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Audit of the Women's Program Executive Summary

Prepared for
Status of Women Canada

Prepared by
Consulting and Audit Canada

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Executive Summary

As requested by Status of Women Canada, Consulting and Audit Canada conducted an audit of the Women's Program. The audit has reviewed and assessed program management processes, taking into consideration the effective administration against relevant Treasury Board Secretariat (TBS) guidelines on the management of grants and contributions (i.e. June 2000 TBS Policy on Transfer Payments) and due diligence principles.

Considering the diversity in program management approaches, the audit has covered all departmental regions through interviews, and the review of program documentation and of a sample of initiative files. The audit has highlighted the following opportunities for improvement, with respect to the management of the Women's Program.

Opportunities exist to improve the approval process, in order to meet the published timeframe commitment, and to provide the information which Program Officers need to better address the needs of applicants.

While the audit has not found evidence of significant shortfalls in the area of financial management, there are **opportunities to improve the Program's financial capability** through enhanced support of Program Officers, as well as the establishment of financial reporting standards.

From a due diligence perspective, the Program would benefit from implementing, on a national basis, **documentation tools and approaches to facilitate its monitoring and reporting function and its risk management capability**. Some of these are already in use in some regions.

There are **opportunities for improvement in the capacity of the Program to share and manage information**. There is also **room for improvement in the area of training**, whereby newcomers are oriented to the Department and the Program, and existing staff are provided the knowledge and expertise required in the conduct of their duties.

The Women's Program is well organized considering its limited resources and its vast geographical coverage with offices comprising as few as one officer. The opportunities for improvement discussed in this report would need to be addressed in order for the Women's Program to become more effective in the achievement of its objectives, and in meeting governmental policy and due diligence requirements. There were clear indications, at the time the audit was conducted, that program management had already identified some of the issues raised in this report, and was working towards addressing them through, notably, the creation of a policy and procedures manual for the Program.