



First Nations Early Learning and Child Care: Key Messages

Co-developed by the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) and Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC), October 2018

Indigenous Early Learning and Child Care (ELCC) Framework

- In 2017, First Nations conducted a comprehensive engagement across the country at the direction of AFN Resolution 39/2016, *First Nations National Working Group on Early Learning and Child Care (ELCC)*. The recommendations that emerged from this engagement process informed the First Nations ELCC framework, developed by the National Expert Working Group on First Nations ELCC.
- The First Nations framework was endorsed by the AFN Chiefs-in-Assembly through AFN Resolution 83/2017, *Support for the National First Nations Early Learning and Child Care Policy Framework*, and was submitted to the Government to support the national Indigenous ELCC Framework. Canada and the AFN worked together to co-develop a new National Indigenous ELCC Framework, which includes the First Nations framework.
- The [National Indigenous ELCC Framework](#) was released jointly by the Government of Canada and First Nations, Inuit and Métis Nation leadership in September 2018. The Framework creates an historic opportunity to establish a comprehensive, coordinated, regional First Nations-developed and –led ELCC system that is responsive to First Nations, their communities and families.

New Investments in First Nations ELCC (See *Funding Backgrounder*, page 4)

- The Government has committed \$1.7 billion in new funding over 10 years to strengthen ELCC programs and services for all Indigenous children starting in 2018-19.
- Up to \$1.02 billion is dedicated for First Nations ELCC, with maximum flexibility, and will be managed in partnership with First Nations. This includes \$72.5 million this fiscal year (2018-19). This is in addition to existing federal funding for ELCC programs (Aboriginal Head Start on Reserve [AHSOR], Aboriginal Head Start Urban and Northern Communities [AHSUNC], and First Nations and Inuit Child Care Initiative [FNICCI]).
- This First Nations funding envelope can be allocated to a broad range of First Nations ELCC activities. This envelope includes dedicated portions set aside for First Nations priorities outlined in the First Nations Framework, including: support for program development enhancements; capacity for partnerships, planning and governance; strategic transformative actions; and annual incremental funding increases beginning in year five.
- To support seamless delivery and avoid disruption, the existing programs remain in place and current funding will continue to flow to existing recipients.

New Process: First Nations-Driven Decision Making

- The government has not made prescriptive decisions on this funding – there is no program allocation, no regional allocation, and no community allocation. Decisions on allocations to regions, to First Nations, or through programs will be led by First Nations in partnership with the Government.
- The process is envisioned as:
 - National Expert Working Group on ELCC: Convene regional representatives; recommend regional allocations to Chiefs; set national priorities; offer coordinated guidance and advice; support joint national reporting, planning, research, evaluation and accountability framework development, etc.
 - Regional Tables:
 - Convene First Nations representatives and existing or new partnership tables.
 - Recommend program and community allocations to Community and Regional Chiefs.
 - Lead coordinated regional implementation planning and reporting (including partnerships with provinces and territories, as desired).
 - Build capacity for Regional Coordination Bodies.
 - Lay groundwork towards transfer of programs to regional First Nations governance structures or authorities at a pace and scope of First Nations' choosing, as mandated by communities.



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- Link to federal processes: Support joint implementation with federal departments; amend or create new funding agreements; share information; collaborate on planning and projects; etc.
- Joint reporting and review: First Nations, regions and national table to support joint reporting on progress and measuring results, strategic planning, and ongoing collaboration over the long-term.

New Program Flexibility

- The Government of Canada has created a new Indigenous ELCC (IELCC) Transformation Initiative that offers an umbrella over the three existing federal programs (AHSOR, AHSUNC and FNICCI), at three federal departments (Indigenous Services Canada [ISC], Public Health Agency of Canada [PHAC] and Employment and Social Development Canada [ESDC]), and provides a federal focal point at ESDC, in collaboration with PHAC and ISC.
- The three existing programs are now *complemented* by a new set of umbrella Terms and Conditions (Ts and Cs) that are horizontally accessible by all three federal departments (ESDC, PHAC, and ISC).
 - These new Ts and Cs:
 - support maximum flexibility for a range of ELCC activities (e.g., capital, services, capacity, operations, projects, curricula, and other First Nations ELCC priorities),
 - apply both on- and off-reserve, and
 - enable flexible, long-term funding agreements over several years.
- The three existing program Ts and Cs remain in place.
 - The AHSOR authorities were amended to enable spending off-reserve and on child care as desired.
- This approach offers a menu of mechanisms:
 - New funding can be flowed through any of the existing federal ELCC programs, or under the new Ts and Cs in new or amended contribution agreements.
 - Cohesive or combined funding agreements could be developed (to pool ELCC funding).
 - The Government of Canada and First Nations can work together to find the most effective and appropriate program, mechanism or agreement to flow ELCC funding to each First Nation/recipient/site.

Examples:

- **Example 1:** A British Columbia First Nation has an AHSOR program, but families are in need of more flexibility, including some full-time child care. Under the IELCC initiative, the regional table (as directed by First Nations) may allocate new investments to both program expansion and enhancement.
- **Example 2:** An Alberta First Nation wishes to add more language and cultural programming to their existing child care program. The new IELCC investments can support such enhancements, as directed by First Nations.
- **Example 3:** An Atlantic First Nation has a FNICCI site funded by ESDC and an AHSOR site funded by ISC. The AHSOR site is full and has a long waiting list, while the FNICCI program is underutilized. Under the new IELCC initiative, the regional table could recommend allocating new funds to the program that needs it most.
- **Example 4:** An Ontario First Nation has no existing ELCC services. With the new IELCC investments, the regional table could allocate funds to the community to develop new program models based on their own priorities, needs, and traditions of raising children.
- **Example 5:** An AHSUNC site in Winnipeg is well-used and is in high demand. Under the new IELCC investments, the regional table could decide to expand services to allow more children to access urban programming, or could establish a table to coordinate and support urban First Nations ELCC programs.
- **Example 6:** A Quebec First Nation does not currently have access to culturally appropriate ELCC for their children. Under the new initiative, the First Nation could develop culturally-relevant curriculum to use in their program sites.



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Next Steps:

- The National Table is preparing regional allocation options to present to First Nations leadership.
- Regional representatives are beginning to brief First Nations leadership and partners and to develop their regional capacity plans to support their coordinating role going forward.
- As regional tables come together, regional ELCC implementation plans can be developed to guide investments.
- Partners are working together to explore all options for funding this fiscal year with the greatest flexibility for First Nations and recipients, according to their own priorities.



First Nations Early Learning and Child Care: First Nations Funding Backgrounder

Prepared by the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) and Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC), October 2018

Indigenous Early Learning and Child Care (ELCC) - First Nations Funding Backgrounder

Prepared by ESDC, October 2018

New investment of \$1.7 billion over ten years in support of the Indigenous ELCC Framework, to strengthen ELCC programs and services for Indigenous children and families starting in 2018-19. This is part of the commitment of \$7.5 billion over 11 years the Government has made to support and create more high-quality, affordable child care across the country, and complementing these investments. Over the next 10 years, up to \$1.02 billion is committed to the First Nations distinction-based “envelope” of funding, to be managed in partnership with First Nations. The First Nations envelope of funding is to be allocated to regions based on direction from First Nations leadership, guided by recommendations from the National Expert Working Group on First Nations ELCC. This funding is **in addition to existing federally-funded Indigenous ELCC programs**, currently spending approximately \$132.6 million annually in three main programs (AHSOR, AHSUNC and FNICCI).

First Nations Funding

Services enhancement and expansion: to improve and increase ELCC services and programming for children and families, with broad flexibility of spending in any location, on early learning and/or child care, capital, operations, projects, curricula, capacity, professional development, or other ELCC priorities consistent with Terms and Conditions.

Partnerships and Governance: to enable First Nations decision making, support the new partnership model, and strengthen First Nations ELCC capacity as desired.

- Minimum of 10% of First Nations services funding is earmarked for partnership and governance.
- At year five (starting in 2022-23) this 10% earmarked could be adjusted based on evolving partnerships and priorities.

Transformative Action Fund: beginning at year 5 (2022-23), enable strategic investments on priorities that have evolved (e.g. governance development and supporting the transfer of the funding and delivery to regional ELCC authorities/governance bodies).

Annual Incremental Increases: Beginning in year 5, currently projected based on 2016 census data of children aged 0-6.

Other Investments to strengthen Indigenous ELCC

Quality Improvement Projects (\$44.2 million over 10 years) to fund application-based, Indigenous-led projects to advance foundational elements of Indigenous ELCC, (e.g. cultural and languages resources; professional capacity, centres of excellence or networks; data, research reporting or evaluation activities; or, links to provincial/territorial service delivery).

Enhancing Pan-Indigenous ELCC Services (\$34.0 million over 10 years) in addition to distinction-based funding, to support AHSUNC with the opportunity for AHSUNC sites serving First Nations, Inuit or Métis Nation children to partner with Regional Tables for greater cohesion and in support of culturally-specific programming and serving families where they live, as desired.

Data and Innovation funding through Budget 2017, in addition to Indigenous ELCC, may present opportunities for Indigenous organizations/recipients and participation in supporting improved ELCC Data or innovative projects.