



Social Enterprises
Knowledgeable Economies
and Sustainable Communities

Urban Aboriginal Strategy Funding Database

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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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A Research Report

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INTRODUCTION

Operating since 2002, the Saskatoon Urban Aboriginal Strategy (UAS) was one of eight demonstration pilot projects funded by the federal government. The initial pilot projects ran from 2002 to 2007 and have been extended to 2012. The major impetus for the UAS program across the country was “to implement innovative approaches that address the needs of Aboriginal people living in key urban centers” (Merasty and Associates, 2007: 2). The Saskatoon UAS vision is “creating opportunities for Aboriginal people to participate equally with a shared vision of a better quality of life through partnerships with all levels of government and the communities of Saskatoon” (Saskatoon UAS Steering Committee, 2006: 6). These are the goals for the Saskatoon UAS:

1. Develop partnerships through collaboration with provincial and municipal governments, urban Aboriginal organizations, groups and communities in order to engage in sustainable community development;
2. Co-ordinate federal government resources across departments in the Pilot Project cities in order to focus efforts on addressing the disparity between urban Aboriginal people;
3. The ultimate objective of the Pilot Projects of the UAS is to close the gap in life chances between urban Aboriginal people and the mainstream population.

(Saskatoon UAS Steering Committee, 2006: 6)

In order to meet their vision and goals, the Saskatoon UAS has been pursuing the development of a Sustainable Collaborative Community Model. The overriding principles of the model are poverty elimination and Aboriginal capacity building. The intent of the model is to challenge the status quo to improve the socio-economic status of Saskatoon’s Aboriginal people. The model builds relationships between governments, foundations, and community to improve services and programs and address gaps in service delivery for Aboriginal people. The model builds social cohesion through the process of collaboration and co-operation.

A component of the model is a funding and granting table that facilitates collaborating, learning, and leveraging available resources. Each member of the table brings assets in terms of knowledge, visibility, credibility, and leadership. Together the partners at the table develop appropriate expectations related to outcomes and track documentation of outcomes as a tool for education and identification of new opportunities. The priority pillars for this model are: health, justice, youth, economic development, and capacity building ((for detailed information see Pillar Priorities section). In order to inform the new funding model, a database was created that highlights the current funding options under each priority pillar.

The purpose of this report is to highlight the steps that researchers at the Community-University Institute for Community Research (CUISR) undertook to create the funding database. The first section is an overview of the Saskatoon UAS. The second section is an overview of the project, its scope, and the working relationship between UAS and CUISR. The third section looks at the UAS priority pillars. The fourth section discusses the formation of the database and subsequent webpage. The final section is the conclusion.

PROJECT OVERVIEW

i. Introduction

In response to the community's demand for a more responsive and transparent process for the funding of programs geared towards Aboriginal people, the UAS Steering Committee sought to develop a comprehensive database that would compile information regarding funding sources that are available to the urban Aboriginal community. This database would provide an integrative funding mechanism to support community-driven initiatives and collaborative partnerships by coordinating the mandates and programs of several organizational bodies, including governmental departments, First Nations and Métis agencies, community-based organizations, and the non-profit sector. Through multi-sector collaboration and access to the maximum resources available to the Aboriginal community, it is hoped that the funding database will contribute to effective strategic planning to address challenges facing the urban Aboriginal community in Saskatoon.

The vision for the funding database is to support the initiatives and direction of the

proposed UAS Sustainable Collaborative Community Model. The UAS identified a collaborative funding model and granting process as the most effective and comprehensive approach for the planning and delivery of services to the urban Aboriginal community. These collaborative entities work together to establish lines of communication and coordination between community and Aboriginal organizations, who are in the position to best determine community needs, with people and agencies who can access direct funding to support a diversity of initiatives. The objectives for the collaborative body range from building a common vision and strategy to address community needs to enhancing networks and community partnerships at all levels to reduce the duplication of services and prioritize investment for community projects. Through the brokerage of resources and expertise, collaboration builds on existing structures to identify high-priority needs and services gaps for the urban Aboriginal community, while working towards efficient and responsible policy and funding directives to create the greatest impact for the urban Aboriginal community.

As a tool for the storing and management of information, the funding database identifies the mandates of funding departments and the available funding opportunities. Accessing information about available funds facilitates the leveraging and pooling of resources for a collaborative and integrated approach to the delivery of program priorities. Collectively accessing and directing resources and services can not only reduce costs and redundancy at all levels, but also match collaborative funds to facilitate the development of and investment in both capital and long-term community-based projects. Furthermore, the linking of funding organizations that have a clear commitment to Aboriginal programs and services with those working for the urban Aboriginal community ensures that Aboriginal funds are distributed and fully utilized by the Aboriginal community. A funding database to support a collaborative approach to the collection and distribution of funds represents the potential for change in the way funding policy and processes are conducted, moving towards partnerships and integrative approaches to community initiatives, and providing a lasting legacy of the Urban Aboriginal Strategy in Saskatoon (Merasty and Associates, 2007:4).

ii. Scope of Project

In consultation with the Community-University Institute for Social Research (CUISR) at the University of Saskatchewan, the UAS coordinator and researchers from CUISR

identified structures and mechanisms that have been used by other urban and funding centres as potential prototypes for the development of a collaborative funding mechanism specifically for Saskatoon. The overarching goal of this project is to identify all possible sources of funding available, specific to Aboriginal people within the city of Saskatoon. The scope of research involved identifying the funding body, type of funding opportunity, organizational mandate, funding history and criteria, program description, desired information, contact information, and including application deadlines and links to on-line application forms. Gathering data from a number of available funding sources into one “clearinghouse” of information assists in the navigation of the vast number of programs available to the Aboriginal community, while serving as a communication tool to increase the level of awareness of services available. The funding database also attempts to build capacity in the Aboriginal community by encouraging access to and use of available funding opportunities, services, and programs.

iii. Definition of Pillars

Funding information is organized by target area or “pillar” priorities. Five pillars identified through the priorities defined by multiple community consultations represent the intersecting domains of the collaborative community model: “Health”, “Economic Development”, “Capacity Building”, “Youth”, and “Justice”. A working group proposed for each pillar is made up of individuals, agencies, and government officials who work in spheres represented by that pillar. Working groups are to meet on a regular basis to coordinate services and unify goals for the community, develop new programs, consolidate funds and initiatives, and prioritize community investment. Recognizing the interconnections across pillars, a communication strategy between pillar working groups is proposed to further maximize opportunities for shared initiatives and a holistic community planning process.

CUISR researchers conducted a comprehensive research review of available funding sources for each of the established pillars. Within the database, a broad spectrum of funding agencies and programs can be searched within a specified pillar. Many funding opportunities can be cross-referenced between more than one of the pillar categories. In the database, the scope of funding sources identified for each pillar addresses the pillar priorities previously established by the UAS.

iv. Communication with UAS

Communication between the UAS and CUISR consisted of regular meetings and ongoing consultation with UAS Coordinator Dwayne Docken, CUISR liaison Maria Basualdo and academic director Isobel Findlay, along with CUISR researchers Karen Lynch and Cara Spence. Consultations were also necessary with website design artist, Penny Lee from PenTech Solutions, who worked in collaboration with the CUISR researchers to develop a web-based structure in which research could be accessed and easily navigated.

v. Conclusion

Many contemporary funding opportunities promote and focus on collaborative approaches to knowledge generation and to the framing of policy and community programming. A funding database, such as the one visualized and implemented by the UAS, is a progressive method to identify and consolidate the diverse funding opportunities that are widely accessible. The UAS funding database is specialized in that it highlights opportunities that are specific to the Aboriginal community. The consolidation of funding information allows for a broader picture of the type and amount of funds that are available, and ensures that those funds are directed towards the needs of the Aboriginal community. Moreover, generating a greater awareness of available opportunities and using a collaborative approach to planning is consistent with current trends for affecting change.

PILLAR PRIORITIES

i. Introduction

The role of each pillar committee is to develop the overall strategic plan to meet the short and long-term objectives of each pillar. This process includes, but is not limited to: reviewing programs, projects, and services currently in operation within the community; identifying the strengths and reducing the weaknesses of existing programs; identifying gaps in existing services and programs; identifying areas for joint partnership and service integration; identifying additional/potential partners or agencies that work within pillar priorities; sharing information and strategies amongst partners; seeking out further available funding options; prioritizing investment decisions; determining fund-

ing criteria for pillar objectives; and conducting regular meetings as required to meet established goals and objectives.

To assist in the operation and success of pillar committees, the funding database is anticipated to play a key role in identifying, planning, and coordinating opportunities that build community capacity. Used as an important tool, the database identifies not only potential funding opportunities offered through various federal, provincial, municipal, and non-governmental agencies but also—as potential committee members for the various pillars—many funding agencies with specific mandates to serve the Aboriginal community. In short, reviewing available funding and collaborative opportunities identified via the funding database allows pillar committees to access funding opportunities and potential partners to meet the objectives and priorities of the pillars.

ii. Health Pillar

In general, collaborators engaged in the Health Pillar work together to promote the development of careers for Aboriginal people in the health sector, the integration of holistic concepts of healthy lifestyles, reduction of obesity in the Aboriginal community, the expansion of career choices and parenting resources available to the Aboriginal community, and the development of a wellness centre in Saskatoon. Specifically, the established priorities for the Health Pillar include:

- Increased access for mental health services, specifically for FAS/FAE
- Increased support for families raising children
- Teen pregnancy reduction
- Reduced addictions
- Sharing of information, resources, and research
- Increased Diabetes Initiatives
- Partnerships with Aboriginal organizations, community organizations, and health agencies to encourage health lifestyles to reduce life-threatening diseases.

Collaborators identified to represent the working committee for the Health Pillar include: the Department of Health, Saskatoon Health Region, Saskatchewan Indian and Gaming Authority, Personal Care Homes, Occupational Health and Safety, Department of Indian and Northern Development, Department of First Nations and Inuit Health,

Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation, Status of Women, Métis Addiction Council of Saskatchewan Inc., Health Canada, Saskatoon Food Bank Inc. and Learning Centre, SaskNative Rentals, Cress Housing, SaskHousing, and the Westside Community Clinic.

iii. Justice Pillar

The working group for the Justice Pillar seeks the meaningful involvement and increased authority of the Aboriginal community within the Canadian justice system. Objectives of this pillar include:

- Promoting cultural understanding and support, including the broader incorporation of healing circles and alternative sentencing
- Increasing understanding of and education about the justice system among the Aboriginal community
- Addressing language barriers
- Enhancing awareness of and reducing racism within the justice system
- Ensuring consistent service evaluations, moving towards legal policy changes
- Reducing the exploitation and abuse of Aboriginal women and children,
- Focusing on proactive programs such as life skills, inclusive youth activities, healthy lifestyles, parenting, and career choices, and role model programs.

Agencies represented by the Justice Pillar include: Community Resources and Employment, Métis Family and Community Justice Services, Friendship Inn, Salvation Army, Anti-Poverty Coalition, Department of Heritage Canada and Human Rights, Legal Aid Commission, Saskatchewan Children's Advocate Office, and Native Law Centre of Canada at the University of Saskatchewan.

iv. Youth Pillar

The working committee for the Youth Pillar seeks to support good programs for youth, including increased access to cultural and outdoor programs and programs that assist youth in enhancing self-esteem and cultural identity. Priorities for this pillar also include supporting programs for parenting and intergenerational awareness, youth forums, role model programs, family-orientated activities, and addressing the gap between youth and their parents. Sport, cultural, and artistic activities are also emphasized in this pillar as

well as advancing partnership opportunities between Aboriginal youth and government, crown corporations, business, and educational institutions to increase the presence of Aboriginal youth in educational programs and the workforce. Collaborators within the Youth Pillar foresee a partnership strategy with the Saskatoon Health Region to address the growing concern over drug and alcohol dependency among Aboriginal youth, as well as a strategy to reduce the recruitment of Aboriginal youth into street gangs.

The defined objectives for the Youth Pillar are:

- Create and/or enhance accessible, appropriate, and affordable opportunities for youth to engage in healthy activities
- Create grassroots, youth-driven initiatives that promote youth ownership in wellness and healing, economic development, social action
- Support leadership and mentorship development opportunities for youth by youth
- Commit to genuinely engaging youth in activities and initiatives tailored to youth
- Support systemic and institutional changes to remove disincentives for youth
- Increase opportunities in sports, culture, and recreational programming.

Funders and collaborators of the Youth Pillar include: Department of Indian and Northern Development, Canadian Heritage, Department of Learning, White Buffalo Youth Lodge, Saskatchewan Indian Institute of Technologies, University of Saskatchewan, Saskatchewan Urban Native Teachers Education Program, Indian Teacher Education Program, First Nations University of Canada, Gabriel Dumont Institute, Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology, Osk-yak (formerly Joe Duquette) High School, Inner-city schools, Department of Justice, apprenticeship programs, Teen and Young Parent Program, Student Financial Assistance, CanSask Employment, Saskatchewan Children's Advocate Office, and SaskSport Inc.

v. Economic Development Pillar

Above all, the Economic Development Pillar seeks to reduce the unemployment level within the Aboriginal community, and increase the number of Aboriginal-owned businesses. Initiatives include: increasing the focus on labour force participation and individual capacity through basic upgrading, training, and apprenticeships; increasing

provision of capital and grants for Aboriginal business start-up; establishing Economic Development Offices to assist Aboriginal people in economic and business development ventures including business plan development, researching available resources, and assisting in funding applications; setting up community co-operatives for economic development; ensuring financial equity, and developing a comprehensive directory to increase networks connecting existing Aboriginal business and organizations across the city of Saskatoon.

The objectives of the Economic Development Pillar are:

- Increased labour force participation of urban Aboriginal residents, with a focus on individual capacity
- Increased numbers in training and apprenticeship programs, including an increase in job retention
- Wealth creation in core neighbourhoods, involving income levels, homeownership, and tax initiatives
- Advancement of Aboriginal self-employment and business development
- Linkages between level of governments, crown corporations, and the private sector for business formation, job creation, and self-employment.

The working group for the Economic Development Pillar includes: Investment Saskatchewan, Small Business Loans Association, Saskatchewan Made Program, Clarence Campeau Development Fund, Saskatchewan Indian Equity Foundation, First Nations Bank, Saskatoon Regional Economic Development Authority, Western Economic Diversification, Government Relations and Aboriginal Affairs, Department of Industry and Resources, Saskatoon Urban Development, Gabriel Dumont Institute, Saskatchewan Institute of Applied Science and Technology, Métis and Employment Training Saskatchewan Inc., Tourism Saskatoon, Department of Learning, Department of Labour, Crown Corporations, Saskatchewan Training Opportunities, Saskatchewan Heritage Foundation, Saskatchewan Arts Board, Department of Indian and Northern Development, Canadian Heritage, Aboriginal Business Canada, Service Canada, Scotiabank, Royal Bank, CIBC, and Peace Hills Trust.

vi. Capacity Building Pillar

The goal of the Capacity Building Pillar is to increase the capacity of Aboriginal service delivery organizations. Capacity issues within the Aboriginal organizations and the

broader community are far-reaching, ranging from administrative and economic to support to increased human and social capital. Communication strategies are of particular importance to the Aboriginal community to increase awareness of and encourage the use of available services. The sustainability of many Aboriginal organizations depends on the provision of basic infrastructure, staff professional development, organizational structure, leadership, mentorship, partnership, and volunteerism. The key objectives of this pillar include:

- Develop and deliver communication strategies
- Develop and deliver organizational sustainability models
- Develop and deliver increased programs and services to meet the growing needs of the Aboriginal community
- Develop and deliver enhanced partnership building models
- Develop and deliver strong evaluation models
- Assist with developing organizational board structures and staff professional development
- Continue to assist with developing competent and capable Aboriginal organizations.

Organizations representing a working group for the Capacity Building Pillar include: the Salvation Army, Building Independence-Investing in Families program, Family Support Agencies, The Saskatoon Food Bank Inc. and Learning Centre, Indian and Métis Friendship Centre, Saskatchewan Assistance Plan, Universal and Child Benefit Program, The Abilities Council, SaskNative Rentals, Cress Housing, SaskHousing, The Banff Centre, and the Saskatoon Foundation.

vii. Conclusion

The research on various programs and funding opportunities available to the Aboriginal community of Saskatoon identifies not only the vast amount of monies that can be accessed, but also the diversity and range of agencies working with parallel and complementary mandates. Identifying prominent themes with focused objectives, such as the pillar priorities of the UAS, is an effective means to direct services and to merge resources. The support of collaborative working groups on community initiatives and policy directives creates a progressive environment in which the needs of the urban Aboriginal community in Saskatoon can be more fully realized.

The consolidation of information into a database also works to identify gaps in funding initiatives. A significant finding in the development of the UAS funding database was the clear under-representation of funding opportunities in the Capacity Building Pillar. This finding identifies an obvious gap in programming options for Aboriginal organizations. As well, initiatives within the Justice Pillar are clearly lacking when compared to opportunities for other pillars.

As with the development of any comprehensive database, data entry is a continuous process. What has been developed for the UAS by the CUISR researchers is a strong foundation upon which to build a comprehensive database. However, the success of the database will be determined by a number of factors. Most importantly, a vision and resources for the sustainability and updating of the database is necessary. Further, using the database to meet the objectives represented by the five pillars depends upon the degree of awareness, support, and use of the database by community stakeholders.

WEBPAGE

i. Introduction

We based the funding webpage on the Community Futures website (<http://www.communityfutures.com>). The researchers at CUISR brought this model to a meeting with the UAS and all agreed to model our webpage on the layout of the Community Futures website. The Community Futures model was chosen over the other websites because it was user-friendly and provided a comprehensive overview of funding possibilities. We also agreed to track traffic on the site by attaching a counter to each section of the webpage.

Once the information was gathered on the organizations that fund Aboriginal programs, the data was entered into an Access database created by Penny Lee from Pen-Tech Solutions (Penny Lee and her employees designed the funding models webpage on the Saskatoon UAS website). The information transferred into the database included:

- Name of organization
- Website of organization
- The type of organization (Federal, Provincial, Municipal, and Other)

- The type of funding (Grant, Loan, Scholarship, Bursary, and Other)
- The amount of funding (if available)
- The title of the funding program
- Live links to funding program applications
- Contact information
- Funding deadlines
- Other information (past projects funded, eligibility for funding, and other important information)
- Date of the entry

The content of the webpage is designed to inform organizations looking for funding for their programming for Aboriginal people in Saskatoon. The Funders listed on the webpage were current as of March 2007.

ii. Purpose of the Funding Database Webpage

In order to inform community-based organizations concerning the amount of funding available, the webpage offers an overview of the funding dollars and programs that are available for organizations in Saskatoon. The type of Funder listed on the webpage was informed by the pillar priorities. The strength of the webpage is that funding information is accessible, integrated, and concise, which enables the individuals and organizations to become informed about the wide range of funding opportunities available to them.

iii. Limitations of the Funding Database Webpage

Even though the webpage is a powerful tool, there are limitations to its use. First, organizations should double-check with the funding body to ensure that the program(s) found on the website are still providing funding. Second, although the researchers at CUISR undertook a comprehensive review of Funders, the webpage needs to be tested by various Stakeholders to ensure that no funding bodies or programs have been overlooked. Third, the webpage needs to be tested for user-friendliness to ensure that community members can successfully navigate the webpages and gather the information that they need. Finally, funding programs and initiatives undergo periodic change; thus the database and webpage needs to be periodically updated.

iv. Conclusion

The Funding webpage offers community members a means to search for secure funding for their programming. Once community-based organizations learn of the tool, it should help Aboriginal people living in Saskatoon. Although there are limitations associated with the webpage, if used properly, the webpage is a powerful tool to help effect change in Saskatoon

CONCLUSIONS

This project had two goals: first, to identify all possible sources of funding available, specific to Aboriginal people within the City of Saskatoon; second, to transfer the funding resources into a database that would be converted by a third party (PenTech Solutions) into a searchable webpage.

The first goal was completed via web-based searches. The data gathered was based on the information posted on the organizations' websites. In some cases, organizations were contacted directly to clarify information on their websites. The majority of the funding resources are government-based departments and organizations.

The second goal entailed transferring the compiled research into an Access database that was in turn used by PenTech Solutions to create the webpage, now accessible on the UAS website at <http://www.saskatoonuas.org/Fundorgs.php>.

The project goals and outcomes fit with the UAS Saskatoon vision for a collaborative funding and granting model. The data collected informs the amount of funding and granting resources that are available for organizations who deliver programming for Aboriginal people living in Saskatoon.

Contingent upon a sustainability model with periodical updating, the funding database has the potential to become an important tool for community-based organizations and policy makers to direct change in Saskatoon.

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Regional Partner Organizations



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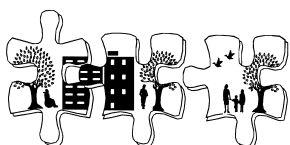


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