

ACCESS TO RESEARCH DATA CENTRES BY RESEARCHERS

(Original document prepared in 2005, Revised February 2009 by Raymond F. Currie)

There are four primary types of non network users who either are currently using the RDCs, or have indicated that they might use the Network in the near future:

- 1) Federal government entities,
- 2) Users requesting Indirect Access,
- 3) NGOs; and,
- 4) Provincial government entities.

Each of these users presented unique circumstances and therefore each case should be considered separately.

1. For Federal government entities that use the Federal RDC in Ottawa, they are charged \$3,500 per month per contract.
2. For provincial government users, it is up to the Directors of RDCs to determine access and cost, keeping in mind that some provincial governments support the RDC program directly and should not be charged.
3. For researchers who have a grant from SSHRC or CIHR they are not to be charged for access to the RDCs because we are funded by these Councils.
4. For researchers who are at a university that has a Centre, a Branch or is a partner in the CRDC Network, they are not to be charged.
5. For researchers at other universities, the cost is at the discretion of the Director of the RDC.
6. For contracts from HRSDC to individual researchers, the cost is 3,957.00 per contract (not per month). Of this, \$3,500.00 goes to the RDC that hosts the contract, 228.50 goes to the U of Manitoba Office of Research Services for overhead, and \$228.50 goes to the CRDCN which does the administration of the contract. If researchers from several universities are involved the \$3,500 is to be split according to the proportion of work carried out by the researchers as agreed upon by the RDCs involved.

The CRDCN is keeping track of the average time per contract from information submitted by the RDCs on a monthly basis.

This is part of a contract with HRSDC that signed with the CRDCN from 2007-2009.

As of February 2009, HRSDC has let contracts totaling \$79,140. Six RDCs have hosted a total of 19 contracts.

7. For NGOs who wish to do research in an RDC it is up to the Director of the RDC to negotiate the price. Sometimes these may be pro bono.
8. For other potential users, it is up to the RDC to negotiate contracts but the Directors recommend that \$3,500 per contract be a norm.

USER FEES AND THE CRDCN

(Submitted as part of the Briefing Notes to CIHR, July 2009)

The majority of researchers do not pay a user fee to enter an RDC, including all researchers from our partner universities. However, there are some instances where user fees are applied. This summary will deal with both approaches to access to RDCs.

◆ **Researchers funded by SSHRC and CIHR**, whether or not their university is part of the Network, and researchers from a government that is a financial partner with the Network, **do not pay a fee** to enter an RDC.

◆ **User fees are charged to researchers who are carrying out a contract for HRSDC**. The Network has had a three year contract with HRSDC for up to \$395,000 a year for such contracts. In fact, contracts totalling a little over \$100,000 have been issued. For each contract, \$3,957 is paid to the Network headquarters at University of Manitoba where the contract is located, and \$3,500 of that is sent to the RDC where the work is carried out. The remaining is overhead. The Network then provides HRSDC with a number of agreed upon statistics on the contract, including time spent in the RDC. HRSDC has indicated it plans to renew this contract in 2009.

◆ Researchers from **other government departments usually pay a user fee** according to the policy above. **For NGO's, Directors of RDCs have some discretion** in this matter.

Reasons for our Non-User Fee Policy

1. In the mid-eighties, much of the quantitative research community was diverted from using Statistics Canada microdata files because of a substantial increase in the costs of the Public User Micro-data Files. We developed a policy to eliminate user fees in most instances to enlarge the community of researchers committed to the use of Canadian survey data.
2. There are inevitable obstacles to conducting research in a RDC (investment in quantitative analysis; logistical constraints associated with having to use a secured environment; access procedures...). The academic directors and SSHRC felt that adopting a user fee structure would add to these obstacles, discouraging potential users further. These reasons are still valid today (culture of "quantitative analysis" still not deeply rooted in Canada)
3. A significant component of our operating funds come from SSHRC and CIHR. We do not believe it would be appropriate to have one agency (SSHRC) fund the Network with a block grant and another agency funded by user fees.
4. Universities are paying in excess of 50% of the costs, funds that would not otherwise be available under a funding model that depends on individual grants.
5. The RDC program is still relatively young, with a number of sites only a few years old. Many sites remain far from their full research capacity. The need to encourage new users for the reasons given above.
6. A user-fee model would provide monies from CIHR for researchers but a large number of researchers would be left out. Unless special provisions were made, students working on their theses and dissertations, those involved in graduate courses offered through the Centres, as well as all researchers conducting non-medical research would be disadvantaged.
7. Most RDC Analysts are skilled researchers themselves and provide others working in their RDC with important advice about the data and statistical methods to analyze them. Also, once we get the metadata up and running, researchers will be able to benefit from others' experience with the data. Advantages of this kind are not available to individuals working on their own.

8. We are operating as a network with each Centre contributing to the whole, which is greater than the parts. The differential funding formula would weaken the network when we engage in activities beyond actual contracts that researchers undertake. The Network dimension, particularly the website and dissemination and social policy activities of the Network, as well as administrative dimensions would be particularly weakened.
9. Some Centres conduct far more health research than others. User fees would increase the disparities for funding opportunities between Centres would grow and could even affect which Centre was selected to undertake the research. It would weaken the Network.
10. Contracts are approved for the RDC program, not just for a given centre. With user fees, a researcher may begin his or her contract in a centre that does not charge user fees and then continue the contract in a centre that does (e.g. while on sabbatical). In the past, this has happened. We don't find this helpful.
11. Contracts also draw researchers from multiple institutions, some that would charge user fees and others that would not. Some of these lead researchers may come from a medical field while others may not. What is best for the research contract rather than a fee structure should determine where the contract is centred and who leads it.

ACCESS TO RDCS BY NON-MEMBER INSTITUTIONS, CRDCN MEETING, NOVEMBER 2005

**Goldmann
Baker
Schwartz**

Discussion: The Committee identified four primary types of non network users who either are currently using the RDCs, or have indicated that they might use the Network in the near future:

- 1) Federal government entities,
- 2) User requesting Indirect Access,
- 3) NGOs; and,
- 4) Provincial government entities.

It was decided that each of these users presented unique circumstances and therefore it was necessary to consider each case separately.

Goldmann - Federal Government Entities

Federal government employees already access RDC data in Ottawa, and a fee for access has already been negotiated and accepted. **It is \$3500 per month for a single seat for direct access.** The Committee sees benefits in a single price for this type of access across the RDC network. Given this benefit, and that the fee has already been accepted by federal government departments, **the Committee recommends the current fee in Ottawa be charged by all RDCs.**

Goldmann - Policy Development Research Projects Overview

- How to collect revenue on federal government contracts completed by external consultants (including members of network and non network universities) that make use of RDC data? While these projects are clearly “government work”, in many cases RDC access may naturally be gained through an indirect route. Many “request for proposals” specify that a certain topic be investigated but do not mandate that specific data be used. It is the consultant submitting the proposal that suggests that RDC data may be best to answer a given question.
- Key is that it must not be administrative work – statistical work.
- Peer review done within a Federal government department.
- Statistical focal point in each Province department – provincial researcher makes a direct request for RDC access to the specific RDC (ask Academic Director’s approval) and does not go through the SSHRC application process.
- Payment needs to be negotiated with the individual institution in which the research will be done. Direct access to FDAC is \$3,500 per month for each project.

Decisions for Policy Development Research Projects

- \$3500 per project per month (real time month)
- cut out indirect access
- bypass the SSHRC application process
- Each RDC will determine if access is granted if FDAC is not the feasible location to perform research.

Baker – Update on access for government researchers / Indirect Access

- Charge a cost of \$5500 for indirect use and for provincial access, the charge would be treated as a federal government employee \$5500. How to collect the fees? Proposal is that Goldman would collect the money from the departments and the University would receive a credit on their annual bill for the money collected for all these types of projects.
- Do we have the mechanism to track these types of projects?
- Norris clarified – includes contract work for Federal government departments.
- Humphrey – suggested that we add to our SSHRC application process a screening mechanism if they are a policy development researcher, by way of asking for funding sources on the SSHRC application.
- Schwartz – why is the access fee of \$3500 being charged? – Goldman replied the fee is based on real costs, to simulate a virtual workstation, not charging on a per project basis. Baker replied that a set cost will cut out the competition for each RDC to negotiate different fees.
- If a federal employee comes through the policy development research initiative – they don't come through SSHRC application process, but through their focal point in their respective Federal department and then they will be charged a monthly fee.
- Baker – Provincial government – special status under the Stats Act – provinces are granted access to the data for their province only if the data are not publicly available. It is assumed that provinces would not welcome additional fees charged to them for access to the data in the RDCs.
- Forget commented regarding Provincial access – concerns with Manitoba government – she suggests we leave it up to the individual RDC to determine access and fees.
- Le Bourdais clarified that their RDC receives grants from the Quebec government to support researchers in Quebec to access the RDC data. Manitoba receives funding directly to allow provincial government researchers to perform research in the Winnipeg RDC.
- Humphrey – commented that we keep the model simple – have province go through SSHRC and not charge them and if they go through Gustave, then they access the FDAC. If researchers get money to put in their pocket then they should go through the FDAC.

Access for NGOs (Update by Schwartz)

- NGOs (any entity not related to a Federal or Provincial government agency) can negotiate with individual RDCs.
- Network of NGOs could band together and contribute money for group access.
- With whom do the individual NGOs want to negotiate fees? They will need to go through the SSHRC application process regardless.
- Increase the pool of peer reviewers by adding a list of NGO reviewers (with the proviso that they will not review their own proposals).
- Forget – how would we treat a request from Assembly of First Nations? Schwartz replied that we go back to the original premise of definition for the NGO when determining who gets access based on which process.
- Riddell – clarified his policy at the BCIRDC from the standpoint that they wanted to originally generate research – never expected many NGOs to access his RDC; wanted to reach out to all researchers in the community regardless of affiliation to a University; they wanted to have the NGOs as partners. Set up an alternative option – pay on a per project basis.
- Baker – hidden costs when you involve NGOs in the RDCs. Ensure that the RDCs know what these hidden costs are before making agreement.
- Le Bourdais – proposed that we charge nothing but remain flexible and that each RDC set their own fees for NGO participation. Want to promote a good relationship for research.

Consensus

- Leave it to the individual RDC to determine fee structure and access.
- Delete paragraph 3 “One particular NGO has a different perspective. It gives grants to other NGOs and to researchers across the country. That NGO (and possibly others) might be interested in coming to an agreement which give its funded researchers access to RDCs in the city in which they live and work. This would require an agreement between that NGO and the RDC network if site-specific negotiations are to be avoided.”

Follow-up items (any questions, or outstanding issues):

Action items:

10 NGO CVs are to be forwarded from Schwartz to Marc Fonda at SSHRC.

Person Responsible:

Deadline: