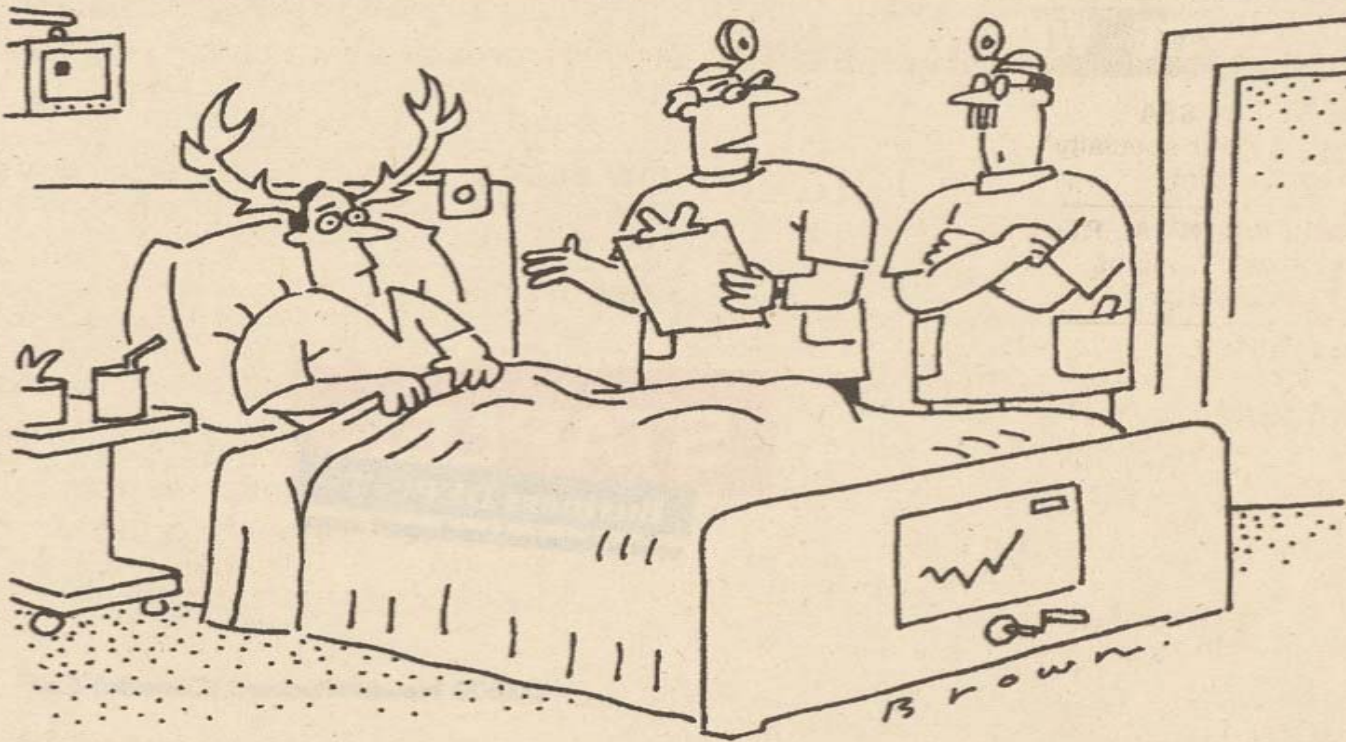


Unintended Consequences...



"This drug would rock the market, if we could just beat this one side effect."

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Decision Support

Evaluating Program and Project Performance – Some Ideas from the Canadian R&D Sector

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Victoria BC Canada

CES CONFERENCE, VANCOUVER BC, JUNE 2003

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Decision Support – who needs it?

The funding agency program manager:

- Has to decide which initiatives, programs and projects to invest in

The evaluator:

- Has to assess the performance of initiatives, programs and projects the program manager has invested in

*Both may need decision support. The common problem is to **address the intangibles** – since “neither the accountants nor the evaluators can count them”*



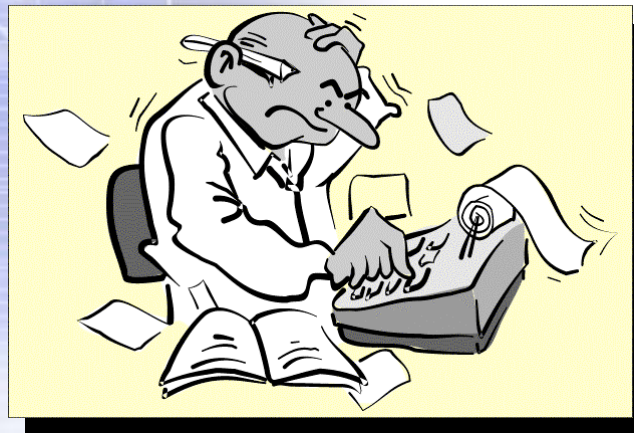
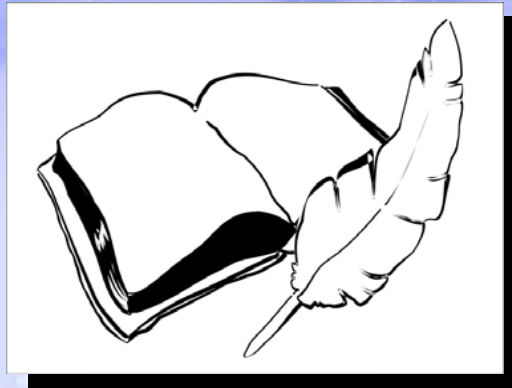
Reality check

Who has....

- ♠ Gone “beyond the numbers” in obtaining evaluation data?
- ♠ Based evaluation findings on unstructured, qualitative information obtained from “experts” in the field?
- ♠ Tried to make sense of conflicting opinions from those experts?
- ♠ Evaluated a program which has never been evaluated before?
- ♠ Worried about “comparing apples and oranges”?
- ♠ Evaluated programs which had no real performance criteria or written expectations (so you had to figure them out for yourself)?
- ♠ Written an evaluation report which took you far too long?
- ♠ Had difficulty having findings and recommendations accepted?

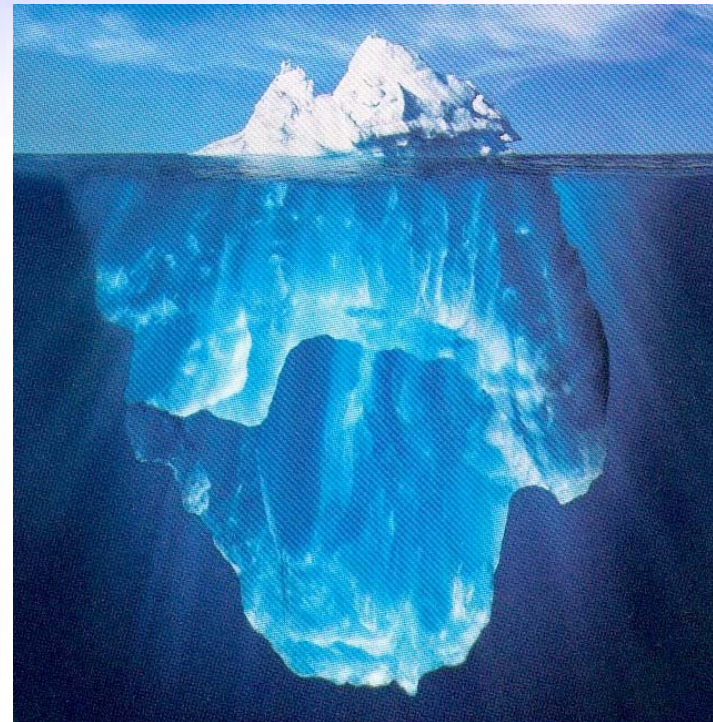


How did we do the accounting before computers arrived?



Focus on the *Intangibles*

- ♠ **Tangibles - easier to evaluate, tools available, more easily evidenced and understood**
 - Money, revenues, costs
 - Equipment, facilities
 - Numbers and outputs
- ♠ **Intangibles - harder to evaluate, fewer tools available, harder to evidence and understand**
 - Systems and processes
 - Management skills
 - Corporate values
 - Outcomes, impacts and effects



Questions Involving Intangible Criteria

♠ Relevance to the Sponsoring Organisation

- Did the program fit the organisation's strategic objectives?
- Did it fit with the corporate expectations and values?

♠ Quality of the Process

- How effective was the program/implementation design?
- How effective was the service delivery approach?
- Did the implementation team have the right capabilities?

♠ Outcomes, Impacts and Effects

- What were the benefits to the organisation's clients/customers?
- What were the **reasons** for success (or otherwise)



What our agency clients would like from us

- ♠ **Minimise the subjectivity**
- ♠ **Enhance the discipline and rigour in our evaluation processes**
- ♠ **Use “soft” data and imperfect information more effectively to assess results**
- ♠ **Transparent, fair, rigorous evaluation process - yet quick and efficient**
- ♠ **Recognise all the accountabilities of the program**
- ♠ **Enhance credibility and confidence in our results**
- ♠ **Improve our “results to cost” ratio - efficiency**



What we aim at – the overall process

- ♠ Formalize the use of ***independent experts***
- ♠ in the assessment of program or project ***outcomes, impacts and effects***
- ♠ by applying a rigorous, transparent and credible ***automated methodology***
- ♠ to arrive at ***findings, conclusions and recommendations*** which cannot adequately be reached by reference to quantitative information alone



The Mechanics (1)

1. Determine the key *performance criteria* (usually from three to twelve) – *and get them approved by the agency responsible*
2. Set out the criteria out in a Performance Matrix format - *and get them approved by the agency responsible*
3. Design the Language Ladders™ - *and get them approved by the agency responsible*
4. Collect the data (may be reports, case write-ups, proposals etc)
5. The program/project managers evaluate their performance on standardised assessment forms using Language Ladders™



The Mechanics (2)

6. **The experts evaluate the data independently on standardised assessment forms using Language Ladders™ (see handout)**
7. **ProGrid® software assesses the performance based on the experts' assessments *and ranks the projects/initiatives in order of their ability to meet the performance criteria***
8. **The experts meet to review their individual and collective assessments. The initial assessments are flashed up on the screen. They do a final performance evaluation strictly according to the criteria**
9. **Reports (graphs and charts) are prepared for managers, stakeholders and anyone else to whom the program is accountable. Standardised formats, limited text**



Performance Matrix Example

Inputs/Resources	Enablers/Plan	Outputs/Results
Consistent with six United Way community goals and priorities	Quality of service delivery approach, design and methodology, including timeframes	Clarity and realism of identified program goals
Consistent with three United Way approach preferences	Quality of track record and credibility in service delivery	Quality of performance measurement plan (evaluation)
Avoidance of duplication in community services	Quality of management and staff assigned	Anticipated sustainability of results
Degree of collaboration and client involvement	References and support	Develops long-term increases in community strengths and networks



Language Ladder™ Example

The Assessment/Input Form contains **one Language Ladder for each Performance Criterion in the Matrix**, for example -

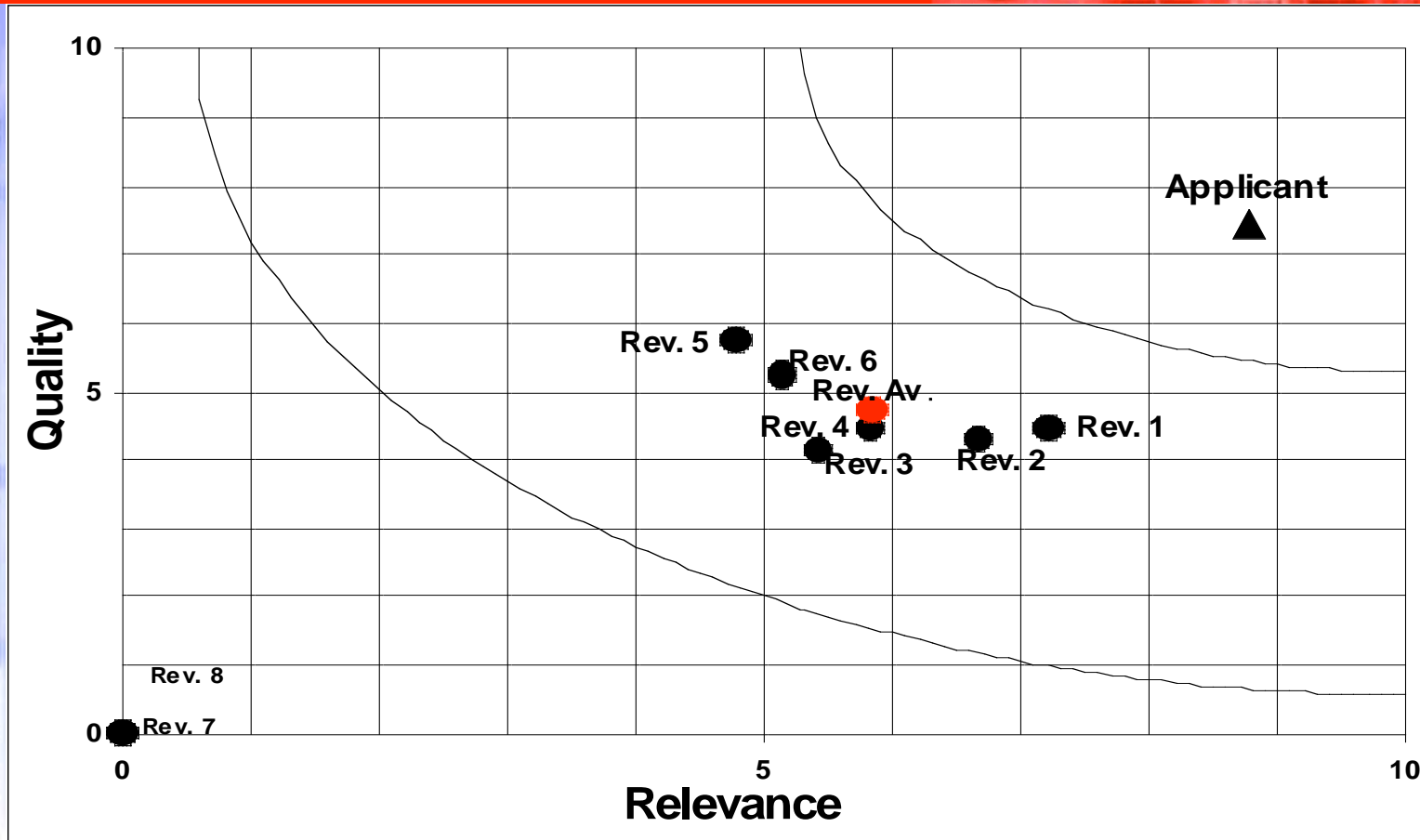
Track record and credibility in service delivery

The managers of this project demonstrated:

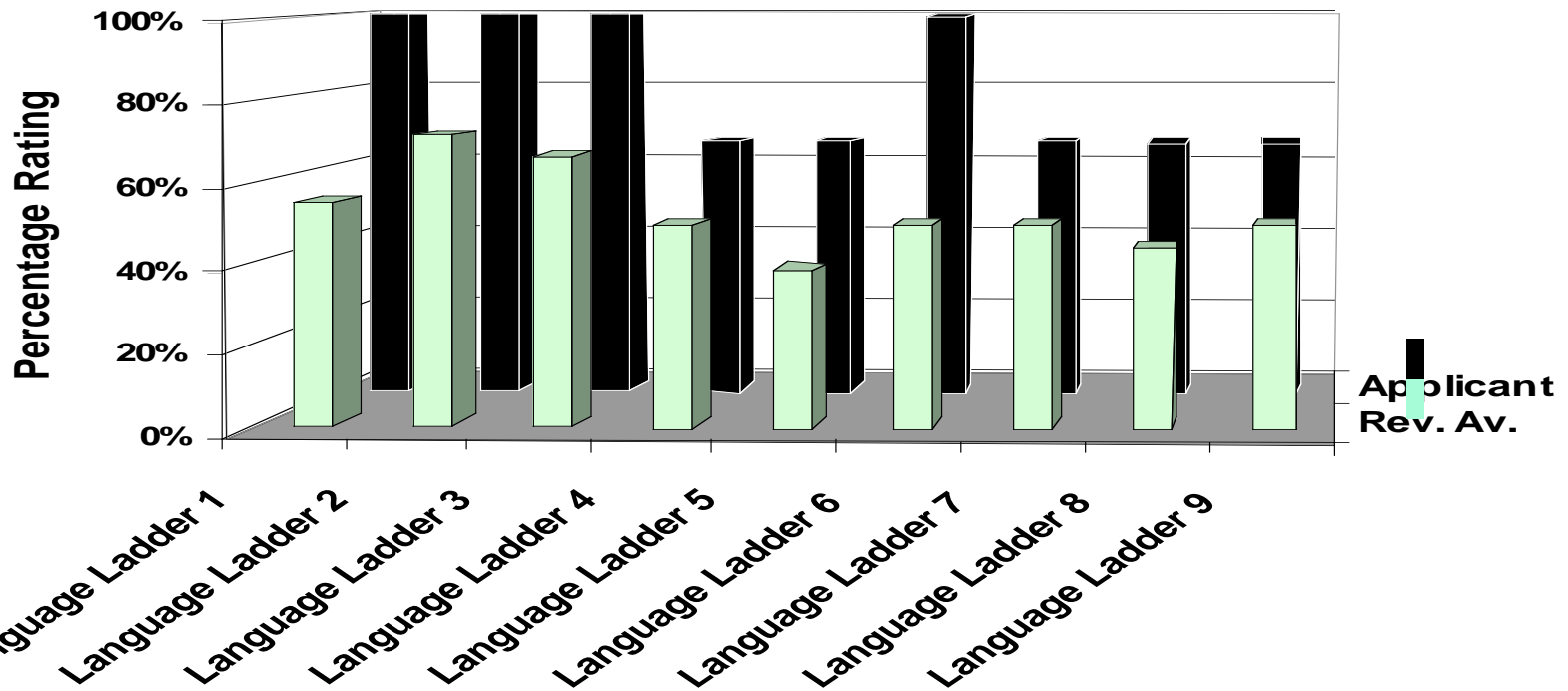
- A Limited expertise or experience relevant to the scope and needs of this project. Limited experience with this client group
- B Previous experience and expertise on some aspects needed to address the scope and needs of this project but not all. Some experience with this client group
- C Significant previous expertise and experience needed to address the project requirements successfully. Good experience with, and knowledge of, this client group
- D Exceptional expertise and experience generally beyond that needed to complete the project successfully. Expert knowledge of this client group.



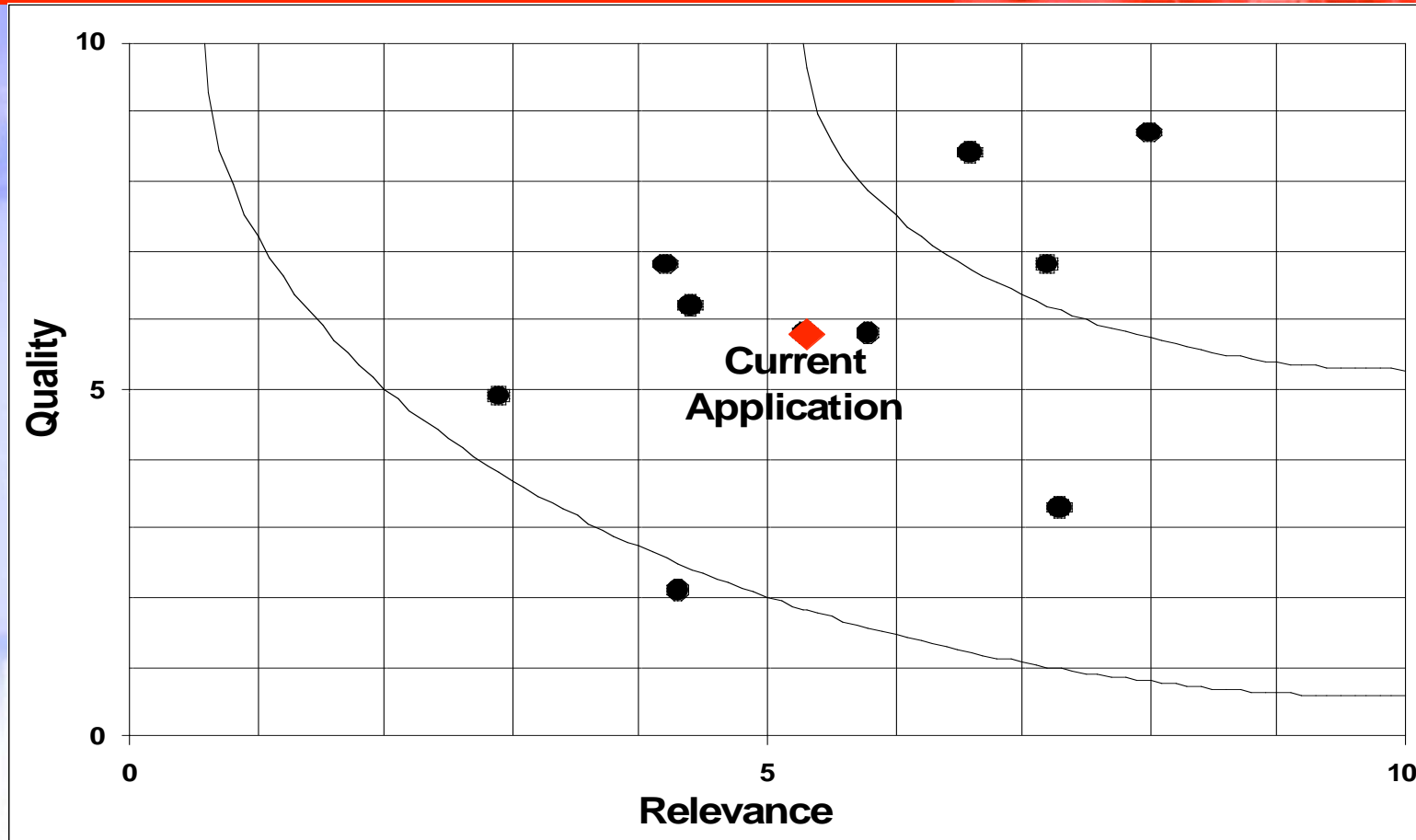
How the project manager and the reviewer panel saw this project/initiative



How the project manager and the agency's review panel saw the individual performance criteria



How the reviewer panel saw this project/initiative compared with the others in its category



Characteristics of ProGrid[®] Decision Support Methodology

A rigorous and standardised approach to program/project assessment where the *intangibles* are crucial to the evaluation

- ♣ Uses explicit, client-driven assessment criteria in the Matrix
- ♣ Uses carefully articulated performance measures in the Language Ladders (in Plain English – no “scores”)
- ♣ Effectively harnesses the knowledge of staff and/or expert advisors
- ♣ Transparent process and reporting facilitates the acceptance of the choices made - even by the “dissidents”
- ♣ Can bring your Stakeholders, Clients, Board, Executive Committee, Treasury Board, Cabinet and others explicitly into the evaluation circle
- ♣ Enhances client/stakeholder performance – they get the results too
- ♣ Provides the superb accountability to the funding agency, project managers, proponents or clients

These clients are investing some \$2 billion a year using ProGrid®

- ◆ Alberta Heritage Foundation for Medical Research
- ◆ Agricultural Value Added Corporation (Alberta)
- ◆ Alberta Innovation and Science Research Investment Program
- ◆ Alberta Agricultural Research Institute (new two-stage process)
- ◆ Canada Foundation for Innovation
- ◆ Canadian Space Agency
- ◆ Canadian Science and Technology Growth Fund
- ♠ Centre for Research in Earth and Space Technology (CRESTEC)
- ♠ Climate Change Central (Alberta)
- ♠ Department of National Defence
- ♠ Forest Innovation Investment (BC)
- ♠ Natural Resources Canada
- ♠ Ontario Ministry of Natural Resources
- ♠ Ontario R&D Challenge fund
- ♠ Saskatchewan Research Council
- ♠ Science Council of British Columbia

What the users say.....

"A remarkable tour de force"

"Tremendous strides from the acrimonious, unproductive debates of the past"

"Professional, objective feedback and mentoring to our clients and stakeholders"

"Substantial reductions in the time to reach agreement"

"An altogether useful tool for a very challenging job"

"Targets the discussion on areas of reviewer variance"

"(ProGrid is) the cornerstone of our performance management system"

"Where can I buy shares?"

And the press.....

*“Transparent,
fair and
superbly
managed”*

Jeffrey Simpson, Globe & Mail

THE GLOBE AND MAIL



JEFFREY SIMPSON

IN OTTAWA

Here's some good news

When governments screw up, we in the news business whip that story onto the front page. When governments do something right, we bury it.

So it was that, a few weeks ago, my distinguished paper devoted two paragraphs under the headline Researchers To Get Millions to news of the latest grants from the Canada Foundation for Innovation.

The CFI is one the most forward-looking policies of the Chrétien government. Established in the 1997 budget, the CFI works at arm's length from the federal

projects was transparent and fair. The distribution of money seemed about right between big and small institutions and among the provinces. Praise like that doesn't come every day.

The CFI headed off a program that would have been much worse. In the 1993 election, the Liberals promised and delivered on a physical infrastructure program that scattered money across the country for everything from roads and sewers to bocce courts.

Liberal MPs loved the ribbon-cutting

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Making decisions the old way



"Rock breaks scissors. We operate!"

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..... can lead to this!

***“\$3-billion mismanaged” OAG says.
“Audit reveals mess in grant-giving processes”***

- Projects approved without even the submission of an application form (documentation)
- Projects approved without any proper internal or external decision process (accountability)
- No audit trails for the decisions (auditability)
- No evidence of performance measurement or financial monitoring (evaluation)



Want to know more?

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