and success could be improved for the future of the UAS (Appendix F). The Project Coordinator met with CUISR to discuss these questions in an open-ended, semi-structured environment, which also encouraged discussion to be furthered beyond the pre-determined set of questions. This interview was tape-recorded and analyzed for the purpose of developing this evaluation of the UAS project.

vi. Strengths and Limitations

Questionnaire, focus group, and interview data were systematically analyzed to identify prominent issues and themes that emerged from the broad sector of participants. The vast amount of data that was collected as a result of using three methods of research and the incorporation of perspectives from the various groups involved in the project provides a detailed collection of qualitative data, contributing to a broadened understanding of the UAS project. Designing the evaluation of the UAS using qualitative data facilitated the articulation of sentiments and opinions of those involved in the project. The openness and confidentiality of the questionnaire design, as well as the flexible approach of the semi-structured environment of the focus group and interviews, encouraged participants to direct their responses towards issues that they deem relevant and pertinent to an evaluation of the project. Furthermore, offering participants the opportunity to discuss both the strengths and the weaknesses of the project, as well as means to improve for future success, allows those involved to address any issues that may go beyond the structure of the pre-determined questions.

An unfortunate limitation of the evaluation was the absence of Steering Committee input and the small sample size as a result of the low participation, particularly among funding recipients. The recipient group represents fundamental aspects of the project, primary for the success of the UAS project. Perhaps the poor participation is a result of (a) completion of the UAS pilot project; (b) uncertainty about the future of the UAS project in Saskatoon; and (c) changes in personnel associated with specific funded projects.

FINDINGS

i. Funding Recipients

Questionnaires

Questionnaire responses indicated that funding support offered by the UAS greatly contributed to the ability of organizations to serve the Aboriginal community through “*substantially increasing the access to our service*” and providing “*our organization with crucial start up funds... to serve our clientele, which is anyone with low income, but have thus far been largely Aboriginal.*” The provision of UAS funding and services has “*made a major impact on the urban aboriginal community in capacity building and programs.*” One respondent indicated that as a result of the loss of UAS funds available within the community: “*5-600 community based organizations suffered staff lay-offs, no more core funding for wages, program cuts, etc.*”

In terms of meeting UAS mandates and building capacity of participating organizations, the UAS funding allowed one organization to “*contribute in the areas of Poverty and Capacity Building – two pillars of the UAS*” and another to “*fill a gap in community through meeting the mandate of the Justice pillar.*” UAS funding also achieved the following:

provided the opportunity for community organizations to build capacity, hire aboriginal people, facilitate partnerships, and offer programs and services. Projects have secured partnerships that will continue...

without this contribution, (we) would not have be able to have an operational service in the community, and the UAS Steering Committee was instrumental in providing direction and support in achieving these goals.

The UAS also assisted organizations with the development of strategic planning, contributing to building long-term capacity of organizations. Strategic planning also helped organizations to “*operate efficiently and allocate resources appropriately.*” However, the carry-over of funds and long-term funding options was seen by the majority of respondents as essential for lasting and genuine capacity building for organizations. One organization stressed that as a result of the delay in the delivery of funds, inflexible criteria for funding, and the non-renewal of proposals, the UAS funding did not help the

organization to meet the UAS mandate; rather it contributed to complications within the organization. Moreover, it was suggested that the UAS should accept *any* proposal that meets criteria of the UAS mandate, as *“the meaning of ‘capacity’ is to ‘do something’ ... not disallow any proposal that is trying to do something”* as it appeared that the Steering Committee *“picks and chooses”* successful funding applicants.

Questionnaire findings regarding communication and relationship building with the Steering Committee proved to be divided. A few organizations felt that communication with the Steering Committee was satisfactory, with continued *“invites to public events, including their community consultations”*; while other respondents stated that communication was *“not good. We were not aware of any of their meetings, or we would have been there!”* The suggestion was made that *“the general public is not aware of the UAS nor its mandate,”* and that the *“UAS should publish quarterly reports in a newsletter to advise the community and its stakeholders.”* Another suggestion was a comprehensive listing of Aboriginal organizations that the Steering Committee could use to enhance awareness of events, meeting, deadlines, etc.

The Steering Committee has *“allowed a bottom-up perspective,”* while *“aiming to build a relationship with (organization) and to foster (organization) relationship with the community.”* However, several other organizations were *“not aware of who the Steering Committee is.”* One respondent suggested that the Steering Committee

ought to be real and get to know the organizations that they are funding and be sure that the funds are being used appropriately.... And not funding the same organizations over and over again, either.

Reporting mechanisms and other requirements of the Contribution Agreements with Service Canada were *“clear and easy”* for some organizations; while for others, reporting was *“incredibly onerous for organizations with only one staff member.”* One respondent claimed that *“we were given a whole pile of paper and told to ‘sign here.’ They need to sit down and explain fully what they are receiving and how it works.”* It was identified, that *“feedback is required and accountability is a must.”*

On how to better deliver funds and services, suggestion were made that the UAS needs to *“be fair to everyone”* and to

consider funding organizations that are not completely run by all Aboriginal people. There are a lot of worthwhile organizations helping Aboriginal people that could use this support.

Another suggested “*quarterly advances.*” One organization reported that “*we needed funding upfront for start up costs ... and was instrumental in allowing us to establish the program and begin offering services.*” Another organization saw no better way to deliver the UAS project than the current structure.

The overall strengths of the UAS, as defined by questionnaire respondents include: the “*helping our organization to set budget priorities, offer suggestions, advice, and direction for strategic planning*”; “*providing the opportunity and capacity to offer our services*”; “*opening up opportunities for our organization to serve the community and to build on the support offered by the Steering Committee to address different core funding agencies*”; a “*community based approach*”; and the “*success in outcomes of programs,*” where “*dollars have made a huge impact on capacity building and community programs.*” As well, the Steering Committee consisting of only Aboriginal people was seen as a strength of the UAS in Saskatoon.

Weaknesses of the UAS seen by funding recipients include: the lack of “*commitment by steering committee members,*” “*communication and information,*” the “*wait time to receive initial program funds ... stalls the starting of projects,*” the “*lengthy time frame between the call for proposals, signing of the contract, and the project being facilitated,*” “*no multi-year funding,*” and “*no provincial government cooperation.*” As well, an issue of transparency was raised as one respondent suggested that the “*same locals receiving funding all the time. Perhaps only allow one proposal per one organization.*”

Additional comments and suggestions contributed by funding recipients regarding the improvement of the UAS included that “*UAS could be improved in Saskatoon if they are allowed to continue to fund and support important programs in the community*” and to “*extend the program and loosen constraints on timelines.*” Questions were raised by respondents, such as:

Are there written documents that describe the structure, number and qualifications of the UAS steering committee?

Is there a process to determine how decisions that affect the community are made?

Does the committee assess its own performance and the performance of individual committee members?

Does the committee have a code of conduct that governs the behavior of members, staff, and volunteers while representing the UAS (i.e. attendance at meetings, full participation in meetings or workshops)?

Finally the “*continued support from all levels of government is important, both financial and public support*” and the governmental support for community based initiatives were also highlighted as important to funding recipients.

Focus Group

Focus group questioning began with asking participants how the UAS funding had helped their organization better serve the Aboriginal community. One respondent was not pleased with the funding, as funds took so long to come through that the proposed need for the money was no longer real or immediate. However, once the organization received the funds, monies were not permitted to be used for other purposes outside of the proposed request. Respondent #2, however, encountered no such problems as funds were to be used to serve a specific need in the Aboriginal community, as per the initial proposal. The funds that were received provided core funding and facilitated further connections with the Aboriginal community, whose needs the organization addresses have been increasing. However, as the UAS funds provided core funding for the program, non-renewal of the funding will result in the termination of the program, regardless of its enduring success.

Furthering the discussion surrounding the flexibility of funds and the approval of proposals, both focus group participants expressed the necessity for clear criteria and guidelines when evaluating proposals. Respondent #1 suggested that a federal governmental agency is a useful entity for the distribution of funds, and thus not solely under the discretion of the Steering Committee or the Project Coordinator. However, this respondent also suggested that funding and timeframes need to be more flexible. As well, better awareness and advertisement of funding opportunities need to be implemented to ensure that it is not “*the same organizations are being funded all the time.*” For Respondent #2, the time lapse for funding did not create challenges for the organization. Paperwork was submitted in a timely fashion, and funds were received in a reasonable period of time. Clear timeframes and proposal guidelines were seen as a necessary improvement for the UAS.

In terms of the overall organizational structure of the UAS, experiences and opinions were again diverse. Respondent #1 was very concerned with the overall structure of the UAS and accountability of the Steering Committee, particularly in regards to perceived preferential treatment for a select few community-based organizations. This

participant questioned the requirements and qualifications of both the Project Coordinator and the members of the Steering Committee. It was suggested that the Steering Committee must incorporate participants and facilitate funding opportunities “*outside the small circle*”, including the inclusive involvement of non-Aboriginal representation. The lack of established channels of communication was seen as a problem, which exaggerated the transparency issues. Respondent claimed that there was no advertisement for call for proposals, and “*everything was done by word of mouth.*” Furthermore, when proposals were rejected, no letter or phone call indicated rejection, or a reason for the refusal.

Contrasting the experience of Respondent #1, the only interaction between the UAS and Respondent #2 was through federal representatives at Service Canada. This respondent had no awareness or communication with the Steering Committee. The relationship between Respondent #2 and Service Canada was exceptional. Representatives from Service Canada were helpful and supportive. Respondent #2 did not recall advertisements calling for proposals. Awareness of the UAS was through the department of Service Canada.

The perceived exposure and accessibility of the UAS to the community was excellent, according to Respondent #1. From this perspective, all community-based organizations were aware of the funding available through the UAS. However, no solicitation, communication, or notification of events came directly from the UAS Steering Committee member, or the Project Coordinator. Respondent #2 only recently became aware of the UAS project through an Aboriginal source. A suggestion was that Aboriginal organizations were aware of the UAS and its mandate, and non-Aboriginal organizations were not as aware. Respondent #2 stressed the need for clear requirements, priorities, and program details of the UAS among all community-based organizations.

Focus group participants stressed the necessity for the amalgamation and partnership building between the Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities. Although the focus on building capacity of the Aboriginal community was recognized, it was suggested that the primary criteria for funding projects be for proposals that best serve a need or fill a gap in providing for the Aboriginal community. A clear statement of qualifications and requirements for the Project Coordinator position, and for members of the Steering Committee was also highlighted by focus group participants. The final point stressed by both participants was the need for better communication and a clear process of the UAS. This includes the call for proposals, established criteria, clear guidelines and a

communication strategy between the UAS and the community. Suggestions include: open Steering Committee meetings whereby meetings are accessible to the public, regular newsletters that highlight projects and successes, and building partnerships and networks to mutually support all community-based activities taking place in Saskatoon.

ii. Service Canada

The interview with Service Canada representatives began with the support role Service Canada provided to UAS funding recipients. The first respondent explained that the role of Service Canada began as a support for the Steering Committee in making decisions and provided recommendations regarding how funding should be spent. The direct mandated role of Service Canada was to flow the UAS funds. Once the Steering Committee had established its capacity and became the assessors and decision-makers in regards to the Letters of Intent and the full proposals, Service Canada provided support to funding recipients. It was Service Canada who was responsible for the signing and enforcement of Contribution Agreements, including satisfying the operations guide for grants and contributions, helping recipients understand the legality of agreements and underlying expectations, the monitoring agreements, and forging networks and linkages with other funding agencies. Respondent #1 identified the difficulty from a federal department perspective in allowing the degree of autonomy held by the Steering Committee in making decisions and establishing direction. However, it is recognized that the objective of the UAS was to enhance the capacity within the Aboriginal community. Indeed, the drawbacks to a community-based approach were seen as limited, and with the help of the lessons learned through the pilot project, a comfort zone was achieved between Service Canada and the UAS Steering Committee.

Respondent #2 highlighted the direct role and relationship Service Canada had with funding recipients in a support role to develop capacity. Service Canada worked directly with funding recipients on the “*nit picky stuff*” that the “*Steering Committee lacked the capacity to do themselves.*” According to this respondent, expectations and roles that developed between the Steering Committee and Service Canada were clear, which provided for a comfortable relationship that met the terms and conditions of the UAS mandate.

In the attempt to better understand how the roles and expectations were developed within the UAS structure, representatives were asked how the process was

formalized and what stages the project evolved through in order to develop a clear structure. Respondent #1 clarified that the roles and expectations were not formalized in any particular way, which was a difficult aspect of the relationship between the Steering Committee and Service Canada. Establishing roles and obligations was a “*growing process*”. Formal agreements were not developed. Service Canada increasingly gained respect of the leaders of the community and had “*a good comfort level that the integrity of the program would be upheld by allowing for more community control.*” The focus of the start-up phases of the pilot project was in getting funds out to the community. The final year of the UAS the Steering Committee gained ground in moving ahead with a formalized collaborative structure and strategic planning. Service Canada’s role in the project was established “*way up at the top... which many times seems totally unacceptable to the Steering Committee.*” Respondent #1 declared a pride in the leadership of the UAS in taking control and responsibility for the project; however, noted that the Project Coordinator required more administrative support so that a community liaison role can be strengthened.

The roles and expectations of the Steering Committee members and Service Canada representatives were clear to Respondent #2. A consistent structure and protocol was followed. Furthermore, the Steering Committee took initiatives to formalize the roles with Service Canada and streamline the process to make the project more efficient in the allocation of funds. This leadership initiative on behalf of the Steering Committee is compatible with the mandate of the UAS to build community capacity and as such “*Service Canada has taken, and has wanted to take a back seat in order to allow the community to develop its leadership.*” However, many of the processes and procedures were vigorous and considered necessary from a federal perspective, particularly in the allocation of funds:

proposals were required to go through many steps, including an internal review where it would be taken apart, budget negotiations where we would question every expense to make sure it was valid, reasonable, does it meet the terms and conditions, does it make sense, is it duplicating existing services, a whole bunch of things... average time could have been six weeks. At the beginning, it could have taken months.

Respondent #2 suggested that in the next round of UAS funding, a third-party agreement option could be considered where a community entity would hold contribution agree-

ments and deliver the funds to the recipients. However, *“there needs to be a formalized channel in which this process is conducted.”*

The development of a communication strategy is seen as a necessary component to link the Steering Committee with the community. Respondent #2 identified that the Steering Committee is *“already so low in capacity that it is very challenging to learn about each project.”* As a result, the Steering Committee would not learn of the details of a specific project; in turn it was unable to publicly support or advocate for the UAS funded projects. Engagement with the projects became the role of Service Canada, who thus became the official communication channel with the community. Respondent #1 reiterated that for the Steering Committee, it is a *“matter of building capacity in order to take on that greater role.”* Both Service Canada representatives agreed that communication was undeniably linked to capacity; both the *“nitty gritty stuff”*, and initiatives such as newsletters and community events, require administrative support. Respondent #1 affirmed that *“success in the transition to the next phase of the project will require this (additional support) .”*

Issues surrounding accessibility and accountability of the UAS to the community were identified as a point for discussion. Respondent #1 confirmed that the Steering Committee is indeed representative of the community and all are leaders with an interest in serving the Aboriginal community. However, a large percentage of the UAS funds have been directed towards three main Aboriginal organizations; organizations who have representatives at the table. It was suggested that this is the result of operating within a small community. The Steering Committee felt very strongly about supporting solely Aboriginal organizations and initiatives. However, the UAS has *“made huge success in terms of partnerships (with the non-Aboriginal community) in the last year.”* For the next round, Respondent #1 suggested building upon the draft Terms of Reference that have been established in the pilot stage, including standards and guidelines for Steering Committee, while pulling back on the strategic planning.

iii. Project Coordinator

The interview with the Project Coordinator allowed for the researchers to address any missing links or clear gaps that emerged as a result of the previous research. The primary issue was the formalized structure and process of the UAS, particularly in terms of calling for proposals and allocating funds. The Coordinator recapped the background of the

process, which is not formalized but in a state of continual progression in the initial stages. Furthermore, the first order of business was to “*get the money into the community*”. The first call was for full proposals that were to be submitted to Service Canada. Calls were advertised by the use of print media and through community networking. However, it became clear that many community-based organizations did not have the capacity to develop full proposals. In response, the UAS called for Letters of Intent and developed a template for adjudication by the Steering Committee (Appendix G). Letters of Intent were forwarded directly to the Project Coordinator, who would bring them to the Steering Committee. The Project Coordinator noted that using a Letter of Intent process “*tended to build on existing programs,*” allowing the UAS to contribute to capacity building in the community by assisting in the development of full proposals.

Once Letters of Intent were adjudicated by the Steering Committee, it was Service Canada’s role to communicate with the applicants. This process was not a result of a formalized process; it was “*just the way we did it because they had six employees, we have one*”... “*Service Canada took much control because of their capacity.*” As a result, the Coordinator acknowledged that the UAS did not have a direct relationship with funding recipients and raised concerns over communication issues. The lack of communication between the UAS and their community partners was seen as a result of the “*lack of human capacity*”. Service Canada was understood as a required entity for the management of contribution agreements; however, “*when the federal government sets the conditions, but without knowledge of what is needed in the community... there is a huge gap between the federal and the local.*”

The Project Coordinator viewed the UAS Steering Committee positively:

one of the strongest Steering Committees I’ve ever seen – one of the first times that we (First Nations and Métis) all sat down and adjudicated a million dollars of proposals, and volunteering their time.

However, the implementation of a collaborative model is seen as fundamental because “*we need to engage with the larger, mainstream community. Aboriginal people will never be able to make changes for Aboriginal people without the help of mainstream society. They have expertise there, too.*” Without a collaborative model, the community will “*continue to spin our wheels.*” Using a collaborative model provides for cost sharing initiatives, single reporting processes, integrative planning, and a new way of negotiating

and planning to “*meet our needs, meet the community’s needs, meet the government’s needs.*” According to the UAS Project Coordinator, a collaborative model to facilitate partnerships, combined with sufficient lead time to establish the appropriate structures, protocols and sufficient infrastructure, is needed for the UAS to succeed in the next phase.

ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION

The objective of this report is to evaluate the degree to which the UAS Saskatoon has met the federal UAS mandate and objectives to strengthen partnerships and support local initiatives and priorities to build the capacity of the local Aboriginal community. The goal is to provide recommendations that will enhance the UAS project in Saskatoon beyond the pilot stage. The findings of the questionnaires, focus group, and interviews raised several themes constant among the varied sectors of the UAS project. For these themes (each discussed in turn), recommendations are provided.

i. The Substantial Contribution of UAS Funds in Building Capacity and Strategic Planning for the Community

A general consensus suggests that funds from the UAS project have advanced both the immediate and long-term capacity among community-based organizations and the Aboriginal community in Saskatoon. Funds have been used to introduce new initiatives, sustain existing programs, contribute to management and planning efficiencies of organizations, employ Aboriginal peoples, and raise the awareness of needs in the community. Furthermore, through numerous community consultations, the UAS has been able to establish five pillar priorities for the Aboriginal community, supporting collaborative planning and direction for combined efforts. All sectors involved in the UAS discussed the provision of both direction and support for activities in the Saskatoon community as a result of UAS funds.

ii. Communication and Relationship Building among the Steering Committee, Service Canada, and the Community

Communication and relationship building resulting from the activities of the UAS in Saskatoon is a crucial theme that recurred at various levels. It is important to note the

transformation in the structure and process of the UAS throughout the pilot stage. As the necessary foundation was yet to be laid when the UAS began in Saskatoon, a reasonable period for development is required. Operating without an established structure raised many challenges in regards to communication and relationship building as the project proceeded throughout the development stages.

For community-based organizations and funding recipients, communication between them and the Steering Committee was generally poor. It was seen that the Steering Committee did not fulfill its objective to engage with the community to establish lasting relationships and partnerships. The call for proposals for funding dollars was also considered in need of improvement. The concern among the community is that the Steering Committee did not adequately notify community-based organizations of time frames and proposal requirements allowing for fair and equitable access to the funds.

The community consultations conducted by the UAS have encouraged a “bottom-up” and collaborative approach to strategic planning for the community, strengthening the involvement and collaboration from the wider community. Supporting local initiatives also supports local autonomy in the delivery of services. However, a communication strategy and protocol is considered necessary not only to provide linkages between the UAS Steering Committee and the organizations funded by UAS monies, but also to provide a network in which partnerships and support for community-based activities can occur.

The communication between funding recipients and Service Canada appeared to be exceptional. Service Canada maintained a clear communication protocol in a supportive role to funding recipients. Furthermore, communication and relationship building appeared very strong among Service Canada, the Steering Committee, and the Project Coordinator. Trustful working relationships were developed throughout the pilot phases, and federal representatives from Service Canada expressed satisfaction with the development of the federal mandate and objectives of the UAS project.

Through the leadership of the Steering Committee and the commitment of the Project Coordinator, the UAS has gained a degree of local capacity and control in the administration and management of the delivery of the UAS project to the community. However, the lack of UAS structure and capacity at the initiation of the project meant that Service Canada was called upon to provide the necessary support. While Service Canada operated with full capacity and infrastructure and the UAS struggled with low capacity

and resources, an unbalanced partnership between the parties developed. Furthermore, with Service Canada in complete control of the funds, while the UAS Steering Committee addressed political and capacity issues prevalent within its working group, the UAS became increasingly removed from developments within the community and funded community projects. Such challenges are common in pilot projects and can be surmounted as the UAS moves beyond the pilot phase, building on its accomplishments.

iii. Allocation and Delivery of Funds

Concerns about a bias in allocation and slow delivery of funds raise two key points. First, a perceived bias in the allocation of funding monies supports the need for enhanced communication and relationship building between the Steering Committee and community organizations. Second, delay in the delivery of funds calls for a clear process and protocol to be established to ensure that funding applicants are aware of the due process for the management and delivery of UAS monies. Key considerations were streamlined reporting mechanisms and formalized communication channels and processes. Furthermore, long-term and lasting financial contributions for programming and initiatives remains a consistent issue among community-based organizations.

iv. Transparency and Accountability Issues

Particularly among community-based organizations and funding recipients, transparency and accountability of the UAS Steering Committee is a major concern. This theme is linked to the development of a clear communication strategy, as well as public criteria and timelines for funding. Beyond funding recipients, there is a generally identified need for formalized terms of reference, Steering Committee member requirements, and qualifications of Project Coordinator. The strictly Aboriginal composition of the UAS is a point of contention. Particularly in regards to partnerships and collaboration, this issue must be addressed for the future success of the UAS in Saskatoon.

v. Long-Term Commitment of the UAS to the Community

There is overwhelming support to extend the work of the UAS project in Saskatoon beyond the pilot stage. A long-term commitment to the UAS initiative and funding is seen as crucial for the genuine capacity building of the Aboriginal community. Innovative initiatives have been developed to meet local needs; however, without sustained funding, initiatives may end. Furthermore, the structures that have been established, as well

as the partnerships developed during the pilot stage, need an opportunity to expand and flourish. However, the commitment of the Steering Committee is seen as pivotal for the future of the UAS in the community. On the one hand, without a revived dedication to the UAS among the entire Steering Committee, local support for the UAS could continue to erode. On the other hand, formalization of the Terms of Reference and composition of the Steering Committee—supported by a coherent and comprehensive communication plan—could contribute to future support for the UAS within the community.

vi. Partnership and Collaboration between Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal Communities and Organizations

Toward the end of the pilot phase, much ground has been made in the effort to build partnerships and collaboration between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal communities and organizations in addressing the needs of local Aboriginal peoples. The development of the *Collaborative Community Model for Aboriginal Funding and Granting* (Merasty, 2007) attempts to build and sustain relationships among all levels of governments, community organizations, and other initiatives to provide services, programs, and funding to the Aboriginal community. A component of the model is a funding and granting table that facilitates collaborating and leveraging of available resources. Although collaboration among Aboriginal groups has seen unprecedented success as a result of the UAS work in Saskatoon, the level of acceptance for the collaborative model among the wider community remains unclear. Bridging Aboriginal, non-Aboriginal, and governmental organizations is a necessary step to accomplish the federal UAS mandate to make linkages and collaborative partnerships within the local community.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE SUCCESS

Based on these themes, the following recommendations have been developed:

1. Facilitate long-term funding options through the security of the UAS as a sustained community presence

Typical of other successful pilot projects, it is premature to evaluate the full potential for the strategy to impact the community. Awareness of UAS activities, vision, and mandate, as well as of its developing administrative structure, is only beginning to

gather momentum. Guaranteeing security by implementing the UAS as a permanent and long-term project with funding opportunities available to the community will continue to build capacity in the Aboriginal community—and benefit the entire community of Saskatoon.

2. Enhance the awareness of the UAS project within the larger community including: the UAS mandate, structure, committee representatives, and funding opportunities

In order for the UAS to experience further success beyond the pilot stage, the presence of the UAS must be increased within the community. Broadened exposure will increase the number and diversity of supporting organizations, advancing the capacity of the UAS to partner and collaborate among community organizations.

3. Develop a comprehensive communication strategy

A weakness of the current UAS structure is the lack of a formalized communication strategy. In order to engage the community that the UAS intends to serve, a comprehensive communication strategy must be developed and instituted.

4. Formalize clear criteria, guidelines, deadlines, reporting mechanisms, and contact information for the funding process

The communication of formal criteria and guidelines for funding opportunities must be developed and disseminated among the broader community in order to ensure fair and equitable access to funds.

5. Ensure flexible and expeditious fund allocation

A streamlined and flexible process for funding allocation would alleviate many of the challenges of accessing funds experienced by the funding recipients. Furthermore, the processes for funding allocation need to be made clear to applicants in order to reduce confusion or distorted expectations on funding allotments.

6. Develop a formalized process, including terms of reference (eligibility criteria, term of position, availability, roles and responsibilities), steering committee requirements, project coordinator qualifications, evaluation protocol, and conflict of interest guidelines

In order for the UAS to proceed beyond the pilot stage, due processes and structures need to be formalized. Clear guidelines will support the transparency and accountability of the UAS activities.

7. Establish a local, third-party organization to manage and distribute funds

Establishing a local, third-party organization to manage UAS funds would strengthen the capacity and encourage increased responsibility of the project within the local community. Furthermore, enhanced local control of the UAS would narrow the gap in the administrative processes between the federal and local levels. However, it is seen as necessary to locate the UAS as an organization within a non-partisan location with exposure to the community.

8. Enhance capacity within the UAS structure in order to better provide services and to enhance local control in administering the UAS

The weakest component in the UAS structure and process is the lack of capacity within the organization. In order to enhance local ownership and future success of the project, increased administrative support is essential. Reducing federal representation within the operations of the project, while supplementing support at the local level, would involve the employment of a Project Coordinator, a communication or community liaison, a researcher or project development officer, and the provision of additional administrative support staff.

9. Secure commitment of support from all levels of government

Public support for the continuation of the UAS project is seen as imperative for future success. The development of collaborative agreements and the creation of sustaining partnerships require the support from all levels of government, including First Nations, Métis, federal, provincial, and local level government.

10. Refine and institute the Collaborative Planning and Granting Model in the City of Saskatoon

The first steps have been taken towards the development of a collaborative action plan to address the needs of the local Aboriginal peoples. However, the structure of each pillar, including participants and goals for each priority, need to be confirmed. Furthermore, long-term community commitment and funding support for the model must be established.

Appendix A: Letter of Introduction

*Saskatoon
Urban Aboriginal Strategy
315 Avenue F South
Saskatoon, SK S7M 1T3*

Phone: (306) 242-6197

Fax: (306) 975-9156

UAS Evaluation Questionnaire (Draft Feb 9/07)

Community University Institute for Social Research has been contracted by the UAS Steering Committee to evaluate the 32 Saskatoon Urban Aboriginal Strategy Projects. The information collected from the questionnaire below will be used to write a report for Service Canada and the UAS steering committee to improve the Urban Aboriginal Strategy.

The goal of the Urban Aboriginal Strategy is to “close the gap in life chances” between urban Aboriginal people and their non-Aboriginal counterparts. In Saskatoon, the UAS Steering Committee is responsible for facilitating this goal. This questionnaire will collect your views as a representative of the urban aboriginal community. We want to hear your thoughts on the strengths and weaknesses of the Urban Aboriginal Strategy and what can be done to make improvements.

If you have any questions please contact us at 966 2136 or at cuisr.liaison@usask.ca

Please answer the questionnaire below and return it to Maria Basualdo at cuisr.liaison@usask.ca

You are also asked to sign the consent form attached at the end of the questionnaire. Please fax it at 966 2122, or mail it to:

Community-University Institute for Social Research
432-221 Cumberland Avenue
Saskatoon SK
S7N 1M3

Appendix B: Questionnaire

1. How has the UAS helped support enhanced services to the urban Aboriginal community?
 - Can you please give us a recent example?
 - Can you tell us about strengths and weaknesses of the approach?
 - What more can the UAS steering committee do to further enhance opportunities to the community?

2. How has the UAS helped your organization in meeting their mandate through UAS Project funds?
 - Can you give us an example?
 - What would you suggest the steering committee do to better meet the needs of Aboriginal organizations through the UAS mandate?

3. How has the UAS built capacity in your organization?
 - Can you give us an example?
 - Can you give us feedback or suggestions on how UAS could better meet the needs of capacity issues faced by community organizations delivering services?

4. How has the UAS supported your organization in strategic planning?
 - Can you give us an example?
 - In what ways is this working or not working well? Example?
 - What more can the steering committee do to further help support community strategic planning?

5. The steering committee is also interested in receiving your feedback in the areas of establishing communication and building relationships.
 - a. How has the Steering Committee established communication with your organization?
 - Can you give us an example of when this worked well?
 - Can you give us a recent example of when this has not worked well?
 - How can the steering committee be more effective in communicating with the public

 - b. How has the Steering Committee built relationships with your organization?

- Can you give us a recent example?
 - Can you give us a recent example of when this has or has not worked well?
 - What can the steering committee do to build and/or improve relationships with your organization?
- c.** What or how has the reporting requirement through a Contribution Agreement affected your organization?
- Can you give us a recent example of when this worked well?
 - Can you give us a recent example of when this has not worked well?
 - How can the steering committee assist your organization in addressing the effects of reporting?
- d.** Can you determine a better way of delivering funds to project holders that will assist in meeting your needs as an organization?
- Can you give us an example?
 - How can the steering committee be more effective in delivery of UAS funds to stakeholders?
- 6.** That is all of the questions I had to ask you. Is there anything else that you would like to add?
- Anything about strengths and weaknesses of the Urban Aboriginal Strategy?
 - Do you have any more suggestions on how the UAS can be improved here in Saskatoon?

Thank you very much for taking the time to share your knowledge with us.

Appendix C: Consent Form



UNIVERSITY OF
SASKATCHEWAN

You are invited to participate in a study entitled *A Process Evaluation of the Saskatoon Urban Aboriginal Projects*. Please read this form carefully, and feel free to ask questions you might have.

Purpose and Procedure: The purpose of this evaluation is to identify strengths and limitations of the Saskatoon Urban Aboriginal Strategy Funded Projects in meeting its goals, and to provide a report outlining these along with recommendations for future improvement. This information will be obtained by sending via e-mail questionnaires to representatives from organizations that have applied for UAS funding; answer this questionnaire will take approximately 30 minutes. Your responses will be transcribed into a word document and analyzed for themes which will be summarized, in combination with the responses of the other representatives interviewed, in a final report to be submitted to Service Canada and the UAS Steering Committee.

Risks and Benefits: There are no risks to participating in this evaluation. A benefit of participating is that the information that you provide will assist the UAS Steering Committee better understand the views and needs of the Urban Aboriginal community.

Storage of Data: All data collected for this evaluation (i.e., questionnaires, consent forms, etc.) will be securely stored in a locked filing cabinet in with Community – University Institute for Social Research (CUISR). All information provided will be maintained for 5 years, after which time it will be destroyed.

Confidentiality: The data collected in this evaluation will be kept confidential with CUISR. While Service Canada and/or the UAS Steering Committee may be aware of your participation in the evaluation, they will not have access to the raw data (e.g. questionnaires, consent forms, etc.); your responses will be confidential. Although we may use direct quotations from the interview in the report, no identifying information (e.g., your name, your position, name of your organization, etc.) will be linked to those quotes. The data from this study may also be published and presented at conferences; however, your identity will remain confidential.

Right to Withdraw: Your participation is voluntary, and you may withdraw from the study for any reason, at any time, without penalty of any sort. You may also refuse to answer any individual question(s) without penalty of any sort. The funding of your organization and/or any service from Service Canada will not be affected by your participation in this evaluation. If you withdraw from the study at any time, any data that you have contributed, if possible, will be destroyed at your request.

Questions: If you have any questions concerning the study, please feel free to ask at any point; you are also free to contact CUISR at the numbers provided above if you have questions at a later time.

Consent to Participate: I have read and understood the description provided above; I have been provided with an opportunity to ask questions and my questions have been answered satisfactorily. I consent to participate in the study described above, understanding that I may withdraw this consent at any time. A copy of this consent form has been given to me for my records.

(Name of Participant)

(Date)

(Signature of Participant)

Contact Information

Maria Basualdo: Community-University Institute for Social Research
 Community Liaison Office
 Ph. (306)966-2136
 Fax (306)966-2122
 e-mail: cuisr.liaison@usask.ca

Appendix D: Focus Group Questions

Urban Aboriginal Strategy Evaluation — Focus Group Funding Recipients

Questions:

1. How has the UAS helped your organization support the Aboriginal community?
2. How do you perceive the overall organization and structure of the UAS?
3. How do you perceive the organizational structure of the Steering Committee?
(including communication, support, and relationship building)
4. How was the flexibility of funding and approval of proposals (including amount of funding, disbursement times, allocation of funds, carry forward of funds, types of proposals funded, reporting process, and support mechanisms, etc.)
5. How much exposure and accessibility did the UAS establish within the community and amongst community based organizations?

Appendix E: Service Canada Interview Questions

Urban Aboriginal Strategy Evaluation — Focus Group Service Canada

Questions:

1. Could you tell us about the Service Canada support role with recipients of UAS funding?
2. How that role was developed? Was that role formalized within the UAS guidelines? Did the Steering Committee take part on formalizing that role?
3. How did you communicate with both UAS and funding recipients? Did Service Canada liaise between the two parties? Was there a formal way of communication set?
4. How would you improve the process of communication among the three parties (Service Canada, UAS and funding recipients)?

Appendix F: Project Coordinator Questions

Urban Aboriginal Strategy Evaluation — Project Coordinator

Questions:

1. Could you tell us about the process of calling for Letters of Intent? How was that process developed?
2. What are the criteria to decide which letters are approved? How you communicate with the project recipients?
3. Is there a process set up for the Steering Committee members to discuss updates on current projects?
4. How do you know projects are fulfilling the specific UAS pilot objectives and addressing key issues for Saskatoon?
5. How well do you think the Steering Committee represents the Aboriginal Community in Saskatoon? How could the visibility of the UAS be improved in the community?

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