

BC-Alberta Social Economy Research Alliance (BALTA)

Policy on Addition and Removal of Co-Investigators

Policy Synopsis

The role of co-investigators, as perceived by both BALTA and SSHRC, and the rationale for gradually increasing the number of co-investigators within BALTA are explained. The process for nominating and appointing co-investigators is explained, as well as the criteria for considering appointments. The policy also includes the grounds and process for removal of a co-investigator.

Preamble – The Context for Adding Co-Investigators within BALTA

The principal funding for the BALTA Research Alliance is provided by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada. SSHRC's policies recognize three categories of personnel that can be involved in the funded research project and which are eligible for receipt of specific categories of SSHRC financial support:

- Co-Investigators (also known by SSHRC as co-applicants) – These are viewed by SSHRC as those people actively involved in implementing the project's research activities. Co-Investigators can receive SSHRC financial support to pay someone to replace them if they engage in BALTA related research work (though this is limited in practice by budget constraints). They can also receive SSHRC financial support for travel expenses to attend BALTA meetings or to support other aspects of their engagement in supporting the research program.
- Collaborators – These are viewed by SSHRC as largely arms length advisors to the project, people whose expertise is of assistance in some respect to the project but who do not take an active role in the project and its research activities. Collaborators can receive SSHRC financial support to attend BALTA meetings but cannot receive financial support for research activities.
- Students – These 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. Students involved in the project can receive financial assistance for research activities and for travel expenses to attend BALTA meetings.

BALTA has evolved to date with a somewhat different understanding of the nature and roles of co-investigators and collaborators. Some collaborators in the SERCs conform to the SSHRC definition of arms-length advisors to the project and will only occasionally, as relevant, be involved directly in BALTA meetings and/or activities. But other SERC member collaborators were conceived with a more engaged role in mind as active SERC participants involved in developing and shaping BALTA's research agenda and activities, though not necessarily directly involved in implementing specific research initiatives (though this was seen as possible in some cases). Co-investigators were seen as a small group of lead investigators who would steer the BALTA research alliance.

It has become necessary to shift BALTA's structure to more closely conform to SSHRC's expectations for two principal reasons:

1. It has become clear that we need to identify and support a greater number of people to be directly involved in implementing research initiatives and supervising students, and such people can only receive specific forms of financial support related to research if they are recognized by BALTA and SSHRC as co-investigators.
2. SSHRC has indicated that continued funding of BALTA for the full length of the project may be contingent upon a significant increase in the number of co-investigators within BALTA. Their initial funding decision recognized that in practice some of our collaborators were likely closer in nature to SSHRC's conception of a co-investigator, but they want to see this clarified eventually and reflected in practice with an increase in designated co-investigators.

Approval of New BALTA Co-Investigators

To add a co-investigator, SSHRC requires that the person being added must be approved by the Steering Committee and by the Lead Investigator personally (Mike Lewis). Mike Lewis must then personally submit the person's name to SSHRC, along with a completed SSHRC CV for the person (if they are not already an approved BALTA collaborator with an existing SSHRC CV, in which case only a letter is required).

Recommendations for co-investigators can come from SERCs, through SERC co-chairs or through Steering Committee members. They are directed at the Lead Applicant. Recommended individuals must agree to take on a significant level of responsibility for implementing BALTA's research agenda. The Steering Committee and Mike Lewis will consider the person's suitability for co-investigator status based on the criteria below. If approved, and upon confirmation with the person proposed, a letter from Mike Lewis informing SSHRC of the new co-investigator, along with that person's new SSHRC CV if applicable, will then be sent to SSHRC.

In most cases it is foreseen that SERC members will participate for some period of time as a collaborator before being considered as a co-investigator. However, where someone outside the current SERC membership is identified to lead a particular research initiative and there is an immediate requirement for co-investigator status to facilitate the research, approval of co-investigator status without prior service as a collaborator can be considered. While co-investigator status allows a person to be eligible for support of research expenses, it must be understood that BALTA's financial resources are very limited. Automatic or substantial financial support should not be assumed.

Criteria for assessing potential new co-investigators include:

1. Does this person bring a relevant background vis a vis the social economy and/or social economy related research to a SERC?
2. Can this person make a substantial and longer term contribution to the strategic research priorities and framework of BALTA?
3. Will this person play a significant role in leading and/or participating directly in advancing specific research projects/activities of the SERC and/or BALTA (eg.

- leading a specific research area, leading a specific research project, supervising students, playing a leadership role in managing BALTA's research program, etc.)?
4. Will this person likely play a significant research role over an extended period rather than simply undertaking a limited and short term role?

Resignation and Removal of Co-Investigators

Co-Investigators can resign at any time through submitting a letter of resignation to the SERC co-chairs, the Steering Committee and/or the Lead Investigator. The Lead Investigator will write a letter to SSHRC informing them of the resignation. It is possible for a person to resign as a co-investigator and still remain as a collaborator. However, it is also possible for a person to take a less active role for a period of time without being required to resign as a co-investigator.

A co-investigator can be removed upon recommendation of the two SERC co-chairs and a subsequent decision of the Steering Committee and the Lead Investigator. Removal can also be initiated through the Steering Committee or the Lead Investigator. The usual reason for removal of a co-investigator will relate to persistent non-participation or inadequate participation in the work of BALTA, though other reasons may also occur. In such cases, the co-chairs (in the case of a SERC) or the Lead Investigator (in the case of the Steering Committee) will first inform the person of their concerns and provide an opportunity for the person to address those concerns. If there is no response or the response is unsatisfactory, the initiating parties will then propose the removal to the Steering Committee, explaining the reasons for their decision.

Upon removal of a co-investigator, the Lead Investigator will write letters to SSHRC and the person concerned informing them of the decision.

Approved January 3, 2007