First Nations and Inuit Cultural Education Centres Program: National Program Guidelines 2025 to 2026

Table of content

1. Program introduction

The First Nations and Inuit Cultural Education Centres Program (FNICECP) provides funding for First Nations and Inuit cultural education centres on or off reserves or Inuit settlement regions to support the development and promotion of First Nations and Inuit cultural heritage.

These guidelines set out the FNICECP delivery requirements for recipients that enter into a funding agreement with Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) for the delivery of the FNICECP.

These guidelines are effective as of April 1, 2025 and replace the First Nations and Inuit Cultural Education Centres Program National Program Guidelines 2024 to 2025.

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

2. Objective

The objective of the FNICECP is to:

- Support First Nations and Inuit communities in expressing, preserving, developing, revitalizing and promoting their cultural heritage, through the establishment and operation of First Nations and Inuit cultural education centres on or off reserve
- Ensure that culturally relevant programming and services are available to First Nations and Inuit students through cultural education centres
- Contribute to an enhanced cultural environment and understanding within communities

3. Expected results

The program is a small part of broader efforts to improve First Nations and Inuit elementary and secondary education. Learnings derived from its activities are expected to help improve the overall quality of education for First Nations and Inuit students and contribute to the following specific expected outcomes.

The expected outcomes for the program are:

- revival in traditional cultural skills among First Nations and Inuit people
- increase in the development of contemporary cultural skills among First Nations and Inuit people
- increase in knowledge and use of traditional languages among First Nations and Inuit people
- increase in promotion of cross-cultural awareness in mainstream educational programs and institutions

4. Eligible Recipients

Recipients eligible to receive funding include:

- First Nations or Inuit organization with a cultural education centres on or off reserve
- First Nations cultural education centres.

 Indigenous Services funds the First Nations Confederacy of Cultural Education Centres, which manages and administers FNICECP funds for a majority of First Nations cultural education centre.

5. Eligible activities

Key activities supported by the program include:

- conducting or facilitating research into First Nations and Inuit heritage and culture

- developing or expanding on First Nations or Inuit linguistic learning resources
- developing or expanding on First Nations or Inuit learning resources other than linguistic learning resources, such as land-based learning
- developing or testing culturally oriented educational curricula, methods and materials for use by established and other programs in schools
- developing or collecting educational curricula for use by communities or the public
- developing new and more accurate information about First Nations or Inuit heritage, including historical material
- supporting a community cultural event or traditional ceremony
- supporting the operation of a community museum, library or gallery
- coordinating cultural education workshops
- supporting an activity which helps improve opportunities for the public to become knowledgeable about and sensitive to the historical and contemporary role of First Nations and Inuit people in Canada
- supporting an activity which helps to revive traditional skills
- supporting an activity which helps to develop contemporary cultural skills
- managing proposal-based programs for recipients who are funding delivery organizations for individual projects

6. Expenditures

6.1 Eligible initiatives and projects

Funding is provided to recipients to undertaking work that will lead to:

- culturally relevant curricula for First Nations and Inuit schools
- an enhanced cultural environment and understanding within communities

The funded activities:

- focus on school-age children
- including resources for classroom instruction and after-school programs
- including operational funds for cultural education centres on or off reserve
- including classes for adults and events for community members, including cultural information sessions and tours targeted toward the general public

6.2 Eligible expenditures

Eligible expenditures must be directly related to the eligible activities set out in the work plan that has been approved through a First Nations-led or Inuit-led regional process.

Eligible expenditures may include the following:

- development of culturally relevant curricula for First Nations and Inuit schools

- costs for operating eligible First Nations and Inuit cultural and education centres on or off reserves or Inuit settlement regions
- costs for specific initiatives related to First Nations and Inuit culture
- salaries, benefits and wages for employees
- printing and publishing costs
- materials and supplies
- Elders and guest speakers
- professional services and consulting fees including:
    - communications consulting
    - business services
- facility rental including:
    - equipment rentals
    - conference and meeting rooms
- travel within Canada
    - travel expenses are to be claimed at actual cost, but cannot exceed the rates and allowances established in the National Joint Council Travel Directive in effect at the time of travel
    - expenses which exceed the rates and allowances set for in the directive are ineligible and will not be paid
- administration costs must not exceed 15% of the sub-total amount approved before administration costs. The data collection instrument (DCI) will automatically calculate the amount. Eligible administration costs include:
    - management of regional program processes such as travel, honoraria
    - clerical support
    - office supplies
    - collection, maintenance and reporting of data and information in accordance with program and financial reporting requirements
    - costs associated with ensuring that personal information is appropriately managed and safeguarded during its collection, use, disclosure and disposal
- other

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

6.3 Ineligible expenditures

Ineligible expenditures include, but are not limited to:

- capital construction and renovation
- purchase of land or buildings
- stipends, allowances, honoraria for attendance in a course and activity
- contingency or miscellaneous fees
- deficit recovery
- interest or other bank charges
- amortization expenses
- advocacy

7. Proposal process and assessment criteria

All funding for the FNICECP is based on proposals approved by ISC.

Applicants must:

- submit detailed proposals for all the activities to be undertaken over the course of the agreement
- clearly state how the proposed activities will further the objectives, respond to the educational and community needs, and meet the expected results of this program

Recipients whose proposal for a multi-year project is approved will be notified in a timely manner of the funding amount for the subsequent years of the project.

Funding for a subsequent year will depend on achievement of the objectives and availability of funds.

7.1 Submission of proposals

Only proposals submitted in the electronic proposal form issued by ISC will be considered for assessment. 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 regional office, or if you are a national recipient, write to education-education@sac-isc.gc.ca.

Refer to the proposal form and the attached instructions for application details. Incomplete proposals will be returned to applicants.

7.2 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 implementation of activities within their proposal successfully
    - complete the project or initiative in a timely manner
- consultation and commitment: the extent to which the proposal has the support of relevant organizations or communities
    - the assessment process will consider the letters of support provided by the applicant
- implementation activities: the extent to which the proposal aligns with eligible activities and meets program objectives. The assessment process will consider:
    - timelines
    - cost-effectiveness
    - the degree to which the activities will result in the expected outcomes
- project management: how the initiative or project will be managed, including:
    - project governance

- management of program scope
- human resources
- risk management
- deliverables
- project monitoring, control and reporting
- project costs: a demonstration of a realistic assessment of estimated total costs and a justification of the level of funding required

Meeting these criteria does not guarantee funding from the FNICECP.

7.3 Review and approval process

ISC regional or headquarters staff will review and approve proposals. Applicants will receive a written response to confirm whether or not their proposal has been approved for funding.

The First Nations Confederacy of Cultural Education Centres will review and approve proposals for recipients they fund.

8. 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.

9. Funding

9.1 Maximum amount payable per funding recipient

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

This program is proposal-driven and the level of funding is:

- determined on a case-by-case basis
- limited overall by total available funding and the number of proposals approved

9.2 Funding approaches

Transfer payments to funding recipients of the First Nations and Inuit Cultural Education Centres Program will be made using fixed or flexible contribution.

Indigenous Services Canada regional 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 the 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.

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 Cultural Education Centres Program
- Recipients must obtain approval from the ISC officer responsible for the program in their region before reallocating funds
- Centres funded through the First Nations Confederacy of Cultural Education Centres should contact the confederacy for guidance

Unexpended funding:

Recipients may retain unexpended funding from a fiscal year to expend in the one-year period immediately following the fiscal year for which it was provided on eligible activities and expenditures as outlined in these guidelines

Flexible 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 Cultural Education Centres Program

Unexpended funding:

- Recipients can retain remaining unexpended funding at the end of each fiscal year to expend in a subsequent fiscal year on eligible activities within these guidelines

10. Reporting requirements and monitoring and oversight activities

10.1 Reporting requirements

The reporting requirements for 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 they were allowed to retain in another 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.

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

10.2 Monitoring and oversight

To ensure that the program or strategy outcomes and objectives are being met and opportunities for continuous improvement with a goal to improve results for Indigenous peoples are being identified, activities including audits, evaluations, targeted programs or strategy reviews may be conducted in collaboration with the recipient, for example desk and on-site reviews.

11. Personal information

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

ISC is responsible for all information and records in its possession. The confidentiality of the information will be 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 the privacy statutes and regulations up to the point that the personal information is transferred to ISC.

12. Accountability

ISC is committed to providing assistance to recipients in order for them to effectively carry out the obligations set out in this document and funding agreements.

Regional offices and other ISC contacts are available to answer questions and provide guidance related to ISC programs and strategies 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 to manage funding and monitor activities are in place
- exercise due diligence when approving expenditures
- ensure that such expenditures are in accordance with the eligible expenditures set out in these guidelines

13. Intellectual property

Where a grant or contribution is provided for the development of material in which copyright subsists, conditions for shared rights will be set out in the funding agreement.

14. Contact information

To find out more about the program, visit:

- First Nations and Inuit Cultural Education Centres program

Visit the Regional office page to find your regional contact.

You can also write to:

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

 To learn more about education programs, consult Education programs: National program guidelines or click on the View instructions button on the first page of this program's data collection instrument.