

Canadian RDC Network

Procedures for Opening a Research Data Centre



May 2009

(This document should be read in conjunction with
Procedures for Opening and Operating a Branch RDC, May 2009)

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1. Rationale for an RDC

- 1-1. A University interested in opening a Research Data Centre (RDC) must ascertain that it has a sufficient number of researchers interested in quantitative social science research that requires access to an RDC. A graduate program in the social sciences or related discipline is a prerequisite. Under these circumstances, a survey of researchers on campus is the usual way of assessing the need. While no firm number has been determined, a minimum of 20-25 researchers would seem essential for a university to be willing to assume its share of the costs of maintaining a Centre.
- 1-2. A Centre may be warranted on other grounds, such as distance from an existing RDC, a core of researchers in a particular discipline or relevant project, or a unique contribution from a University to the Canadian RDC Network (CRDCN). Statistics Canada does not recover all its expenses of running an RDC from a University so it does not want unnecessary expansion. Furthermore, every new Centre takes resources from existing Centres when it becomes eligible for grant Council funding, so a good rationale is essential.
- 1-3. The University must ascertain the amount of time such a Centre would be open each week. Options include a full-time or half-time Centre, or a Branch.
- 1-4. A Branch is defined as a smaller Centre that does not have a resident Research Data Centre Analyst, but receives that support from an existing RDC. The criteria for opening a Branch are similar to conditions necessary to open an RDC, except that the operation will usually be significantly smaller and the number of researchers fewer (See accompanying document on Procedures for Opening and Operating a Branch RDC).

2. Relationship between an RDC and its Branches

- 2-1. Meetings between an RDC and its affiliated Branch(es) are normally to be held at least twice a year.
- 2-2. The interests of the Branch may be represented at the Canadian Research Data Centre Network (CRDCN) by the Centre to which the Branch is affiliated.
- 2-3. The financial arrangements and the services to be provided to the Branch by the RDC are to be worked out jointly, preferably before the Branch is open. There are model agreements that are available for Centres and Branches. These include such things as support in the provision of data, the performance of disclosure avoidance, conducting orientation sessions for new researchers, the training for graduate students, travel costs, participation in conferences and methodological workshops, etc.

3. Expectations and Obligations of Researchers

- 3-1. Researchers who wish to use an RDC must understand the following conditions:
- a. Researchers require a security clearance by the RCMP. Violation of the conditions of access to data may be a federal offense with significant penalties.
 - b. Researchers become “deemed employees” of Statistics Canada, subject to the provisions of the Statistics Act with respect to access to micro data and maintaining the confidentiality of data.
 - c. Approval to enter an RDC to conduct research implies two conditions;
 - i. Approval of a specific proposal that is subject to a peer review by SSHRC; and
 - ii. Approval by Statistics Canada that the project the researcher wishes to undertake requires entry to an RDC and that in fact the data available can support the aims of the project.
 - d. Researchers will have access to the data only in the RDC.
 - e. Researchers shall provide a report to Statistics Canada at the end of their project. This may be a copy of paper they have submitted for publication or other such documentation.
 - f. Researchers are requested to cooperate with the Network in disseminating their research findings, primarily through the bibliographic data base, but also through the Knowledge Transfer Coordinator of the CRDCN.

4. Costs to a University to Establish and Operate an RDC

- 4-1. There are three major costs that are entailed in the operation of an RDC.
- a. There are the capital costs of preparing a physically secure site that satisfies the requirements of Statistics Canada. (Request document “Security Requirements in RDCs and Branches” from the Executive Director of The CRDCN). There is no single dollar amount that can be estimated for space. The actual amount emerges after identification of the space to be used and the development of plans by the University's Facilities Management (or equivalent title) department. The blueprints for the security of the facility must be approved by the Manager of the CRDC Program at Statistics Canada before the physical space is prepared. The facility must then be physically inspected by the Chief of Facilities Management, from the Administrative Support Services Division of Statistics Canada or the Program Manager of the

CRDCN at Statistics Canada. A senior representative of the RDC program is also present for this inspection.

- b. There is an annual cost for the support from Statistics Canada for its services, including access to data, methodological support, and a Research Data Centre Analyst, who is an employee of Statistics Canada. This annual cost includes an inflation factor, and must be guaranteed by the University for a minimum of five years. This money is currently paid directly to Statistics Canada by the university.
- c. There are annual operating costs incurred by the RDC. Some of these costs may be in-kind, while others will be actual cash costs. These include the cost of freeing up an academic to be the Director of the Centre, costs of administrative assistance, computer and technical support, workshops, supplies, etc. The Executive Director of the CRDCN can provide the University with average operating costs based on the experience of existing Centres. The number of work stations is a key factor in estimating these costs.

5. Funding of Research Data Centres and Branches

- 5-1. Currently the CRDCN is funded in part by SSHRC and CIHR. The agreement in the grant that has been awarded (2005-2010) is that not more than 50% of the costs be borne by SSHRC and CIHR. New RDCs that have not undergone the peer review that led to the approval of these grants are not eligible to receive specific monies from the grants, except in the general manner in which the CRDCN supports the Network. However, when the current grants expire, new RDCs would be eligible to be part of the next submission for a grant.
 - a. Canada Foundation for Innovation (CFI) infrastructure contracts have allowed some RDCs to receive capital costs for the establishment of their RDCs.
 - b. A current CFI grant (2008-2012) is allowing the Network to improve its infrastructure and create DDI3 compliant metadata for sixty data sets in the Centres. Some of these advances will be of assistance even to new Centres in the CRDCN. Our hope and expectation is that those universities with Centres not eligible to receive CFI funds to connect to the intranet will absorb those costs locally.

6. National Policies for Operating RDCs

- 6-1. Universities wishing to open an RDC must agree to follow the national policies established by the CRDCN. These include the following provisions;
 - a. University-based researchers affiliated with a member institution conducting academic research shall not be charged a fee to access an RDC.

- b. A researcher approved to work in an RDC shall be free to conduct his/her research in any RDC in the country without charge. This facilitates continuation of research while individuals are on research/study leave away from their own campus. It also encourages team research involving researchers at different universities.
- c. Researchers under contract to government agencies that are not funders of the CRDCN shall be charged according to the guidelines determined by the CRDCN. (In September 2007, an MOU was signed between HRSDC and the University of Manitoba for the benefit of the CRDCN). The charge for researchers from NGOs wishing to enter an RDC and who meet all the other requirements shall be at the discretion of the Academic Director of the host Centre.
- d. RDCs become part of the CRDCN, through the Canadian Research Data Centre Network. Directors of RDCs participate in two meetings during the year where policy matters are discussed and agreed upon.
- e. The Network is prepared to support the RDCs in all their endeavors such as offering guidelines for graduate courses, student training and annual conferences. Job descriptions are available from the Executive Director of the CRDCN for the Centre Director, Research Data Centre Analysts and Administrative Support Staff. The Executive Director of the CRDCN also acts as a liaison with the granting Councils and other government agencies interested in the work of RDCs.
- f. The Knowledge Transfer Coordinator of the CRDCN is prepared to assist all Centres in dissemination of the research findings in the Centres and expects cooperation from the Centres in its compilation and dissemination efforts.
- g. RDCs are required to submit annual reports according to agreed upon format approved by the CRDCN. This standard format is important for the Network to continue to receive financial support from granting councils. A Copy of this format can be obtained from the Executive Director of the CRDCN.

7. Application to Establish an RDC or a Branch

- 7-1. The written application for permission to open an RDC is to be submitted to the Canadian Research Data Centre Network through its Executive Director.
- 7-2. A University wishing to establish a Branch RDC must submit its proposal to the CRDCN with the support of the home RDC to which it will be affiliated. The goal should always be to consider first the needs of the researchers in the area and what best facilitates their access to a facility at reasonable cost to their University.

- 7-3. Unless there are exceptional circumstances the expectation is that new RDC sites will begin as Branches of an existing Centre and remain as Branches until the level of activity warrants consideration as a full Centre.
- 7-4. The Executive Director for the CRDCN will set up an evaluation committee to review a submission, and present a recommendation to the CRDCN.
- a. The Committee will be composed of the Executive Director of the CRDCN, the Manager of the CRDCN at Statistics Canada and two Directors. Members on the committee must not be in a conflict of interest with the proposed Centre or Branch. If deemed appropriate, external researchers to the CRDCN could be brought in to be part of the Committee.
 - b. A majority recommendation is necessary for the application to proceed to CRDCN for a vote. The Committee may also recommend changes to a proposal before it is brought forward.
 - c. If the application is supported at the CRDCN, Statistics Canada will then carry out an investigation to be sure that the security provisions are met.

8. Change in the Status of an RDC or a Branch

- 8-1. Should a change of status be requested by a Centre or a Branch, a sub-committee of the CRDCN will be established, comparable to the committee to establish a Centre or Branch. Statistics Canada will have a representative on the sub-committee.
- 8-2. The change in status could be to move a Branch to a Centre, or a Centre to the status of a Branch. In the case of an individual Centre, the CRDCN could recommend to the home University and Statistics Canada that a Centre be downsized to a Branch or a half-time Centre. However, should a Centre be perceived to be underperforming, The CRDCN wishes that the Centre be given a period of up to one year to make the necessary improvements before a decision is made on a funding adjustment.

For further information:

Please visit the CRDCN website at <http://www.rdc-cdr.ca/>

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