

Formative Evaluation of the Global Centre for Pluralism

**Prepared for The Global Centre for
Pluralism
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Final Report



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List of Abbreviations and Acronyms

Aga Khan - His Highness Prince Aga Khan, the 49th Imam of the Shia Imami Ismaili Muslims

AKDN – Aga Khan Development Network

AKFC – Aga Khan Foundation Canada

AUCC – Association of Universities and Colleges Canada

Board – Board of Directors

Centre - Global Centre for Pluralism

CP – Corporate Plan

Directors – individual on the Board of Directors

FA – Funding agreement

The Fund – Endowment fund

GCP – Global Centre for Pluralism

GoC – Government of Canada

HR – Human resources

IDRC – International Development Research Centre

ICT – Information and communications technology

IT – Information technology

KPMB - Kuwabara Payne McKenna Blumberg

The Imam - His Highness Prince Aga Khan, the 49th Imam of the Shia Imami Ismaili Muslims

IMC – Investment Management Committee

Members – Members of the Corporation

NCC - National Capital Commission

NGO – Non-governmental organization

SG – Secretary General

SIP - Statement of Investment Policy

SSP - Statement of Spending Policy

Standing committees – Executive, Audit and Investment Management committees

Sub-committees - Executive, Audit and Investment Management committees

TOR – Terms of Reference

Executive Summary

The Global Centre for Pluralism (the Centre) is an initiative of His Highness the Aga Khan in partnership with the Government of Canada. The Centre received letters patent in March 2004 and in October 2006, a funding agreement (FA) was signed with the Government of Canada. Under the FA, the Government of Canada provided a grant of \$30 million and His Highness the Aga Khan, through the Aga Khan Development Network (AKDN), provided \$10 million to constitute a joint endowment fund of \$40 million. In addition, His Highness agreed to spend at least \$20 million renovating the former Canadian War Museum as the Centre's international headquarters.

The mission of the Centre is to advance global understanding of pluralism as an ethic of respect that values diversity as a public good and enables every person – irrespective of ethno-cultural differences – to realize his or her full potential as a citizen. The objectives identified in the FA are to: foster international dialogue; support academic and professional development; provide advisory services; and support research and learning.

The FA requires both an evaluation of the Centre's success in achieving the outcomes identified in the agreement and a performance (value-for-money) audit of economy, efficiency and effectiveness to be conducted by an independent, third-party every five years. In consultation with Citizenship and Immigration Canada, it was agreed to combine the evaluation and the audit for the Centre's formative phase (first five years).

This report presents the results of a formative evaluation of the Centre. It reviews the steps taken to operationalize the Centre in order to assess whether it is adequately prepared to move forward towards achieving its identified objectives. The evaluation looked at progress in the initial five year period (2007-2011) in eight areas: strategic planning, governance, investment management, programs and activities, facilities, human resources, management and administration and accountability.

Prior to commencing the evaluation, a matrix outlining the evaluation issues, questions, indicators and methodologies was developed and approved by the Centre. The evaluation findings are based on document review and interviews with key stakeholders to help ensure the validity of information and data collected.

Strategic Planning

The evaluation found that the process of developing the Centre's strategic plan has been lengthy, for the most part intentionally, to allow for sufficient thinking about this complex and unusual undertaking. The Centre's short term outcomes have focussed on start-up; the medium term outcomes will be elaborated in the 2013-15 Plan, expected to receive approval at the October 2012 Board meeting; and the long term outcomes are identified in the FA and reiterated in the Centre's mission statement. The Centre is now well-positioned to begin implementation of program/projects within the next year.

The Centre's mission statement and strategic plan are generally aligned with the FA but, at least in the short term, advice giving has been replaced by knowledge exchange which may be more appropriate in the context of pluralism and certainly in the Centre's early life as it develops expertise.

GCP has a good understanding of its stakeholders (founders), potential partners (academics, think tanks, NGOs, international agencies, others working in the field) and audiences (academics, civil society organizations, alternative and emerging leaders, journalists, governments).

Governance

While the process of setting up the governance has taken some time, the structure has been established in accordance with the foundation documents. The Members of the Corporation, the body that appoints the Board of Directors among other responsibilities, first met in November 2007. The Board was appointed in May 2010 and convened in October, at which time they established the three mandated sub-committees, the Executive, Audit and Investment Management (IMC) committees. The Secretary General (SG), while not identified in the FA or By-Law, is a key resource in governing the Centre; he took office in September 2011. Delays in establishing the governance structure were largely due to a decision to proceed sequentially with institutional development and the requirement for extensive consultation.

Although there has been some evolution in roles and responsibilities of the governing bodies as the needs of the Centre have changed, the Members, Board and Board sub-committees are operating well and in accordance with expectations. With the establishment of the Board, the Members have been able to step back from stewardship to the oversight role set out in the By-Law. Having set up the tools and procedures for investing and managing the Fund, the IMC will assume a review and oversight role. The Executive Committee, initially focused on recruiting the SG, has assumed its role of acting as a bridge between the Board and the Centre between meetings and as a sounding board for the SG.

Investment Management

Once established the IMC moved quickly to develop the policies and tools and recruit the professional advisors required by the FA to prudently invest and manage the Fund. The Statement of Investment Policy (SIP), Statement of Spending Policy (SSP) and the investment advisor were approved by the Board in November 2011. In 2012 the Investment Strategy was approved (by the IMC) and an investment custodian and a portfolio manager were approved by the Board. The Fund is expected to be fully invested in the market by the beginning of September 2012 and the IMC is poised to receive and review the first report in October.

The SIP and the SSP are the primary tools to preserve capital over the long term. Together, they aim to preserve and grow the real value of the assets while maintaining stable support for operations. A conservative investment and spending philosophy, followed by the Members and the Board, is fundamental to preserving capital. The Centre's budgets, including the 2012 budget, have been set to allow the Centre to "live within its means", drawing conservatively

from revenue generated by the Fund. As the Fund moves out of short term investments in cash equivalents and into the market, the Board has approved a 50/50 equity/fixed income split. There is widespread agreement that the revenue currently generated by the Fund will not be adequate to address growing operational requirements and this issue will need to be addressed in the near term. The Executive Committee has been tasked with exploring funding issues.

Programs and Activities

Most of the Centre's activities to date have been related to research and learning although some initial work has also been undertaken in support of international dialogue and to a lesser degree academic and professional development. Some of the key activities have included a book launch for Adrienne Clarkson's Room for All of Us in 2011, the 2011 ambassadors' working dinner, the 2012 ambassadors' roundtable, and the launch of the Pluralism Forum and Annual Pluralism Lecture series in 2012. Earlier activities include research papers, the 2008 Canadian pluralism roundtable and the Kenya initiative.

The Centre is not yet well known but is conscious of the importance and challenge of identifying and engaging stakeholders in the developing world and is starting to generate awareness both in Canada and abroad through consultations, its website and the events it has hosted.

The Board has been highly engaged in strategic and program planning due to Board members' interest in the topic and the Centre. Once the 2013-15 Plan is approved, it is expected that the Board will step back a bit and take on an oversight role (See section 3.4.4 for the full discussion).

Communications technology is a key tool in the Centre's programming and essential for achieving global reach. While there is no firm strategy or detailed plan yet, a technology study has been conducted and expertise is being sought in the short term. Progress on a communications strategy and technology plan is expected once the 2013-15 Plan is approved.

Facilities

In examining the progress that has been made in setting up a permanent institutional facility, the evaluation found that the pace of building redevelopment has been determined by adopting a joint precinct planning approach with neighbouring institutions to achieve broader public ends. There have been several iterations of the building design brief; however, the renovation plan and a cost estimate remains to be finalized pending Board approval of the strategic plan. While a date for completion of building renovations remains to be set, occupancy is expected by 2016.

Human Resources

The Centre's strategy of using core staff, multi-tasking, contracting and support from AKFC has served it well allowing it to conserve resources and access leading edge expertise. With the near-term addition of program and public affairs/communications capacity, the current strategy will permit the Centre to implement its 2013-15 Plan. Further additions to staff will be needed in the longer term as programming expands and to partially or fully replace AKFC services. However, expansion of the core staff will depend on the Centre's success in increasing its funding/resource base.

Management and Administration

The Centre has been well served by the AKFC from which it receives support for management functions such as finance, human resources, information technology and communications. In the short term the Centre has what it needs but management support requirements are likely to change as programming develops and with the move to the new headquarters. Once these support requirements can be more clearly specified, the Centre will be able to explore the options for acquiring them through a "make" or "buy" analysis.

Accountability

The evaluation examined accountability from several perspectives, both organizational and individual. The achievement of short-term outcomes identified in the Corporate Plans and reported in the Annual Reports has been gradual, although progress accelerated once the Board of Directors and the SG assumed office, thereby operationalizing the Centre. At the time of the evaluation three (3) outcomes had been achieved and three (3) were ongoing. By 2011 the Centre's stewardship had been activated, the executive team was in place and the Centre was operating from its temporary office. A fourth outcome, the development of a strategic plan has progressed to the stage where approval of a three-year plan for 2013-15 is expected at the next Board meeting in October 2012.

Accountability mechanisms for the Board, SG and staff are at an early stage of development. The Board has used an "in camera" informal self-evaluation process following its meeting in May 2012, while the committees are held accountable through the process of reporting to the Board. A performance review for the SG will be undertaken by the Executive Committee and the Board using the objectives of the Centre. Performance reviews for staff members will be conducted using an AKDN process when they reach their one-year anniversary.

While the Annual Reports and Corporate Plans have been used by the Centre to address performance monitoring and risk assessment, implementation of a formal performance monitoring and a risk assessment strategy will follow the approval of the program strategy and the identification of the specific activities.

Business Model

The Centre has reviewed the business models of peer organizations and identified lessons learned such as building core programming around knowledge dissemination and exchange and capacity building; finding “invitation points” for projects and programs; operating globally through locally engaged project leaders; seeking partnerships especially with civil society organizations; augmenting revenue from its endowment through project funding; and using partnerships to become better known, find project funding and build a sound reputation.

Conclusions

Based upon the progress the Centre has made in strategic planning, governance, investment management, programs and activities, facilities, human resources, management and administration and accountability, it is well positioned to achieve its objectives.