BC-Alberta Social Economy Research Alliance (BALTA)

Terms of Reference for BALTA Participants

Policy Synopsis

The roles and expectations of the various types of BALTA participant and structure are explained, including: Principal Investigator; Co-Investigator; Participant Collaborator; Advisory Collaborator; Student; Staff; SERC (Social Economy Research Cluster); and SERC Co-Chair. Terms of reference for other structures, the Steering Committee and Advisory Council, are contained in separate documents.

Preamble – The Context

The principal funding for the BALTA Research Alliance is provided by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. BALTA is evolving a structure, with associated roles and responsibilities, that addresses BALTA's needs as well as SSHRC's requirements. This structure consists of six types of participant and three principal types of sub-structure.

Types of Participant:
- Lead Applicant and Principal Investigator
- Co-Investigator
- Participant Collaborator
- Advisory Collaborator
- Student
- Staff

Types of Sub-Structure:
- Social Economy Research Cluster (SERC)
  - SERC 1 – Social Enterprise in Human Services and Affordable Housing
  - SERC 2 – The Social Economy in Rural Revitalization and Development
  - SERC 3 – Analysis, Evaluation and Infrastructure Development
- Advisory Council
- Steering Committee

Terms of reference for the Advisory Council and the BALTA Steering Committee are in separate documents. Terms of reference for the six types of participant and for the SERCs, as well as the SERC co-chairs are detailed below.

SSHRC views all collaborators as essentially arms-length advisors and does not distinguish between different types of collaborator. However, BALTA sees substantial value in a class of collaborator that plays a more direct and ongoing role within BALTA, participating actively within the SERCs and contributing to the ongoing shaping of BALTA's research priorities and approaches, while not necessarily taking on the substantial direct research/management role of a Co-

Investigator. This group of Participant Collaborators is at present the single largest group of participants within BALTA, though over time the number of Co-Investigators will increase significantly, including through the shift of some Participant Collaborators to Co-Investigators.

There is also a more informal structure that is beginning to evolve within part of BALTA, a regional caucus of BALTA members within a region/province. Currently existing only in Alberta, this group meets occasionally to discuss BALTA matters from a regional perspective and considers how to develop and strengthen the BALTA network and BALTA's research agenda within the region. At this point, this structure has no formal organization, defined mandate or terms of reference, though this could change if appropriate at some future point. Nonetheless it should be recognized as an emerging entity, albeit informal.

Terms of Reference for Lead Applicant & Principal Investigator

The Lead Applicant (Mike Lewis) and his organization, the Canadian Centre for Community Renewal, submitted the proposal for BALTA to the Social Sciences & Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC) and Mike Lewis was approved by SSHRC as the Lead Applicant & Principal Investigator and recipient of SSHRC funding to implement the BALTA Research Alliance project. Under SSHRC's policies and the terms of funding, SSHRC ultimately holds the Principal Investigator solely and legally responsible for BALTA and all aspects of its operations/finances. In SSHRC's view, the Principal Investigator can delegate specific responsibilities to other BALTA participants and structures, but SSHRC still insists that the Principal Investigator personally approve and sign off on all BALTA decisions and actions. It also holds the Principal Investigator personally responsible for all decisions made.

In practice, the Principal Investigator has chosen to share significant responsibility and decision making authority with other participants in BALTA, especially the Steering Committee. Working with the Steering Committee, the Principal Investigator provides leadership and strategic direction to the BALTA research framework and operational policies. He also serves ex officio on other SERCs and the BALTA Advisory Council.

While the Principal Investigator is committed to sharing responsibility and decision making authority, it needs to be recognized that the Lead Applicant, under the terms of SSHRC's funding, has final say on BALTA decisions and can veto or refuse to implement any decision that, in his opinion, would present a risk to himself or CCCR. The Principal Investigator agrees to not exercise this authority lightly or arbitrarily.

The Principal Investigator also manages the operations of BALTA and supervises the BALTA Coordinator (staff).

Terms of Reference for Co-Investigators

Co-Investigators (also known by SSHRC as co-applicants) are BALTA members who play a substantial role, over an extended period of time, in implementing and/or managing the BALTA Research Alliance and/or specific BALTA research activities. Co-Investigators can be both academics and practitioners. Co-Investigators will play a substantial role in at least one of the following areas of responsibility, often in several areas at the same time:

> ➢ Serving as a member of the Steering Committee and/or as co-chair of a SERC;
> ➢ Leading and facilitating/managing a specific research area or program under BALTA's auspices;
> ➢ Leading or playing a substantial direct role in implementing one or more research projects/initiatives of significant duration;
> ➢ Directly supervising students involved in research projects/activities of significant duration.

Co-Investigators can receive SSHRC financial support for research activities as well as for travel expenses to attend BALTA meetings, though the level of support is limited by the modest financial resources available to BALTA. Co-Investigators will in many cases play a role in bringing additional resources (of various types) to BALTA and/or in assisting BALTA to fundraise or secure additional resources.

A Co-Investigator may, at some stages, take a less active role in BALTA and still retain Co-Investigator status as long as s/he remains committed to the possibility of resuming a more active role at some future point in BALTA's activities.

Terms of Reference for Participant Collaborators

Participant Collaborators play an active and ongoing role within BALTA and a specific SERC. Working with other SERC members they help set priorities and design annual plans as well as monitor research projects and participate in synthesis of research results. Through the BALTA Annual Forum, they also participate in designing BALTA's overall research priorities and cross-cutting projects and activities. Participant Collaborators participate actively and regularly in meetings of the SERC. They include both academics and practitioners and perform a critical role in ensuring broad practitioner and academic input into BALTA's research agenda and programs.

Participant Collaborators are not expected to necessarily be directly involved in implementing specific research initiatives, though this may happen in some cases at the discretion of the individual collaborator. Where Participant Collaborators agree to take on a more substantial research role, a shift in their status to Co-Investigator will be considered by the Steering Committee and the Lead Applicant, although it is not a pre-requisite.

Participant Collaborators can receive SSHRC financial support to attend BALTA meetings, but cannot receive financial support for research activities.

A Participant Collaborator may, at some stages, take a less active role in BALTA and still retain collaborator status as long as s/he remains committed to the possibility of resuming a more active role at some future point.

Terms of Reference for Advisory Collaborators

Like Participant Collaborators, Advisory Collaborators are members of a specific SERC and play a role in contributing to the shaping of the SERC's research. However, Advisory Collaborators do not necessarily participate actively and regularly in the meetings and work of the SERCs. They are people with significant experience of relevance to BALTA's work and are available, on an occasional basis, to provide advice and input to BALTA's planning. They may also play a role in helping BALTA to synthesize and disseminate the results of BALTA's research. Advisory Collaborators can include a mix of academics and practitioners.

Advisory Collaborators can receive SSHRC financial support to attend BALTA meetings, if and when relevant, but cannot receive financial support for research activities.

Terms of Reference for Students

Students are viewed by SSHRC as learners who become involved in the project and specific research activities, assisting co-investigators to implement the research, in order to further their education and enhance their research skills. BALTA views students in a similar light, but also as a valued resource in enabling BALTA to implement specific research projects/initiatives. Students will generally become involved with BALTA in a time limited capacity through engagement with a specific research project. In a few cases, students may participate in BALTA on a longer term, more integrated basis, and can in some cases become active on an ongoing basis within a SERC. There is also provision for one student representative to be appointed to the BALTA Advisory Council.

Students involved in a BALTA project can receive financial assistance for research activities and for travel expenses to attend relevant BALTA meetings.

See BALTA's Student Recruitment and Management Policies and Procedures for further guidance on the role of students within BALTA and BALTA research projects.

Terms of Reference for Staff

Staff perform a support role in BALTA, performing various administrative, facilitation, coordination and management support roles. Their role is not to implement research, but to facilitate and enable such research through the support roles they play. Staff include one full time coordinator and two part time staff, a financial administrator and a support position which has varied in function

over the course of BALTA. Specific roles and responsibilities of staff are detailed in the job descriptions for each position.

Since 2009, a student has also been employed in a para-staff role as Student Program Coordinator.

Terms of Reference for Research Clusters (SERCs)

The SERCs play a strategic role in directing, planning, implementing and evaluating BALTA's research agenda, programs and specific projects/activities. SERCs will also play a key role in synthesizing and disseminating research results. While this role is governed by the BALTA research framework set out by the Steering Committee and the Principal Investigator, each SERC will have a specific, albeit broad, research mandate and will itself determine specific research foci and priorities. These will be integrated into an annual plan. Input from the Steering Committee and the BALTA Annual Forum will be considered by SERCs as they undertake their work. Once plans are approved, each SERC will approve specific research projects and activities, allocate their budget, monitor progress and evaluate results. Each SERC is responsible to ensure, with support from assigned staff, that supervision of students is responsibly structured and executed. In some instances, specific SERC members will assume responsibility for the implementation of research projects/activities and supervision of students involved in those projects.

The approval of annual plans by the Steering Committee is to ensure coherence of research plans with BALTA's strategic research mandate, aims and priorities (see BALTA's Policy on Development and Approval of SERC Workplans for further information). Ratification will include approval of specific resources for the SERCs work. Once workplans are approved, SERCs will have reasonably wide discretion and authority to implement specific research plans without seeking further Steering Committee approval, although adherence to relevant policies is required.

Each SERC includes a mixture of participants, both academic and practitioner. The aim is to have a balance, an objective that may need attention over the balance of year one and into year two. It also includes a mix of co-investigators, participant collaborators and advisory collaborators. SERCs may identify needs for additional SERC members and can propose specific additional members to the Steering Committee who, along with the Principal Investigator, may also suggest additions. Most new SERC members will be added, at least initially, as collaborators, but they can be added as co-investigators where appropriate. See BALTA's Policy on Addition and Removal of SERC Members for further information.

Three SERCs have been established as follows. Further SERCs could be established, but only with approval of the Steering Committee and the Principal Investigator. Such a decision will not be taken lightly given BALTA's limited and already overstretched resources.

SERC 1 – Social Enterprise in Human Services and Affordable Housing

SERC 2 – The Social Economy in Rural Revitalization and Development

SERC 3 – Analysis, Evaluation and Infrastructure Development

Terms of Reference for SERC Co-Chairs

Each SERC will have two co-chairs, who are responsible for leading the SERC, facilitating the work of the SERC and chairing SERC meetings. Co-Chairs will play a key role in ensuring adequate and appropriate representation on the SERC to achieve the SERCs mandate and will be responsible for submitting to the Steering Committee proposals for additions and removals from the SERC's membership, as well as changes in the status of SERC members from collaborator to co-investigator.

With the support of appropriate BALTA staff, the co-chairs will be responsible for scheduling SERC meetings, preparing agendas, ensuring preparation of any advance documentation and minutes of meetings, and ensuring appropriate follow-up to meetings.

The co-chairs will also play a key role, with staff support, in ensuring the effective monitoring, evaluation, reporting and dissemination of research activities and results initiated under the auspices of that SERC.

Approved January 3, 2007
Updated June 2010