

First Nations and Inuit Youth Employment Strategy: Summer Work Experience Program: National Program Guidelines 2025 to 2026



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Canada

Services aux
Autochtones Canada

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1. Program introduction

The First Nations and Inuit Summer Work Experience Program is 1 of 2 programs that Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) administers under the [First Nations and Inuit Youth Employment Strategy](#) (FNIYES).

These guidelines set out the delivery requirements for funding recipients that enter into a funding agreement with ISC for the delivery of the First Nations and Inuit Youth Employment Strategy: Summer Work Experience Program during the 2025 to 2026 fiscal year.

These guidelines are effective as of April 1, 2025 and replace the [2024 to 2025 First Nations and Inuit Youth Employment Strategy: Summer Work Experience Program: National Program Guidelines](#).

These guidelines are to be read in conjunction with the funding agreement signed by the funding recipient.

2. Objectives

The objectives of the Summer Work Experience Program are:

- to support First Nations and Inuit secondary and post-secondary students in acquiring employability skills by providing organizations with wage subsidies for their summer work experience
- to assist First Nations and Inuit secondary and post-secondary students prepare for future entry into the labour market by facilitating access to summer employment
- to support First Nations and Inuit secondary and post-secondary students in financing and furthering their education
- to provide First Nations and Inuit secondary and post-secondary students with career and labour market information and assistance in finding summer or short-term employment

These objectives are consistent with, and support, the overall objectives of the [Government of Canada's Youth Employment and Skills Strategy \(YESS\) Summer Work Experience Program](#).

3. Expected results

The desired outcome for the Summer Work Experience Program is that secondary and post-secondary students further their education and acquire employability skills. Key expected results of the Summer Work Experience Program include:

- Enhanced employability skills of First Nations and Inuit youth
- Increased ability of First Nations and Inuit youth to participate in the labour market
- Reduced barriers to employment for First Nations and Inuit youth
- Increased awareness of the benefits of education

4. Funding recipients

A funding recipient is an individual or entity that has met the eligibility criteria of the program and has signed a funding agreement with ISC to deliver an initiative, program, service or activity.

5. Eligible recipients

Eligible recipients are:

- First Nations and Inuit communities
- Governments and organizations
- First Nations schools or federal schools on reserve
- First Nations and Inuit governments and organizations
- Not-for-profit associations
- Private sector employers

Eligible recipients can enter into agreements with private sector and non-profit sector employers to access employment opportunities for youth.

Not-for-profit organizations and private sector employers based in Canada may be eligible for direct funding for activities that provide opportunities for eligible First Nations and Inuit youth in Canada and fall within program guidelines. Not-for-profit organizations may be eligible to receive funding to cover up to 100% of wage costs and mandatory employment-related costs.

Private sector employers may be eligible to receive funding to cover funding up to 50% of wage costs and mandatory employment-related costs.

6. Eligible participants

Eligible participants include:

- First Nations secondary and post-secondary students ordinarily resident on reserve, in recognized communities or on community lands
- Inuit secondary and post-secondary students who are residents in Canada but reside outside their territory and are no longer eligible to be funded by their territory
- Since territorial governments are the primary service providers for Inuit youth who reside on their territory, youth must provide proof that they are ineligible to receive funding from their territorial government to participate in eligible Summer Work Experience Program activities

Eligible youth must be legally entitled to work in Canada. Youth refers to persons aged 15 to 30 years at the start of the program's activities. Eligible youth must be a secondary or post-secondary student in a recognized educational institution and be returning to studies in the next academic session.

7. Activities

The activities will provide career-related summer employment opportunities for First Nations and Inuit secondary and post-secondary students between **May 1, 2025** and the beginning of the student's fall academic term. Initiatives and projects, which can take place on or off reserve, are those within the scope of the following activities:

- activities supporting employers in hiring students to work in occupations that help students develop employability skills and aid their educational and career development
- activities providing labour market information to students including, but not limited to, wage rates, employment and health and safety standards, human rights, government programs and services and the benefits of returning to school

- activities providing job search services to students, including but not limited to resume writing, job placement support and interview advice
- activities promoting and marketing the benefits of hiring students
- activities designed to support research and innovative projects that identify effective strategies to help youth prepare for, return to and maintain employment to be productive participants in the labour force
- land-based learning activities that promote First Nations and Inuit cultures as well as career and skill development such as activities aiming to improve adaptive capacity and advance Indigenous-led climate action
- other activities that support the objectives of the Summer Work Experience Program

8. Expenditures

8.1 Eligible expenditures

The recipient will determine the wage rate for participants. It must be at or above the applicable provincial or territorial minimum wage.

Eligible expenditures include:

- participant wage costs that meet or exceed the applicable minimum wage in the province or territory where the work placement occurs, and mandatory employment-related costs. Mandatory employment-related costs including the gross employee share of the Canada Pension Plan, Quebec Pension Plan, Employment Insurance, vacation pay, Worker's Compensation Benefits or Commission de la santé et de la Sécurité du travail and where applicable, health insurance premiums:
 - the non-profit sector is eligible to receive a contribution of up to 100% of the applicable minimum wage, plus Mandatory Employment-Related Costs (MERC). The private sector is eligible to receive up to 50% of the applicable minimum wage only
 - all employers are eligible to apply for 100% of the wage and MERC when a participant with disabilities is hired. In addition, a maximum contribution of \$3,000 per participant with disabilities may be available, on an actual cost basis, for special equipment and facilities to accommodate participant needs
- other necessary costs directly related to a work placement including, but not limited to, a criminal record check, uniforms and other office attire required by the workplace for participants, and personal protective equipment such as work boots or safety hats up to a maximum of \$300 per participant

Administration costs for direct recipients must not exceed 15% of the sub-total amount requested before administration costs. The data collection instrument (DCI) will automatically calculate the amount.

Eligible administration costs include, but are not limited to:

- office or general expenses of the recipient organization
- materials
- supplies
- advertising
- communication and printing costs
- professional services

Further distribution of funds by ISC's funding recipients

When a funding recipient further transfers funds that they received under this program to a third party the 15% allowed for administration costs must be divided between the parties, as agreed to between the parties.

The total administration costs retained by all parties must not exceed 15% of the sub-total amount requested before administration costs.

8.2 Ineligible expenditures

Ineligible expenditures include but are not limited to:

- office infrastructure or equipment purchases, for example, computers and software
- capital costs for **the purchase of land, buildings, or the** construction of a building, other than small repairs or renovations to support the participation of persons with disabilities

9. Proposal process

All funding for the First Nations and Inuit Youth Employment Strategy will be based on approved proposals. Proposals are selected on the basis of meeting program objectives.

Applicants must submit detailed proposals for the activities to be undertaken over the course of the agreement. Proposals must clearly state how the activities will further the objectives and expected results of this program.

Eligible proposals must:

- meet the First Nations and Inuit Youth Employment Strategy: Summer Work Experience Program: National Program Guidelines
- be gender-balanced
- outline the activities to be undertaken and explain how they will meet the program's objectives
- outline the results to be achieved by the initiative or project

- demonstrate that the activities will provide assistance only to eligible participants
- provide an estimate of eligible costs, including any share to be incurred by partners
- placement must provide a minimum of 80 hours of work.

Submission of proposals

Only proposals submitted using the electronic proposal form issued by ISC will be considered for assessment. Refer to the proposal form and the attached instructions for application details. Incomplete proposals will be returned to applicants.

The information required in the proposal is available in the [Reporting Guide](#). Recipients who have access to the [ISC services portal](#) can access the proposal form by opening a session on the portal. If you do not have access to the portal, contact your [ISC Regional office](#), or if you are a national recipient, contact pse-eps@sac-isc.gc.ca.

First Nations organizations in **British Columbia** must apply through the [First Nations Education Steering Committee](#).

Assessment criteria

All proposals will be assessed by the following criteria:

- **Capability:** the experience and capacity of the recipient, and identified project leader, where applicable to:
 - manage the successful implementation of the activities in their proposal
 - complete the proposed employment initiative in a timely manner
- **Consultation and commitment:** the extent to which the proposal has the support of relevant organizations
- **Implementation activities:** the extent to which the proposal aligns with eligible activities and meets program objectives. The assessment will consider timelines, cost-effectiveness and the degree to which the activities will result in expected outcomes
- **Project management:** how the initiative or project will be managed, including project governance, management of project scope, human resources, risk management and project monitoring, control and reporting
- **Project costs:** realistic assessment of estimated total costs and a justification of the level of funding required
- **Cooperation and partnerships:** with other governments, employers, community-based organizations and interested organizations to encourage strategic partnerships, minimize overlap or duplication and operate in partnership with other related employment, entrepreneurship, economic development and social programs

Meeting these criteria does not guarantee funding from the First Nations and Inuit Summer Work Experience Program.

Review and approval of proposals

ISC regional or national offices, or the First Nations or Inuit organization managing the program reviews and approves proposals from their member First Nations or Inuit communities. A written response is sent to applicants to confirm whether or not their proposal has been approved for funding.

To find out more about the 2025 to 2026 call for proposals and the application process, visit:

- [First Nations and Inuit Summer Work Experience Program](#)

10. Funding

10.1 Maximum amount of funding

The maximum amount of funding given to a funding recipient in a fiscal year is set out in the funding agreement signed by the funding recipient.

The initiative is nationally and regionally based and proposal driven. To learn more, consult [Eligible expenditures](#).

10.2 Funding approaches

Transfer payments to funding recipients of the First Nations and Inuit Youth Employment Strategy Summer Work Experience Program will be made using fixed contribution, however set contribution may be used if the recipient so wishes.

ISC officers can provide information on the eligibility requirements of these funding approaches and on the requirements related to the management of the funds.

The funding approach used to transfer funds to a recipient is identified in the recipient's signed funding agreement.

The following specific program directions for management of transfer payments complement the directions provided in the recipient's signed funding agreement and are to be read in conjunction with the funding agreement.

Set contribution funding

Reallocation of funding:

Reallocation of funds is not allowed with transfer payments made using set contribution.

Fixed contribution funding

Reallocation of funding:

During the fiscal year, recipients may reallocate a reasonable percentage of funds among the eligible activities and expenditures of their ISC-approved proposal for the First Nations and Inuit Youth Employment Strategy: Summer Work Experience Program.

Recipients must obtain the approval from the ISC officer responsible for the program in their region before reallocating funds.

Unexpended funding

Recipients may retain unexpended funding from a fiscal year, to expend in the 1 year period immediately following the fiscal year for which it was provided, on eligible activities and expenditures outlined in these guidelines. [Recipients must report the unexpended funding amount to their ISC officer responsible for the program in region and are to provide an unexpended funding spending plan detailing how retained funds will be spent in the 1 year period immediately following initial funding provision.](#)

11. Reporting requirements and monitoring and oversight activities

11.1 Reporting requirements

The reporting requirements, such as **program and financial reports** and their respective due dates are listed in the recipient's funding agreement. Details on these requirements are available in the [Reporting Guide](#).

Recipients must report on all funds received and expended, including the use of unexpended funding that they were allowed to retain to use in the following fiscal year. Consult the funding approaches section of these guidelines for details on the use of unexpended funds.

Recipients who have access to the [ISC services portal](#) can access the reporting forms by opening a session on the portal. Recipients who do not have access to the portal should contact their [Regional office](#). If you are a national recipient, contact pse-eps@sac-isc.gc.ca.

All recipient reporting requirements are subject to monitoring and oversight activities to determine the accuracy of the information provided to ISC.

11.2 Monitoring and oversight

All recipient reporting requirements are subject to monitoring and oversight activities to determine the accuracy of the information provided to ISC.

ISC may, in collaboration with the recipient, conduct audits, evaluations and targeted program or strategy reviews, for example, desk and on-site reviews to ensure:

- program or strategy outcomes and objectives are being met
- opportunities for continuous improvement are being identified with a goal to improve results for Indigenous peoples

12. Managing conflict of interest

It is necessary to avoid potential, perceived and actual conflicts of interest and any situation that might cause doubt in objectivity. As such, a procedure to manage conflicts of interest must be developed and put in place.

Recipients that manage the adjudication and administration of funding of the program must demonstrate transparency and accountability in their policies and processes.

This includes having:

- a conflict of interest policy
- written standards, policies and procedures on the project selection process for funding
- an available list of successful proponents

Individuals cannot participate in the evaluation of a proposal in the following situations:

- individual has assisted in the preparation of the proposal, is an employee of the applicant, has provided consulting services, in any capacity, to the organization submitting the proposal or may in the future
- individual will be a team member on the proposed project
- individual is a relative or close friend of any of the employees of the management team of the eligible recipient which submitted a proposal

Conflicts of interest may arise during the review of proposals. These situations must be managed in an open and transparent manner

Should a situation arise that presents a real or potential conflict of interest during the review process, the impacted individual must withdraw themselves from the deliberations concerning the specific proposal.

13. Personal information

ISC's collection and use of personal information and other records for targeted program reviews, for example, desk and on-site reviews, is limited to what is necessary to ensure delivery requirements are met.

ISC is responsible for all information and records in its possession. The confidentiality of the information is managed by ISC in accordance with the [*Privacy Act, R.S.C., 1985, c. p-21*](#) and other related policies on privacy.

Recipients are responsible for the protection of personal information as per provincial or territorial privacy statutes and regulations and the recipient's policies up to the point that the personal information is transferred to ISC.

14. Accountability

ISC is committed to providing assistance to support recipients in effectively carrying out their obligations under these guidelines and their funding agreement.

Regional offices and other ISC contacts are available to answer questions and provide guidance related to ISC programs and funding.

Recipients must:

- deliver the programs and strategies in accordance with the provisions of their signed funding agreement and the delivery requirements outlined in these guidelines
- ensure that the necessary management controls are in place to manage funding and monitor activities
- exercise due diligence when approving expenditures
- ensure that such expenditures are in accordance with the eligible expenditures set out in these guidelines

15. Contact information

To find out more, visit:

- [First Nations and Inuit Summer Work Experience Program page](#)

Visit the [ISC Regional office](#) page to find your regional office contact

You can also write to:

Education Branch
Indigenous Services Canada
10 rue Wellington – Suite 1455, Mailstop 25E-19
Gatineau QC K1A 0H4
Email: pse-eps@sac-isc.gc.ca.

To learn more about education programs, consult the [National program guidelines](#) .

