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# Summary of What We Heard: Challenges, Suggestions and Best Practices in Inuit Government Employment

## Nunavummiut Perspectives from Nunavut Stakeholder Engagement Sessions

2017



## **Summary of What We Heard - Challenges, Suggestions and Best Practices in Inuit Government Employment**

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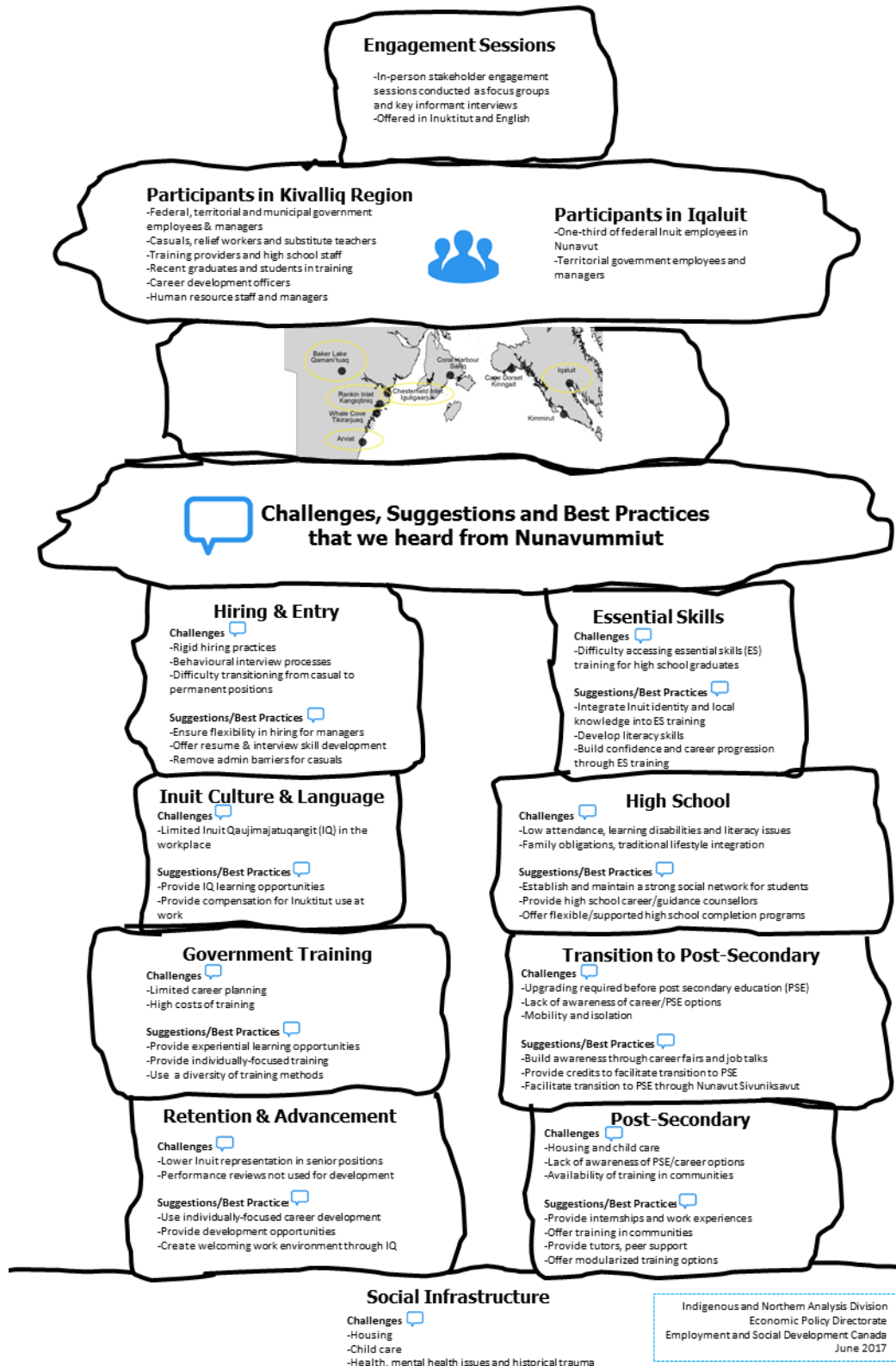
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## List of Acronyms and Abbreviations

- CDO: Career Development Officer
- ESDC: Employment and Social Development Canada
- ETP: Nunavut Arctic College's Environmental Technology Program
- GN: Government of Nunavut
- GoC: Government of Canada
- IEP: Inuit Employment Plan
- ILDP: Inuit Learning and Development Program
- IQ: Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit
- MGP: Municipal Government Program
- MTO: Municipal Training Organization
- NILFA: Nunavut Inuit Labour Force Analysis
- NILFA-TWG: NILFA technical working group
- NLC: Nunavut Literacy Council
- NTEP: Nunavut Teachers Education Program
- NTI: Nunavut Tunngavik Inc.
- Nunavut Agreement: Nunavut Inuit Land Claims Agreement
- NS: Nunavut Sivuniksavut
- PASS: Pathway to Adult Secondary School
- PETP: pre-employment training plan
- Pilimmaksaivik: the Federal Centre of Excellence for Inuit Employment
- SAO: Senior Administrative Officer

# Executive Summary

## What We Heard: Challenges, Suggestions and Best Practices in Inuit Government Employment



## Introduction

Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) conducted stakeholder engagement sessions in Nunavut in March and April of 2017 to broaden our understanding of Inuit interest, availability and preparedness for employment in government in the territory of Nunavut. This research is part of ESDC's ongoing work related to the Nunavut Inuit Labour Force Analysis (NILFA), which is one of Canada's responsibilities under Article 23 of the *Nunavut Inuit Land Claims Agreement* (Nunavut Agreement). NILFA research is designed to support the development of Inuit Employment Plans (IEPs) and pre-employment training plans (PETPs).

The objectives of the stakeholder engagement sessions were to:

- collect qualitative information via in-person interviews and focus group sessions with key organizations and individuals;
- respond to one of Canada's commitments in *Moving Forward in Nunavut: An Agreement Relating to the Settlement of Litigation and Certain Implementation Matters* (schedule D.8) related to conducting key informant interviews and focus groups in Nunavut;
- learn about challenges, suggestions and best practices, as well as pathways to increase Inuit employment, to inform policy makers and program developers involved in the development and use of IEPs and PETPs;
- provide stakeholders with background information on NILFA-related initiatives; and,
- build and establish relationships between ESDC and key stakeholders in Nunavut who have information or data that could support the NILFA.

## Methodology

ESDC conducted engagement sessions in the form of semi-structured, in-person key informant interviews and focus groups in March and April of 2017. The engagement sessions were co-facilitated by three members of ESDC's Economic Policy Directorate, Indigenous and Northern Analysis Division: Tooneejoulee Kootoo-Chiarello, Douglas Hagar and David Horan-Lunney. The original plan was to visit five Kivalliq communities: Rankin Inlet, Arviat, Baker Lake, Whale Cove, and Chesterfield Inlet. Unfortunately, due to weather, we were unable to visit Whale Cove. In addition to the Kivalliq communities, we also visited Iqaluit, where we met with Government of Nunavut (GN) and Government of Canada (GoC) employees.

The chosen communities provided us with a diversity of experiences with government employment. In Nunavut, Rankin Inlet, Arviat, and Baker Lake are the three largest communities outside of Iqaluit. These three communities have decentralized GN headquarter positions and Rankin Inlet is the regional centre for the Kivalliq region. Whale Cove and Chesterfield Inlet are among Nunavut's smallest communities with the fewest number of government jobs and no decentralized GN headquarter positions.

In Iqaluit, we primarily spoke with Inuit employees of the GoC who were participating in Inuit networking events organized by Pilimmaksaivik (the Federal Centre of Excellence for Inuit Employment).

Participants were chosen from several stakeholder groups. These groups included:

- training providers;
- recent high school graduates and participants and graduates of adult training programs;
- casual, relief and substitute staff of GN and GoC;
- Career Development Officers;
- new Inuit employees, including the Inuit Leadership Development Project participants;
- human resources staff and managers; and
- municipal staff.

In total, we met with approximately 100 Nunavummiut during the stakeholder engagement sessions. The vast majority of participants in our engagement sessions were Inuit government employees, including new and long-term employees occupying part-time, full-time, casual, relief and term positions within governments (municipal, territorial and federal). We heard from employees in both management and non-management positions. While the focus of the research was to hear from Inuit



employees, we also heard from non-Inuit employees who are experienced in managing and/or hiring Inuit employees, and those who are responsible for training and development. It is worth noting that we met with approximately one-third of the Nunavut Inuit employees in the federal government during the stakeholder engagement sessions.

Inuit government employees who participated in our stakeholder sessions had the following characteristics:

- A majority of Inuit government employees identified that they were fluent in Inuktitut and English.
- The age range of the participants we spoke to was approximately 20-55 years old and a majority of participants were female.
- Many of the participants held a high school diploma while some had completed post-secondary studies from Nunavut Arctic College, and some had attended colleges or universities located in other areas of Canada.
- A majority of participants also had previous work experience from non-government organizations or other levels of government.

Potential participants were identified using several means. The NILFA technical working group (TWG), comprised of representatives from the federal and territorial governments and Nunavut Tunngavik Inc. (NTI), provided input on which groups and individuals to invite to the stakeholder engagement sessions. ESDC engaged the services of NVision Insight Group Inc. to help identify additional people in the communities. ESDC coordinated with Pilimmaksaivik who solicited interest from federal Inuit employees to participate in engagement sessions in Iqaluit. Finally, we drew on the networks of team members who had contacts in the communities.

ESDC strived to be as flexible as possible to accommodate participants, all of whom were advised that we would be respecting anonymity of all participants in the summary report. Whenever possible, we gave participants the option of either meeting us in a neutral location, or going to them at a convenient location and at a time that was convenient for them, including evenings or weekends. Participants were interviewed in groups or on an individual basis and we encouraged participants to follow up with us by telephone or e-mail (or in person, if possible) if they had any additional thoughts or comments following our session. A few participants did, in fact, follow up to share more insights.

The engagement sessions were primarily conducted in English, though participants were also invited to speak in their language of choice. Many participants chose to

participate in Inuktitut. In these cases, Ms. Kootoo-Chiarelo translated the input and ensured that the input was incorporated into the session notes.

The engagement sessions followed a moderator guide which was developed by ESDC in consultation with NILFA-TWG and NVision Insight Inc. The moderator guide allowed for a semi-structured interview style which provided the flexibility for participants to describe their experiences and provide their insights. While there were specific questions for each grouping of stakeholders, all stakeholders were asked the following questions.

1. How is Inuit employment in government and training progressing in this community?
2. What are examples of best practices and success stories?
3. What would work better to increase Inuit employment and further Inuit success in government employment?

We also had secondary goals of providing information to the communities and building relationships between ESDC and stakeholders who will be able to use NILFA information and who will be valuable contacts for future NILFA initiatives. To this end, ESDC provided “community profiles” of the communities that were visited. These community profiles included labour market information that was compiled from various sources, including the 2001 and 2016 Census, the 2011 National Household Survey, and the Aboriginal Peoples Survey (2001, 2006, 2012).

Note that this project focused on the Kivalliq region of Nunavut. This is the first of several planned engagement sessions that will take place in the future. ESDC is planning future engagement sessions in the Qikiqtaaluk region (including more engagement sessions in Iqaluit) and the Kitikmeot region.

### **About this summary report**

This paper is a summary report of what we heard from stakeholders during our engagement sessions. In writing this report, we have endeavoured to accurately summarize the experiences of participants and capture ideas for what can be addressed to improve the representation rate for Inuit in the government. The suggestions and opinions presented in this report are meant to reflect the views of the participants and should not be considered ESDC’s or the NILFA-TWG’s recommendations. While the testimonies of the key stakeholders are invaluable for deepening the discussions related to increasing Inuit employment in government, readers should be cautious about making generalizations across governments, departments, and communities based on this report, as the process for selecting

participants was not randomized and statements are not intended to be representative of any particular group.

This report presents a series of chapters exploring issues related to government employment, including hiring, advancement, and the incorporation of Inuit culture and language into the workplace.

The remaining chapters explore issues related to building the future workforce over the medium to long-term, including essential skills training, high school completion, post-secondary and community social infrastructure. These factors were highlighted by participants as important for creating a pathway to government employment, and sustainable employment in general, for Inuit in Nunavut.

## **Acknowledgements**

This project would not have been possible without the enthusiastic participation of Nunavummiut who are committed to the fulfillment of Article 23 of the *Nunavut Agreement*. We are extremely grateful for the welcome that we received in communities and the generosity and patience of the participants who shared personal and professional experiences, including challenges that they have faced and factors that have contributed to their success. Frequently, we heard that Inuit are proud of the *Nunavut Agreement*, and are eager to work towards fulfilling the goals and objectives of Article 23. They spoke about the resilience of Inuit who have persevered through challenges in the past and were optimistic about their future. We were inspired by the Inuit with whom we spoke; they were passionate about public service, committed to improving their communities and providing opportunities for Nunavut Inuit.

We would also like to thank our NILFA-TWG partners from Nunavut Tunngavik Inc. and the Government of Nunavut for their assistance and guidance. We thank our colleagues at Service Canada for their hospitality and for providing us with a welcoming space to meet with stakeholders. We thank our colleagues at Pilimmaksaivik for inviting us to engage with federal Inuit employees in Iqaluit. We also benefitted from the input, guidance and assistance we received from ESDC's Indigenous Affairs Directorate and Public Affairs and Stakeholder Relations Branch.

## **Chapter 1: Hiring and Entry into the Public Service**

The *Nunavut Agreement* acknowledges that strategies for increasing Inuit employment will often be unique to the Nunavut context and that best practices for human resource management in Nunavut may differ from best practices in other parts of Canada. This is consistent with what we heard from stakeholders.

Throughout the stakeholder engagement process, participants provided insight into their experiences and those of other Inuit, including barriers to recruitment as well as lessons learned, to ensure that Inuit are provided with the opportunities to successfully get hired and begin careers in the Public Service. The following summarizes what we heard from participants.

### **Hiring Processes**

Participants discussed several challenges, suggestions and best practices related to hiring Inuit government employees.

#### **Challenges related to hiring processes**

##### *Rigid hiring procedures*

We heard that flexibility is key to hiring Inuit who demonstrate potential for being able to meet the requirements of the position, but we also heard that the converse is true. Stakeholders described examples where rigid rules and overly-bureaucratic processes have prevented managers from hiring Inuit whom the managers believed to be capable of doing the job. Participants recognized that the rules and structures of the hiring processes currently in place are intended to prevent the occurrence and perception of prejudice and nepotism. However, we heard about many cases where an Inuk applicant was screened out of a hiring process because his/her interviewing skills were inadequate or because he/she did not follow the application process precisely, even in cases where the hiring manager had experience with the candidate and was confident that the candidate was competent or could be easily trained to do the job.

##### *Interview processes*

Many participants spoke about how the hiring process is not consistent with Inuit societal values. We heard from many participants that Inuit are taught not to brag about their skills and abilities or to consider themselves to be better than other people. Some participants also pointed out how, for many generations, Inuit were taught to feel that they were less capable or inferior to others – particularly southerners – and therefore it

is very difficult for some Inuit to try to sell themselves to an employer as the best person for a job.

The job interview process, on the other hand, requires the opposite behaviour; people are expected to sell themselves as the best person for the job and to “brag” about their abilities. For many Inuit, this feels unnatural and wrong. The result is that some Inuit do not do very well in a job interview and the experience can reinforce the impression that the government is not a workplace where Inuit belong.

### **Suggestions by Nunavummiut and best practices for hiring**

When asked for best practices or changes that could be made to the hiring process to address these issues, participants had several suggestions. Participants suggested ways to address the need for Inuit to improve job search skills, and they suggested ways for the hiring process to be adapted to better align with Inuit culture so that qualified candidates, or candidates with great potential, are not unduly screened out. These suggestions are described below.

#### *Support and coaching for resume writing and interview skills*

Career Development Officers (CDOs) in the GN Department of Family Services are recognized as key resources for helping potential candidates improve their resume writing and interviewing skills. These officers work with community members and employers to help match community members with vacant positions. They are aware of the GN hiring process and part of their job responsibilities includes coaching candidates in the process. Some participants we spoke to were not aware of the CDO in their community or that they would be a resource for helping in the job interviewing process; these participants suggested that more could be done to raise awareness of GN's career development services in the communities. It should be noted that, while all communities are served by a CDO, an individual officer may be responsible for multiple communities, in which case they are not present in the community at all times. In addition to GN employment services, it was suggested that high schools and other education programs should devote some resources into developing job search skills.

Some stakeholders suggested that many Inuit are not aware of governments' obligations under Article 23 of the *Nunavut Agreement*. Several participants suggested that awareness should be built up so that Inuit who are applying to a government job are sure to include that they are enrolled under the *Nunavut Agreement*, and to highlight skills such as fluency in Inuktitut and awareness of Inuit culture and economy when they are writing their resumes. This is especially important because we heard that, in many cases, managers look at the applications of Inuit first, before even considering non-Inuit

and non-Nunavummiut. If Nunavut Inuit do not include these items, they may inadvertently screen themselves out of the selection process.

### *Flexibility and discretion in hiring for managers*

In cases where hiring managers had a degree of flexibility and discretion in hiring, we heard of successful candidate searches that led to people being hired who may not have been hired in a more rigid context. In fact, some hiring managers expressed the opinion that it is actually unfair for everyone to be expected to go through the same hiring process, because it biases the process toward people who are good at interviewing, when that is not necessarily the skill that is needed for the job. Some participants suggested that the interview should not be given the weight that it currently has when making the decision to hire a Nunavut Inuk, especially in cases where they have done well on other parts of the selection process.

We heard several concerns about the use of behavioural interview questions. Behavioural interviews ask candidates to demonstrate their skills and abilities by telling stories about a past experience that illustrate their skills and abilities. The premise behind this type of interviewing is that the most accurate predictor of future performance is past performance in similar situations. This interview method is meant to benefit Inuit who do not necessarily have formal training and credentials. However, we heard from many people that this interview style is not easy for some Inuit and it was suggested that hiring managers use interview and testing methods that are appropriate for the interviewee and the position they are applying for. While it is out of the scope of this project to fully evaluate the challenges, benefits and outcomes of behavioural interviewing, the concerns expressed by participants suggest that further research could be done to make sure that this process is applied in a manner that is conducive to hiring Inuit.

Municipal-level government officials reported that they tend to have more flexibility than the territorial or federal governments with regard to whom and how they hire. We heard from supervisors at the municipal level who had great success by hiring people based on their potential to do a job, rather than existing credentials, and then developing a training plan that provided the new employee with necessary skills over time. We also heard from one supervisor in the GN who reported that they personally had some degree of flexibility in whom they hire, but that this was a result of a long track record of success as a manager and the use of alternate accountability measures.

It was noted that, while hiring based on a candidate's potential rather than his/her credentials is a good way to increase Inuit hiring, it is critical that there are clear plans

and processes in place to provide a new employee with supports so that he/she is not placed into a position where he/she cannot succeed. We heard that a best practice for hiring based on potential, rather than credentials, is to start the employee with 25% of the regular workload and responsibility while 75% of their time would be spent on training. Over a period of time this ratio would change until they are prepared and able to do their job.

It was stressed to us that providing managers with flexibility and discretion does not mean that they are less accountable or prone to nepotism. Participants emphasized that it is necessary for managers to have an understanding of the importance of hiring Inuit (including familiarity with Article 23), to be able to identify potential in Inuit candidates, and to provide new hires with the support and training needed to become successful in their careers. It was suggested that the focus of accountability for hiring managers should be related to whether they did as much as possible to ensure that Inuit are hired rather than making sure that human resource processes were strictly followed. It should be noted that our discussions were limited to the hiring process and that participants did not speak in depth about the implications that increased training needs and supports have on the overall capacity of an organization or the implications for project management. Further discussion would be warranted to establish best practices for balancing training needs of new employees with the operational needs of a high performance organization.

#### *Interviews conducted by Inuit and language of choice*

We frequently heard about the importance of including Inuit interviewers, which is consistent with Article 23 of the *Nunavut Agreement*. Participants expressed that having Inuit on the hiring panel made the process less intimidating and reassured candidates that they were welcome and that they would be understood. Furthermore, we heard that when given the option to conduct the interview in the language, or languages, of their choice, candidates were better able to express themselves and therefore they did better in the interview process. One participant, who participated in many interviews, estimated that approximately half of interviewees chose to conduct their interviews entirely or partially in Inuktitut.

### **Casual Employment**

Casuals are intended to fill short-term hiring needs for governments. We talked to several individuals who were casuals or who had experience being employed as a casual in the past. They noted a number of challenges and lessons learned related to casual employment and the transition to more permanent positions.

## **Challenges related to casual employment**

### *Difficulty transitioning to permanent positions*

Issues related to casual employment for Inuit in government were raised several times throughout the stakeholder engagement sessions. Experiences with casual employment varied a great deal; while we did hear of some cases where a casual or term position was the desired situation for the employee and employer (for example, casual positions were helpful while participants were in school or for employers to fill a need for which there was no permanent position yet created), most people who were casual employees, or had been casual employees, expressed frustration.

Both managers and employees generally reported that casual employees were interested in permanent employment and many saw obtaining casual employment as a “foot in the door” to the public service, where people could gain valuable experience and network and then obtain a permanent job. However, we heard of many instances where Inuit were employed in casual positions for years, yet each time that they tried to apply for a similar or identical permanent position, they were not successful because they did not have the required credentials, or they did not perform well in the interview process. Despite ‘failing’ the hiring process, some were nonetheless hired again on a casual basis, suggesting that they were, in fact, capable of doing the job.

### *Stress from lack of security and benefits*

A few participants expressed that the administrative process for hiring casuals was shorter and more streamlined than permanent staffing processes. As a result, in some cases, we heard that casuals were hired to fill a permanent position and that a selection process to fill the position permanently may have been more appropriate. We heard from some participants that there were several negative consequences to prolonged periods of casual employment. The lack of job security caused stress among participants and required employees to divide their attention between doing their job and needing to look for work well before the end of their contract. Some participants also expressed resentment that being employed on a casual basis prevented them from having access to several (though not all) benefits that they would have received as permanent employees, such as pension and parental leave benefits. Even for permanent employees in the same workplace, some participants found it frustrating to witness what they felt was an abuse of casual contracts.



## **Suggestions by Nunavummiut and best practices related to casual employment**

### *Providing casual employees with the tools and supports to obtain permanent employment*

We heard from managers about best practices that they have used to help casual employees gain permanent employment. One manager stressed that casuals are the best pool of potential permanent employees and that having a casual/term should be seen as an opportunity to get a person ready for a permanent position. This manager indicated that s/he took time to ensure that casual employees were aware of the hiring process and resources that would help them with resume writing and interview preparation. Conscious of the difficulties described above related to the interview process, the manager made sure that casual employees had opportunities to do mock interviews as a way of practicing. We also heard from multiple participants that it is very important to provide as much training and guidance as possible during a casual term, so that when a permanent position becomes available, the casual employee has built up confidence to apply for the job.

### *Removing administrative barriers for casual employees*

We heard that some of the barriers to transitioning from casual to permanent employment were based on processes that casual employees may not be aware of. For instance, we heard that casual employees' resumes are held for six months and then removed from the list of potential employees. Some stakeholders found this to be an arbitrary amount of time and noted that many casual employees are not aware of this practice. We heard from multiple participants, including managers, about missed opportunities where qualified Inuit candidates did not hear about job openings because they assumed that their resumes were actively on file with the GN. It was suggested that this situation could be rectified either by changing the procedures or communicating better with potential candidates when their resumes are expiring.

## **Orientation**

Participants provided us with insight into the best practices for ensuring that new employees are supported and provided with an orientation that sets them on a path to success in their government careers. We spoke with new employees, whose orientation experience is fresh or ongoing, managers who help to welcome new employees and long-term employees who told us about their past experiences and what they have witnessed from other new employees.

We frequently heard about the Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit principle of Tunnganarniq, or fostering a good spirit by being open, welcoming and inclusive. Both positive and negative experiences are very instructive in how to provide a welcoming environment and a good orientation. Suggestions and best practices related to orientation of new Inuit employees in government are provided below.

### **Suggestions by Nunavummiut and best practices related to orientation**

#### *Providing orientation to new employees using multiple methods and assigning a key contact to field questions*

One insight we heard is that hiring managers should prepare for a new employee to start. This includes setting aside time to meet with employees regularly throughout their first weeks to check in and answer questions. We heard that joining the government can be a very daunting experience and that people learn in stages. Employees appreciated having written materials to study to learn about the department and the job they are doing. However, some employees noted that it was overwhelming to be presented with a large binder of information, with no direction about what was most important to learn about first. In general, participants liked learning about the workplace through a mix of written materials, formal instruction and informal discussion.

Regardless of the method of instruction, there was consensus that it is important to have a person, or multiple people, who the employee can speak with informally and ask questions. This applies to the responsibilities of the job and logistical procedures such as navigating the pay and benefits structures. In many cases in Nunavut, workplaces are small and supervisors may be in another community, so these interactions do not always happen naturally. We heard that it is important for managers and colleagues to check in with new employees and create opportunities for learning.

#### *Creating a welcoming workplace*

We heard of some relatively simple actions that go a long way in making new employees feel welcome. We heard from one employee that simply placing a welcome sign over her desk on her first day made her feel welcome. Introductions are also very important. In cases where new employees were not introduced to the other colleagues, they tended to feel isolated. On the other hand, other employees spoke about how they felt welcome when a colleague or supervisor took them around to all the cubicles in the building to make sure that she had a chance to meet everyone.

#### *Meeting with and networking with other Inuit employees*

Participants also spoke about the importance of meeting and networking with other Inuit employees. In some smaller departments, for example, there are relatively few Inuit colleagues with whom they can interact, speak Inuktitut, and share experiences. GoC employees we spoke to in Iqaluit were participating in a week of workshops and networking opportunities with Inuit employees through an initiative of Pilimmaksaivik. Several employees spoke about how they found that initiative to be very beneficial. This was especially the case for Inuit employees who worked in offices where they were one of few or the only Inuit employee. Employees expressed that they believed that these meetings should continue on a regular basis.

*Ensuring that new employees have access to training opportunities from the start*

Participants in public-facing positions reiterated how important it is to have opportunities for in-person training to supplement on-line training. Some participants from a relatively remote community spoke about how they completed several online courses in the first months of their employment. In addition, they were then sent to a week-long training with colleagues from other communities. The in-person training allowed the employees to ask questions of colleagues and learn about issues that do not come up regularly in their community. They expressed that the in-person training solidified much of what they had been studying, increased confidence and provided them with a network of colleagues they could call, rather than always asking a supervisor whenever questions arose.

## **Chapter 2: Government Training Initiatives**

We talked to Inuit government employees in the Government of Nunavut, hamlets and the Government of Canada across Kivalliq and in Iqaluit. Participants discussed challenges and best practices related to training options provided to government employees such as training identified in learning plans or performance agreements, work-related courses, experiential learning, the Inuit Learning and Development Program (ILDP), and the Municipal Training Organization (MTO) programming. Information about these programs as well as challenges, suggestions and best practices will be discussed below.

### **Challenges in government training**

During the engagement sessions, a number of challenges related to entering or obtaining the necessary training to support Inuit government employee career development were discussed by participants.

#### *Career planning*

We heard that regular discussions on career ambitions and progress were found to be beneficial for Inuit employees because it exposes them to opportunities and can motivate them to seek out training and new experiences. However, some Inuit government employees noted that they did not have learning or development plans and have not had discussions with their manager on their career goals. There was a desire to obtain the necessary training to help Inuit employees advance in their current departments.

#### *Costs of Training*

Some Inuit employees noted that the training that they needed to develop was available but that cost and budget limitations had limited their access to the training. Costs for training can be higher if the employees need to travel to other locations to attend.

### **Suggestions by Nunavummiut and best practices in government training**

#### *Experiential Learning*

Experiential learning is a process of learning that focuses on learning through experience. Examples include acting or developmental assignments, job shadowing opportunities, as well as on-the-job training. Most Inuit government employees

identified a preference for hands-on learning experiences. Experiential learning was also found to be an effective learning and development method by stakeholders.

### *Inuit Learning and Development Project (ILDLP)*

The Government of Canada offers the Inuit Learning and Development Project (ILDLP) to provide Inuit in Nunavut with pre-employment and job training in order to develop their skills for potential public service jobs in the territory. Participants take training blended with four 4-month work experience terms within federal government departments and Inuit organizations. Participants also receive coaching and mentorship throughout their experience. Experienced public servants act as mentors, giving advice about setting goals, identifying resources and finding further education and career development opportunities. ILDP coordinators oversee online and classroom learning throughout the duration of the training. As well, participants receive beginner or advanced Inuktitut language courses throughout the term of the project. At the end of the 16-month project, graduates are placed in an inventory for consideration for term and permanent positions in the territorial and federal government, Nunavut Tunngavik Inc. or Qikiqtaaluk Corporation.<sup>1</sup>

Several ILDP participants noted that they had heard about this initiative through word-of-mouth or through their social networks and that they had been encouraged by family or friends who had been or had known recent graduates. They noted that ILDP encouraged them to explore career options and seek to improve their potential quality of life.

ILDLP can help increase interest in government employment and help Inuit to realize their potential. ILDP participants found that participating in the project had increased their motivation, as well as their knowledge of the types of jobs available in the government. For example, one participant explained that ILDP “changed my view on the government and what I want to do with my life. I want to stay in government. Originally, I thought I’d only become a labourer and now I know that I can do much more.”

### *Individually-tailored training and supports*

Developing training plans for all Inuit employees was identified by stakeholders as a best practice. Managers identified that an important part of the development of training

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<sup>1</sup> See the following for more information: Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency. *The Inuit Learning and Development Project*. Updated December 2015. Accessed June 2017 <http://www.cannor.gc.ca/eng/1386010541881/1386010818127>

plans includes ensuring that new employees are exposed to different types of jobs and teams within the organization. Experiences can be aligned with the individual's interests. "I've had cases in the past where a new employee was very interested in arts and culture. I set them up with an arts advisor to help develop applications for arts and culture projects."

Participants identified that hamlets focus on hiring staff with proven potential and reliability and then work to develop individual training plans for new staff. As one hamlet official noted, "the key is that we build the team here". Hamlets draw upon a large amount of general training through the Municipal Training Organization (MTO), including the Municipal Government Program (MGP), Protection Services,<sup>2</sup> and targeted training. MGP includes core training for municipal administration and several streams, including: office administration, planning & land administrator, recreation leader, public works foreman, finance officer, and assistant Senior Administrative Officer (SAO). Protection services training includes firefighting and search and rescue volunteer training. Targeted training involves developing courses based on specific requests from municipalities such as solid waste management, heavy equipment operator, and SAO professional development.

In addition to using MTO training, some municipalities provide additional customized training opportunities for municipal staff. For example, Arviat has a Memorandum of Understanding with Northern College in Ontario to provide customized training that is not possible to acquire through MTO. As well, the municipalities develop training plans for staff, encouraging staff to take job-related training as well as cross-training for areas outside of their current position. Stakeholders identified that this training helps staff develop and ensures that the organization can more effectively fill vacancies, when they arise.

In addition to providing individually-tailored training, stakeholders also emphasized the importance of ensuring that wrap-around supports are available to the participants. Each individual has unique needs and may require different types of supports to succeed in training. Mentorship of employees by co-workers or more senior employees was one type of support that we heard was particularly effective for Inuit.

### *Diversity of training options and methods*

Stakeholders identified that a diversity of training options works best. Some Inuit learn best through hands-on learning and observation, whereas others may learn best in classroom settings. There is no one-size-fits-all approach. In-person, hands-on training

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<sup>2</sup> Municipal Training Organization Business Plan, 2014-2015. *Municipal Training Organization*.

was found to be effective for those who may require support, who may not be as effective at self-motivation, or who may not be as comfortable with computers.

A majority of Inuit government employees felt that online training was also effective, and allowed people to stay within their communities and work at their own pace. However, it was noted that there were existing challenges with slow Internet connection speeds and the high cost of Internet in Nunavut. It was also identified that online courses can be problematic in identifying the need for and offering support to learners.

Inuit public servants who had travelled to the South for classroom training generally felt that the type of training that they received was effective. In addition, some frontline government employees travelled to larger urban centres for initial orientation training because caseloads were higher in those centres, which provided more exposure to various types of issues than they typically encountered in their communities. This type of experience was found to be valuable by the staff who participated. However, it should be noted that some Inuit public servants also expressed a desire for more training opportunities that are available in their communities so that they did not have to disrupt their lives in order to get training.

#### *Promotion of training opportunities*

Most public servants felt that there was sufficient access to training; however, some participants noted that some Inuit were unaware of potential training opportunities and that there is a need for greater information sharing. They suggested creating a training coordinator position that would be tasked with sharing opportunities for employees. Alternatively, participants suggested raising potential learning opportunities and needs during performance agreement discussions.

#### *Cultural awareness workshops for Inuit and non-Inuit employees in Nunavut*

Inuit government employees highlighted the need to ensure that government departments in Nunavut have cultural awareness activities to promote Inuit culture in the workplace. They identified that including non-Inuit employees in these activities would help to promote Inuit culture in the department as a whole and also could provide opportunities for Inuit employees to develop leadership skills by leading training and other activities.

Participants also identified that there was a need for Inuktitut language courses in the suite of government training programs.

## Chapter 3: Inuit Culture and Languages in the Workplace

Participants provided insight into the value and desire of integrating Inuit culture and languages into government workplaces. We heard that while there are government positions in many of the communities across Nunavut, some Inuit were less drawn to seeking employment in government due to the perception that government workplaces do not provide a welcoming environment for Inuit and that government jobs are not meant for Inuit. Stakeholders pointed to both historic and on-going reasons for these perceptions among Inuit.

Historically, government jobs were almost exclusively staffed by non-Inuit and in some cases we heard about neighbourhoods in communities that were reserved exclusively for non-Inuit (it was unclear if this was an official policy or the de facto practice in communities). Even as Inuit became more integrated into the Public Service, we heard that the workplaces maintained a very “southern” structure and feeling that persists, in some instances, to this day. For some Inuit, there is a different perception depending on the level of government. For instance, we heard that some Inuit were less drawn to seeking federal employment due to the historic trauma associated with dealing with the government. That said, the actual experiences of stakeholders in both federal and territorial workplaces were varied, including both positive and negative experiences.

We heard that the integration of Inuit culture and languages in the workplace is of high importance to Inuit government employees for making the government workplace “tunnganarniq” (open, welcoming, and inclusive), which participants directly linked to retention. We heard that traditional knowledge has been passed down by Inuit inter-generationally and defines the Inuit interrelationship with the elements, animals, people and family. Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit (IQ) principles<sup>3</sup> have been identified as guiding Inuit in being able human beings in an Inuit society and to better society as a whole.

IQ translates as “that which Inuit have always known to be true.” The eight IQ principles include the following:

- Inuuqatigiitsiarniq: Respecting others, relationships and caring for people.
- Tunnganarniq: Fostering good spirits by being open, welcoming and inclusive.
- Pijitsirniq: Serving and providing for family and/or community.
- Aajiiqatigiinni: Decision making through discussion and consensus.

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<sup>3</sup> See the following for more information: F. Lévesque. 2014. “Revisiting *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit*: Inuit knowledge, culture, language and values in Nunavut institutions since 1999. *Études/Inuit/Studies*. 38(1-2): 115-136;

S. Tagalik. 2010. *Inuit Qaujimajatuqangit: The Role of Indigenous Knowledge Supporting Wellness in Inuit Communities in Nunavut*. National Collaborating Centre for Aboriginal Health. <http://www.nccah-ccnsa.ca/docs/fact%20sheets/child%20and%20youth/Inuit%20IQ%20EN%20web.pdf>



- Pilimmaksarniq/Pijariuqsarniq: Development of skills through observation, mentoring, practice, and effort.
- Piliriqatigiinniq/Ikajuqtiigiinniq: Working together for a common cause.
- Qanuqtuurniq: Being innovative and resourceful.
- Avatittinnik Kamatsiarniq: Respect and care for the land, animals and the environment.

We heard that many Inuit are guided by the IQ principles when addressing challenges and opportunities and that this approach could be used as a best practice to promote an inclusive and healthy workplace environment.

We heard that frequent exposure to IQ should be provided to all Nunavummiut employees because it creates an opportunity to experience continuous cultural learning in their workplaces. Employees suggested that they feel more motivated when they are provided opportunities to incorporate IQ within teams, and that these experiences also inspire engagement among team members.

Many of the Inuit employees whom we spoke to take the initiative to integrate culture in the workplace by providing country food, being inclusive to all members of the team, working through consensus building and planning IQ days. IQ days are learning experiences that can be provided to employees that educate them on traditional Inuit knowledge and practices which encourage teams to bond and work together.

In our stakeholder engagement sessions, we heard a number of challenges, suggestions and best practices for integrating Inuit culture and language into government workplaces in Nunavut.

## **Challenges in integrating Inuit culture and language**

### *Incorporating traditional practices and IQ into the workplace*

We heard from participants who felt that there is a lack of integration of traditional knowledge into many of the government workplaces in the territory. Some expressed that job descriptions, performance agreements and other performance evaluation mechanisms lacked traditional IQ principles. As well, some participants expressed that they felt disrespected by southern colleagues, as some seemed uninterested in learning about Inuit culture despite living in the territory. They suggested that teaching IQ principles, including finding ways to work in a consensus-based work environment, could help bridge potential divides. As well, participants noted that the current

southern-based business model does not incorporate IQ values, which they felt made it difficult to use traditional concepts when addressing issues at the workplace.

Inuit traditional practices and family obligations can lead to work absences or periods of unemployment, sometimes with little notice. It was highlighted that managers need to strive to have extra capacity in their organizations to be able to respond to workplace pressures that result from these situations. For example, we heard of examples where Inuit employees would not come to work because of a sudden hunting opportunity (e.g. a whale has come near the community). We also heard of longer-term interruptions to employment due to traditional custom adoption<sup>4</sup>. The decision for a family to custom adopt a child sometimes happens with little notice, meaning that one parent (usually the mother) will take a parental leave with much less notice than if she were giving birth. As child care facilities in the communities are quite limited, there is pressure to stay at home with the children at least until they are school-aged.

## **Suggestions by Nunavummiut and best practices in integrating Inuit culture and language**

### *Opportunities for IQ learning*

We heard from participants that there was a desire that workplaces identify ways to incorporate IQ by creating learning opportunities for all staff and working together to incorporate them into learning plans. Integrating IQ values into the workplace was viewed as being particularly important to help address situations where Inuit may have felt there was a lack respect for Inuit employees.

Participants suggested that elders could be invited to the workplace to provide guidance and leadership in all levels of the workplace. Elders encourage youth to be respectful and forgive, which are valuable concepts to incorporate into the workplace. Some participants felt that younger Inuit who have not been raised with the guidance of elders may be more likely to exhibit disrespect for others or may use retribution to solve issues.

Inuit government employees expressed that many workplaces had not held IQ days due to workload or due to overly complicated approval processes required to host internal events. Participants expressed that the opportunity to create formal, or perhaps mandatory, IQ days should be incorporated into corporate planning as non-Inuit would then also participate and gain so much from the special day.

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<sup>4</sup> Adoption of a child in accordance with the Consolidation of Aboriginal Custom Adoption Recognition Act: <http://gov.nu.ca/sites/default/files/acara.pdf>

It was suggested cultural awareness workshops on historic traumas, such as the impacts of residential schools be held and be open to all Nunavummiut employees. Participants identified that the cultural awareness workshops would help to facilitate greater cultural understanding among all employees.

#### *Compensation for Inuktitut language in the workplace*

Many Inuit are bilingual in Inuktitut and English and are often requested or required to conduct tasks in Inuktitut, such as on-the-job translations. However, federal employees noted that they are not financially compensated for English-Inuktitut bilingualism whereas those who are bilingual in French and English receive a bilingual bonus. Therefore, Inuit employees suggested that they should receive a similar language bonus for using their Inuktitut language skills at work.

## **Chapter 4: Retention and Advancement of Inuit Employees**

We spoke with participants about the retention and advancement of Inuit employees in government. It is worth noting that on the issue of advancement, we heard from some participants that, for them, advancement within an organization does not always have to mean promotion, since not all employees desire to move up the corporate ladder. Some participants noted that they were not interested in management positions due to the added stress and responsibility but they were interested in identifying training opportunities to broaden skill sets and diversify daily work tasks. We heard that, in some cases, employees who do not feel supported for advancement opportunities tend to move between the various levels of government seeking new opportunities. Some stakeholders felt that this movement creates vacancies that can limit organizational capacity.

The following are the key challenges, suggestions and best practices related to retention and advancement of Inuit employees that were identified by participants.

### **Challenges in retention and advancement of Inuit employees**

#### *Inuit representation in senior positions*

Participants identified that senior government positions generally had lower levels of Inuit representation. Entry level positions were the ones with the higher levels of Inuit representation. Stakeholders confirmed that there is a need to increase the level of representation in senior positions.

Hamlets within Nunavut tend to have higher rates of Inuit representation compared to other levels of government. From what we heard, this could be attributed to the types of jobs that are situated within the communities, the visibility of hamlet positions in the communities and because there are more trades and front-line positions.

#### *Performance reviews not being used to foster employee development*

Inuit employees expressed mixed feelings towards performance management plans. While some felt the performance management system supported employee learning and career advancement, others felt that they were not being used to support employee growth. Some viewed performance reviews as corporate mandated human resource practices and not responsive to employee development.

Some participants emphasized that formal education is often one of the most important factors in advancement. Moreover, it was noted that some Inuit lack the confidence to

apply for positions citing that they do not meet the educational requirements. They expressed that performance agreements could be used to help create advancement opportunities by considering past work experience and traditional knowledge and mapping out career plans.

### *Access to training*

In terms of broadening skill sets of Inuit employees, some participants noted that there was difficulty accessing training due to higher costs and local availability of specialized training. This limited the ability for Inuit government employees to access more specialized training and had an unintended consequence of sometimes creating vacancies since positions may require specific credentials.

### *Interview processes*

Many of the issues with the interview process identified in Section 3: Hiring and Entry into the Public Service were also raised in the context of the interviewing process for advancing or changing positions within the public service.

### *Working conditions*

Generally, Inuit expressed the preference to work the standard working days of Monday to Friday (37.5 hours per week) and were less attracted to shift-work or seasonal schedules. We heard that government was viewed as an ideal employer, as it provides competitive salaries with good benefits and allows for a work-life balance.

We also heard that many Inuit were hesitant to travel to obtain employment opportunities outside of their home communities on a temporary or permanent basis. Inuit often had family obligations in their home communities and a deep sense of connection to their communities. While there are many individuals who do move for work, we heard both first-hand and second-hand accounts of people who had chosen not to accept a promotion because it would require moving to another community. It was identified that senior government positions were often located in Iqaluit rather than the smaller communities.

### *Family responsibilities*

We heard that Inuit employees tend to place family as their highest priority over other obligations. Participants noted that this can be a factor that prevents Inuit from seeking advancement, especially if the new position requires a greater time commitment or

comes with added responsibility. For example, if a child or parent is ill, the parent will stay home to care for the family member regardless of work commitments. Some employees expressed the need for employers to be more compassionate to the realities of living in isolated communities, including the need to travel to southern cities to seek medical care. We also heard that limited access to childcare in many of the communities means that many Inuit employees must rely on friends and family for assistance. In some situations, families have had to seek nannies and live-in caregivers with difficulty.

## **Suggestions by Nunavummiut and best practices in retention and advancement**

### *Hamlets and individually-focused training plans*

Hamlets have achieved the highest levels of Inuit representation, which stakeholders attributed to the jobs being located in their home communities, the visibility of hamlet positions and because there are more opportunities in trades and front-line positions, which have lower experience and education requirements. As well, stakeholders identified that hamlets often hire individuals who showed potential and provide them with training to move into various roles. As previously mentioned, MTO and other customized training options have been used to help develop the skills of hamlet employees and assist in advancement.

### *Succession planning*

We heard from some participants that there is a lack of succession planning within government represents a lost opportunity. It was suggested that teams should forecast potential vacancies and plan to consistently train other Inuit staff in the organization to potentially take on those roles. Some of the hamlet staff that we spoke to mentioned that they try to anticipate vacancies and train staff in a variety of roles. They referred to this as ‘cross-training’ staff in their organization and identified that it had helped increase the retention and advancement of Inuit government employees because it exposes staff to a variety of roles within the organization and sometimes sparks interest in other positions.

One best practice that we heard about was making use of acting assignments. When there is a temporary vacancy resulting from such situations as a holiday, medical leave, parental leave, etc., employees can be provided with an opportunity to act in a higher level position. This is a training opportunity that can expose employees to management

positions and makes them better prepared to advance when more senior positions become available.

### *Welcoming work environment through Inuit cultural activities*

Several stakeholders saw a direct link between incorporating Inuit culture in the workplace (discussed in Chapter 3) and retention. Inuit government employees highlighted the importance for managers and co-workers to create a welcoming workplace. We heard that Inuit who did not feel welcomed or that were part of a team tend to seek new opportunities in other workplaces. To help create a more welcoming work environment, it was noted that IQ days are an effective way to boost confidence and teamwork among employees because they provide Inuit employees with opportunities to showcase and apply their skills and knowledge.

In addition to IQ days, it was suggested that managers and employees consider a variety of activities for Inuit and non-Inuit employees such as an Inuktitut lunch and learn. This could help reinforce Inuktitut language learning, help with team building and foster a more inclusive work environment.

### *Development programs*

We heard from staff that there is a desire for development programs for new and more senior staff. ILDP was praised for the variety of experiences it provides to its participants, who potentially may become new government employees. Government employees we spoke to desired other experiential development programs that could be used to learn about other jobs and roles in government as well as build new skills and abilities.

### *Helping employees overcome personal challenges*

Participants spoke about instances of employees who were living with social and medical issues, such as mental health crises, substance addiction and volatile family situations. These issues are known to affect job performance and attendance at work. We heard from managers who were very concerned for the well-being of their employees. Managers described the following best practices for supporting employees who are dealing with chronic issues or are in crisis: ensure that managers, both Inuit and non-Inuit, have an understanding of the historical traumas that Inuit have suffered and how those traumas affect current Inuit society; and, note that it is critical not to “write-off” an individual after an incident. For example, employees should not be judged

by their worst days, but rather they should be given the opportunity to prove that they are capable of coming back to work after a set-back.

We heard that it is important for supervisors to take time to work through issues with employees. We heard about several strategies that managers have for helping employees who are struggling. In some instances, managers found it helpful to discuss personal experience with his/her own family members who may have gone through similar situations and to encourage the employees to use the resources that are available in the community. One supervisor spoke about the importance of keeping people employed who are going through issues because it helps with pride and stress. Several supervisors spoke about how it is worth taking the time to help an employee through a personal situation, rather than letting them go and having to hire and train a new person.



## Chapter 5: Essential Skills and Pre-Employment Training

In order to achieve representative levels of Inuit employment at all levels of government in Nunavut, participants highlighted a variety of medium and long-term factors that must be considered. Essential skills and pre-employment training were two of the factors commonly discussed by participants.

During the engagement sessions, we heard that in many Inuit communities, there were challenges with essential skills, such as literacy and numeracy.<sup>5</sup> These skills are generally obtained via high school completion, however in Nunavut, approximately half of Inuit do not complete high school and a sizable amount of Inuit may lack basic literacy, numeracy and other essential skills required for government or other employment (note that high school completion is discussed further in Chapter 6). Some participants also noted that, even among high school graduates, literacy, numeracy and other essential skills (such as computer skills) tended to be quite underdeveloped for some Inuit in the communities.

We heard about a variety of initiatives for providing essential skills upgrading in the Kivalliq region. For example, Nunavut Arctic College offers the Adult Basic Education / Essential Skills program in all Nunavut communities. This 28-week program blends training that is focussed on building learner confidence, learning about the history of Nunavut and Inuit societal values, facilitating career planning and fostering literacy, numeracy and essential skills. It also incorporates practical workplace experiences as well as sessions with elders to discuss and develop traditional life skills.

The Nunavut Literacy Council (NLC) programs provide literacy training to those who are furthest away from employment or education. The NLC operates a variety of literacy-development programs in communities that build essential skills through informal teaching methods that integrate traditional knowledge into learning activities. Through experience and lessons learned from previous training programs, it was found that having training immersed within Inuit cultural activities led to the best outcomes. Using an informal path of developing language skills integrated into traditional knowledge was found to be less intimidating for participants. By focusing on traditional teachings and developing English and Inuktitut language skills informally, more successful programs were created.

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<sup>5</sup> For more information on essential skills, see: <https://www.canada.ca/en/employment-social-development/programs/essential-skills/definitions.html>

The Kivalliq Mine Training Society has also offered pre-employment and essential skills training to individuals prior to entering formal training. The training offered allows participants to gain confidence as well as explore the types of jobs available and whether they would be a good fit for them.

## **Challenges in essential skills and pre-employment training**

### *Difficulty accessing essential skills/pre-employment training for high school graduates*

Stakeholders identified that essential skills and pre-employment programs are often not accessible for high school graduates who are not enrolled in post-secondary studies. They identified that there is a need for high school graduates to be able to access this type of programming due to literacy, numeracy and essential skills issues that exist for some graduates. We heard from stakeholders in the post-secondary education sector who noted that there were instances where individuals wanted to pursue trades or health care-related training and entered foundational training, but lacked a sufficient knowledge base to be successful in the foundational training. The training providers noted that essential skills training can help those individuals succeed in the foundational courses.

## **Suggestions by Nunavummiut and best practices in essential skills/pre-employment training**

### *Essential skills/pre-employment training is a bridge to further labour market participation*

Participants identified that essential skills training acts as an initial step that can lead to further training and labour market participation. Completing this training builds confidence and motivation among participants. Building literacy skills was viewed as key to enabling completion of subsequent training. Stakeholders pointed to examples of individuals who completed essential skills training and went on to hospitality training, trades and government employment.

### *Incorporating Inuit identity and local knowledge into essential skills/pre-employment training*

Participants noted that, for Inuit, essential skills include having a sense of one's identity and a connection to the local environment. According to one participant, helping to develop a sense of identity is important because "if you understand your own culture,

you have a very good base to learn from. Then you can go out and continue learning and developing as a person.”

According to stakeholders, integrating traditional practices and IQ into essential skills and pre-employment training is particularly effective for Inuit. Integrating traditional knowledge into training can help to provide participants with a sense of identity and confidence. This can set participants on the pathway to pursuing further education or labour market participation. Participants also noted that literacy and essential skills should be incorporated into as many programs as possible. Building on the experience of Nunavut Literacy Council programs, training providers noted that there has been success in integrating literacy and numeracy into programs that are focused on, for example, traditional activities, sports, cooking, or sewing.

Students and instructors from various training settings identified that it was beneficial having elders come into the classroom to teach traditional practices as well as share the history of the community and their life stories. Incorporating elders into programs and courses helps to develop a stimulating learning environment, a sense of identity for youth and can be a good motivator for students.

#### *Building confidence in essential skills and pre-employment skills programs*

Building confidence was highlighted as an important aspect for essential skills and pre-employment skills training on the journey towards further education or labour market participation. One participant noted that “building confidence helps [Inuit] gain the motivation to move forward to other education or employment.” Essential skills and pre-employment skills training is an initial stepping stone for participants.

#### *Developing literacy skills*

We heard that literacy was a particularly important factor to include in essential skills and pre-employment skills training. Developing literacy skills involves working on reading comprehension, reflection and critical thinking. Participants described how literacy provides the basis for subsequent learning and enables a person to understand his/her place in the world and make informed choices in his/her daily life.

## **Chapter 6: High School Completion**

We heard from a large number of participants that high school completion was an important step on the path towards sustainable employment; however, many noted that high school completion tended to be low for Inuit in many of the communities. Participants noted several challenges related to high school completion and provided a number of suggestions or best practices for improving high school completion.

### **Challenges in high school completion**

The factors that hindered high school completion identified by the participants included the following:

#### *Low attendance*

High school staff identified that attendance was a challenge for some students across the communities and noted that attendance in middle school (grade 6-8) can be an early warning sign for students who may have issues graduating high school later on. Those we spoke to suggested that students who have the greatest issues with attendance may come from families that do not follow regular work routines or where parents may not have graduated high school in the past and thus may not see the importance of completing high school.

#### *Family obligations*

Responsibilities at home caring for siblings and pregnancies during the high school years were identified as factors that could disrupt high school completion. The limited childcare spots available in many of the communities were seen to increase the difficulty in managing family obligations and education. However, it should be noted that some participants identified that having a child was a significant motivator to complete high school and plan their future career in order to be able to provide for their child.

#### *Traditional lifestyle integration*

Participating in hunting is particularly important to many families in order to offset the high costs of food in Nunavut and the need to seize the opportunities for sustenance provided by local wildlife. We heard that managing traditional practices, such as hunting and fishing, along with education, posed challenges for some high school

students. Some students may be quite successful during the school year, but due to hunting seasons, they miss final exams in June.

### *Learning disabilities*

In the engagement sessions, we heard that there are difficulties diagnosing learning disabilities and mental health issues among students, as well as determining the supports needed for those particular students. The remoteness of the communities has meant that it is difficult to access medical services and diagnostic tools locally and individuals must often travel south in order to obtain the necessary tests to diagnose their conditions.

Participants stressed the importance of being able to provide proper diagnosis and applicable supports to all individuals who may be affected. School staff who suspect particular learning disabilities in students would seek to provide them with support. However, without a proper diagnosis from a medical professional, it is difficult to know whether adequate support is being provided. As one participant explained, “we are guessing at how to support the students at the moment.”

### *Literacy*

While there is some variation between schools and communities, most classes in Nunavut high schools are conducted in English. Participants explained that “language is integral to how we learn” and provides the necessary basis for further learning and critical thinking. For some students, English is their second language and these students can become discouraged when language barriers inhibit their learning.

Some participants mentioned that exploring new models of bilingual education may be beneficial to ensure that students have sufficient abilities in English and Inuktitut. One participant explained that “language development happens at an early age and therefore there is a need to provide bilingual exposure early.”

## **Suggestions by Nunavummiut and best practices in high school completion**

Participants provided a number of lessons learned in improving high school completion in the communities. For example:

### *Fostering a strong social support network*

We heard that “students need a strong social support network from a young age” and this includes home, in-class and community support. Having multiple layers of support surrounding each individual can help keep them on the path to high school graduation. Participants emphasized that one of the most common factors enabling high school completion is having parents who motivate and support their children through school. Educational staff identified that the majority of successful students come from families where the parents are engaged in meaningful employment opportunities and are engaged in the student’s life. Siblings and friends were said to also help motivate individuals to complete high school and plan for their futures.

Communities with a history of having more employment opportunities, such as the history of mining-related employment in Rankin Inlet, expose new generations to work routines and provide students with part-time job opportunities during the school year. In the smaller communities, “unemployment is very high so students don’t see their parents going to work and don’t get exposed to that routine.” We heard that organized sports are sometimes beneficial for building the foundation for skills and habits that are later needed in the workplace. We heard that participation in hockey and other sports activities develops teamwork skills, self-motivation and routines, and as a result, can be a motivating factor to high school completion. Participating in sports activities can also allow students to travel to other communities and become exposed to the training and employment opportunities provided elsewhere.

### *High School Career/Guidance Counsellors*

Most schools have student support assistants to help students deal with personal and mental health issues and other disabilities. We heard that student support assistants provide an essential role; however, some participants also expressed that it is important to have a full-time, experienced guidance counsellor who provides regular career-assistance support to students. Stakeholders noted guidance counsellors help to deal with educational issues, provide motivation, and can address social issues. As such, stakeholders noted that the presence of a guidance counsellor has multiple benefits related to Article 23 goals: they can help to increase academic success, high school completion, and build interest in both post-secondary education and government employment. We heard that there is currently only one school in the Kivalliq region with this type of guidance counsellor.

### *Breakfast programs*

We heard that breakfast programs serve to provide students with a healthy meal to boost energy throughout the day and help boost attendance at school. It was noted that

food security is an issue that many families struggle with in Nunavut. Breakfast programs serve a dual purpose in that they can get students in the door of the schools, and provide the sustenance needed for them to become engaged in learning.

*Flexible and supported programs for those returning to complete high school*

Currently the Pathway to Adult Secondary School (PASS) program exists for older students who wish to return to complete high school. Some of the stakeholders identified that PASS is effective for students who are independent, self-motivated and focused. However, many students require hands-on support to overcome barriers and increase motivation and suggested that modifications to the program could be made to meet the needs of more students. As well, some stakeholders suggested that the number of courses an individual can take at one time and the timelines for entry into the program could be more flexible.

## **Chapter 7: Transition from High School to Post-Secondary Education**

Participants noted that, for Nunavut Inuit, the transition from high school to post-secondary education can be challenging due to the need for upgrading, the lack of opportunities, and a lack of awareness of educational options available. Participants identified a number of suggestions or best practices in improving the transition from high school to post-secondary education. These challenges, suggestions and best practices are summarized below.

### **Challenges in the transition from high school to post-secondary**

#### *Upgrading required before entering post-secondary education*

We heard that many graduates required upgrading before entering post-secondary education programs since necessary pre-requisites may not have been offered in the high school in their community (e.g., biology, chemistry or advanced math for nursing or science programs). School stakeholders in smaller communities identified that they were often too small to provide the pre-requisites needed or that they lacked the facilities to provide the classes. For example, one school identified that they did not have a science lab and shop room so it would not be possible to offer chemistry or technology classes.

Participants identified that even when pre-foundational programs existed (e.g., pre-nursing or pre-trades), some students still need some academic upgrading before entering these programs. This upgrading could consist of essential skills training or other general college courses before entry into the program. Stakeholders identified that most students who pursued university or more advanced technical college programs required some level of upgrading before entry.

We also heard that it was difficult for some individuals to obtain financial support to support upgrading before entering post-secondary education.

#### *Awareness of career opportunities and post-secondary education programs*

We heard from participants that there is a lack of awareness among Inuit high school students on the options available for post-secondary education and career planning for the future. There is a need for exposure to training and employment opportunities that could be available to them through career fairs, job talks, guidance counsellor planning and other experiences.



Some participants noted that, in smaller communities, awareness is particularly challenging because of limited post-secondary and employment opportunities. In these small communities, extra effort could be required to expose students to potential career and educational opportunities elsewhere in Nunavut.

### *Mobility*

Stakeholders noted that the requirement to leave the territory to pursue training in some disciplines, such as many science and technology degrees, acts as a barrier for some Inuit. The communities in Nunavut are fly-in only and therefore it is difficult to travel throughout the territory or to the south. Pursuing college or university opportunities may require the individual to move away from their home community and families.

## **Suggestions by Nunavummiut and best practices for the transition from high school to post-secondary**

### *Awareness through career fairs and job talks*

Providing career fairs and job talks to high school students helps to expose students to future opportunities. There is a need to make sure that people are aware of the types of jobs that exist in the communities as well as the educational path needed to obtain these jobs. Career fairs, job talks, and guidance counsellor assistance during high school are some of the methods to increase awareness and planning for post-secondary education among Inuit youth.

There was some debate about the best practices for raising awareness among students about government careers and the pathways to gain government employment. While career fairs were cited by some stakeholders as a best practice, others who had been involved in organizing career fairs cautioned that students generally only got a superficial exposure to jobs and they questioned how efficient the fairs were in building awareness and interest for students. Other ideas for best practices were bringing community members (including public servants) into the schools to talk more in-depth about their careers, pathways to employment, and overcoming barriers. Some stakeholders emphasized that efforts to build awareness of government jobs should not just focus on high school students; exposing younger students to career information could have a long-term impact on building interest in government employment for Inuit.

### *Credits in high school to facilitate the transition to post-secondary*

To encourage the transition from high school to post-secondary education, some participants suggested offering experiences during high school that could provide credit or hours towards some post-secondary educational programs, such as providing some exposure to trades in shop courses that could be used for apprenticeship programs. Students who may already have several hours of experience, for which they get credit, may be more inclined to pursue this educational opportunity after high school.

### *Nunavut Sivuniksavut facilitates transition to post-secondary*

We heard praise from stakeholders about the effectiveness of Nunavut Sivuniksavut (NS, located in Ottawa, Ontario) in helping students prepare for post-secondary education or the transition to the labour market. NS provides cultural and academic learning experiences for Inuit youth. Participants identified that NS helps provide Inuit youth with a sense of identity, history and self-reliance. The experiences gained at NS allow Inuit to connect with each other and learn about living in a larger urban centre (i.e., Ottawa). Those who had attended NS identified that this had helped them succeed in university and in other experiences in life, such as employment and involvement in Inuit cultural activities.

## **Chapter 8: Post-Secondary Education**

The Nunavut Arctic College is the primary post-secondary institution in the territory and provides training in each of Nunavut's 25 communities. The college provides a variety of programs including the Nunavut Teachers Education Program (NTEP), nursing, pre-apprenticeship training, apprenticeship training, Inuit language and culture, among other programs. The programs offered in each community differ year-to-year based on community needs, facilities and other factors.

Students may also seek post-secondary training opportunities at colleges and universities located outside Nunavut.

Challenges identified by participants related to access and completion of post-secondary education for Inuit in Nunavut are summarized below. This is followed by suggestions or best practices for improving access and completion of post-secondary discussed by participants.

### **Challenges in post-secondary education**

#### *Housing*

Participants pointed to a lack of available housing in the communities and noted that this poses a challenge for students who may wish to attend training outside of their home community. In addition, the shortage of housing was also seen as creating difficulty for attracting and hiring short-term instructors.

Providing student housing was viewed as being particularly beneficial to helping encourage post-secondary educational attendance. However, participants also noted that in some cases, students may need to relocate their children and families to the community where they wish to attend training. Therefore, providing housing support (and having available housing in the community) was also highlighted as a need.

#### *Child care*

We heard that due to the lack of child care spaces in many communities that some students who had children were forced to interrupt their studies to care for their children. Parents we spoke to often had to seek out private sitters or rely on family members in order to attend their program.

### *Training needs*

Participants identified that there was a need for additional pre-trades and trades courses in communities in the Kivalliq region. Hamlets identified that there was a demand for plumbers, carpenters and mechanics and that the existing training options provided through the Municipal Training Organization program do not include these types of occupations. As well, stakeholders from hamlets also highlighted that it can be challenging to find journeypersons to take on apprentices in the communities and therefore an alternative approach to trades training may be needed in some communities.

We heard instances where participants perceived that there was a mismatch between the training offered in a community and the employment opportunities in that community. For instance, it was noted that there is a need for the training for personal/community support workers in Chesterfield Inlet and Arviat to help Inuit employees who work in the personal care field advance their skills.

### **Suggestions by Nunavummiut and best practices in post-secondary education**

#### *Raising awareness of educational and career options*

Participants highlighted the importance of doing outreach on the type of occupations available and the education required to obtain those occupations. Federal public servants identified that a lot of the government jobs available in Nunavut consist of science-related jobs and therefore promotion of science-based learning would be needed to help Inuit obtain these positions. The new Canadian High Arctic Research Centre in Cambridge Bay is anticipated to create the need to hire more Inuit who will need to be trained in environmental and physical sciences. Several stakeholders cited Nunavut Arctic College's Environmental Technology Program (ETP) as a key factor in building Inuit interest in science and preparing students for scientific careers. The ETP is a two-year diploma program that incorporates classroom and practical lab and field experiences to develop student skills. Participants noted that this program was very adept at building on the knowledge that many Inuit already possess based on past experiences on the land.

#### *Internship and work experiences*

Participants praised programs that provide hands-on experience to students through internships or other work experience opportunities. Hands-on experience can help

provide students with career exploration and informed career decision-making opportunities, directly connect them with employers who could hire them after graduation as well as provide work experience to add to their resumes.

NTEP students found experiential learning that was provided by observing at local schools and leading lessons was particularly beneficial. Hands-on experience was valued by the students. Other stakeholders also emphasized that hands-on or on-the-job training was effective for younger Inuit.

### *Training in Communities*

Due to difficulties leaving communities to pursue educational opportunities (such as travel expense, lack of housing, and family obligations), stakeholders highlighted the need to provide training as close to the communities as possible. It may also be possible to offer more advanced technical training and university programs in Nunavut by partnering Nunavut Arctic College with other colleges and universities in Canada. The Masters of Education as well as the Akitsiraq Law School were provided as examples of past partnerships.

Instructors also noted that it is beneficial to augment training and training materials with local knowledge and examples. The textbooks generally available were described as Southern-focused and utilizing examples that were not relevant to Inuit in the North. Instructors found that modifying examples and course content to draw upon the experiences encountered in the North were effective in engaging Inuit students.

Some participants noted that there were challenges in finding the space/facilities required in order to offer training and thus it is difficult to respond to training demands in the smaller communities due to limited space available. For example, there is a desire to hold more pre-trades and trades courses in the smaller communities, but this would require appropriate trade shops to be constructed.

### *Tutors and peer support*

The need for tutoring and peer support for students was highlighted by participants. Nunavut Arctic College provides tutoring but it can be challenging to find individuals who are capable of tutoring students within particular programs (accounting was cited as an example). The GN Department of Health has developed a new Public Health Upgrading Program based on lessons learned from previous health-related education programs. In developing this program, the Health Department found that providing the students with access to academic tutors, Internet, content on USB sticks, and other

wrap-around supports was critical for ensuring student success and preventing students from dropping out before completing the program.

We also heard that it is important to take an individual-centred approach to support and to make sure that the necessary supports are in place for each learner. Each individual has different needs and therefore requires their own types of supports.

#### *Modularized/progressive training options*

Participants identified that modular, progressive training options were most successful for many Inuit. This allows for the creation of a laddering approach that is able to build motivation and reduce discouragement by allowing the employee to gain a certification, return to work, and then take more advanced training. The office administration program at Nunavut Arctic College was identified as one example of a laddering type of training. The program is offered over 3 years in 3 stages. This laddering approach was able to keep Inuit interested and motivated and has had relatively high rates of completion. As well, the Environmental Technician Program was also highlighted as another program that was taught using a modularized fashion.

#### *Transitional support after graduation*

Participants indicated that there is a need to provide transitional support to students after graduation in order to help them secure jobs in their field of study. It was suggested that a job finding club could help students connect with potential employment opportunities after graduation.

## **Chapter 9: Community Social Infrastructure**

In addition to challenges directly related to training and education, participants suggested a number of medium and long-term social infrastructure issues that need to be considered when trying to develop a representative level of Inuit government employment. Community social infrastructure includes both assets and social supports necessary to help develop dynamic and strong communities. These included health and mental health services, addiction counselling, supports for learning disabilities, housing, child care and criminal record suspensions.

### **Health and mental health issues, historical trauma**

Limited access to health care resources within the communities has meant that Inuit in Nunavut often must travel to the South in order to secure medical appointments for a variety of health services. These frequent, unpredictable absences can impact the capacity of government departments in Nunavut since they can cause resource shortages in the workplaces. Weather/ travel delays can add to the unpredictability and length of the medical leaves.

Issues stemming from historical trauma and mental health issues are fairly prevalent among the Inuit population. Conversely, services available to address the issues are limited in most communities. Participants identified that addressing these issues is often the first step towards employability. Due to limited access to mental health services in the communities, it can be difficult to provide the level of services that may be required.

### **Criminal record suspension**

Participants identified that criminal records posed a challenge to obtaining employment in some situations. Criminal records obtained years earlier can prevent job seekers from obtaining jobs that require individuals to be bonded or have security checks. It was felt that some individuals do not fully understand the criminal record suspension (pardon) process and how to clear past charges from their records.

In addition, we heard that in some situations, employees may have received impaired driving or other charges and their current job may be threatened as a result. In these situations, it was identified that having the necessary supports in place in the community to help the individual address the situation is important. Furthermore, addictions or mental health issues may have contributed to the situation, requiring supports to address these challenges.

## Housing

Overcrowding and the need for quality, affordable housing was an issue that was interwoven throughout many of our discussions. The Nunavut Housing Corporation estimates that across Nunavut, 38% of social housing tenants live in overcrowded conditions and that this amount can be as high as 72% in some communities.<sup>6</sup> According to the 2017 Report of the Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples, overcrowded housing across Inuit Nunangat affects physical health, mental health, experiences of violence, early childhood development and the ability for high school students to find quiet spaces to study.<sup>7</sup> ITK has identified that the housing shortage directly affects the educational attainment of young people in Nunavut and Inuit Nunangat.<sup>8</sup>

During the stakeholder engagement sessions, we heard that housing shortages affected the ability for Inuit to relocate in order to continue education or to obtain employment. Participants provided examples of vacancies that were impossible to fill due to difficulties obtaining housing for individuals who were interested and qualified for the position. One particularly illustrative example of this was a story of a Nunavut Inuit post-secondary graduate who wanted to work for the GN in a Kivalliq community. Because this person could not get housing in the community, they ended up taking a job outside of Nunavut. This story was relayed to us as an example of how the housing shortage in Nunavut has a negative impact on Inuit representation in the government in Nunavut.

Participants also pointed to issues related to obtaining staff housing or housing supports. Some Inuit identified that there were inequalities and difficulties obtaining staff housing supports due to a lack of available units in the communities, the classification of certain positions (e.g., as casual) or other policies. For those unable to obtain staff housing, the cost of rent can be quite high.

We heard that the remedy to the housing shortage is not as simple as building additional units, since additional units would also require major investment and upgrades in public infrastructure (e.g., additional roads, water/wastewater services, electrical system upgrades) to be able to support the new units. Hamlets would also have to ensure that there are sufficient resources to support maintenance of the

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<sup>6</sup> Nunavut Housing Corporation. *Nunavut is facing a severe housing crisis*. Brief submitted to the Standing Senate Committee on Aboriginal Peoples, 23 March 2016.

<sup>7</sup> *We Can Do Better: Housing in Inuit Nunangat*. Report of the Standing Committee on Aboriginal Peoples, March 2017.

<sup>8</sup> *We Can Do Better: Housing in Inuit Nunangat*. p. 19.



upgraded infrastructure. The construction of new units would also require sourcing materials from the South and securing and training qualified tradespersons.

## **Child care**

Throughout our discussions, participants identified that there were limited child care facilities and open spots available in the communities. The lack of childcare impacted the Inuit's (with children) ability to progress on their educational path, as well as to enter and continue to participate in the labour market. In one community, an informal survey of child care needs conducted by a member of the community concluded that seven times the amount of child care spaces were needed in the community than were available.

Participants indicated that they have had employees who had relocated to obtain employment within their organizations, but who were later forced to leave due to difficulties obtaining child care. We talked to Inuit who were forced to leave their places of employment in order to care for new children and who expected to be in that situation until their children were old enough to attend elementary school.

## **Chapter 10: Conclusion**

Stakeholder engagement sessions were conducted in order to explore challenges, suggestions and best practices in Inuit government employment in Nunavut. The sessions consisted of semi-structured in-person interviews and focus groups with Nunavummiut who were new and experienced government employees, managers, training providers, and high school staff, among others. We learned a great deal about the five communities that we visited and were appreciative of the warm welcoming that we received and the willingness of stakeholders to participate in our sessions.

This report presented a summary of findings related to key themes that arose from the discussions including challenges and lessons learned related to entry and hiring practices, public service training initiatives, integration of Inuit culture and languages in the workplace and retention and advancement of Inuit employees. As well, we heard that in order to build a workforce with Inuit representation at all levels, issues related to high school completion, post-secondary education, and community social infrastructure should be considered. A summary of these factors was included in this report.

ESDC plans to conduct stakeholder engagement in the two other regions of Nunavut as part of our ongoing work related to the NILFA, in collaboration with NTI and GN. These future stakeholder engagement sessions will build on the lessons learned during this project.