Evaluation of the Urban Programming for Indigenous Peoples Program

Fall 2024

Indigenous Services Canada

Services aux Autochtones Canada

Canada

This publication is also available in French under the title: Évaluation des Programmes urbains pour les peuples autochtones

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List of Acronyms

ATIP	Access to Information Act & Privacy Act
DCI	Data Collection Instrument
DG	Director General
EC	Economics and Social Services
EFSF	Emergency Food Security Fund
FC	Friendship Centre
FTE	Full-time Employee
G&Cs	Grants and Contributions
GBA Plus	Gender-based Analysis Plus
HQ	Headquarters
ICSF	Indigenous Community Support Fund
INAC	Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada
ISC	Indigenous Services Canada
MMIWG	Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls
NAFC	National Association of Friendship Centres
NRC	National Review Committee
NUICC	National Urban Indigenous Coalition Council
OCAP	Ownership, Control, Access, and Possession
OFI	Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-status Indians
OFIFC	Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendships Centres
PIP	Performance Information Profile
RCAP	Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples
SPO	Service Provider Organization
T&Cs	Terms and Conditions
TAC	Technical Advisory Committee
TBS	Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat
TRC	Truth and Reconciliation Commission
UAS	Urban Aboriginal Strategy
UN	United Nations
UNDRIP	United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples
UPIP	Urban Programming for Indigenous Peoples Program

Land Acknowledgment

The evaluation team gratefully acknowledges that the land on which they work and live is the traditional territory of diverse Indigenous Peoples including the Tsuut'ina Nation, the Blackfoot Confederacy, the Ktunaxa Nation, the Northwest Métis Nation, the Îyârhe Nakoda, the Algonquin Anishinaabeg, the Haudenosaunee, the Anishinabewaki, the Mississauga, and the Wendake-Nionwentsïo peoples. We also offer our gratitude to Indigenous Peoples who live in what is now Canada, whether they are from this region or elsewhere. We have a responsibility to respond actively to this history, which we strive to do by incorporating Indigenous worldviews into our evaluation practices, regularly consulting with Indigenous partners, and critically responding to the colonial underpinnings of traditional program evaluation.

Nous sommes conscients et reconnaissants d'habiter et de travailler sur un territoire traditionnel de divers peuples autochtones y compris la Nation Tsuut'ina, la Confédération des Pieds-Noirs, la Nation Knutaxa, la Nation Métisse du Nord-Ouest, et les peuples Îyârhe Nakoda, Algonquin Anishinaabeg, Haudenosaunee, Anishinabewaki, Mississauga, et Wendake-Nionwentsïo. Nous rendons également hommage à tous les peuples autochtones qui habitent ce qui est maintenant connu sous le nom de Canada, qu'ils soient de la région ou d'ailleurs. Nous avons la responsabilité de répondre activement à cette histoire, ce que nous nous efforçons de faire en intégrant les perspectives autochtones dans nos pratiques d'évaluation, en consultant régulièrement les partenaires autochtones, et en répondant de manière critique aux fondements coloniaux de l'évaluation traditionnelle des programmes.

Executive Summary

As part of Indigenous Services Canada's (ISC's) commitments under the *Financial Administration Act* (1985) and the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat's *Policy on Results* (2016) and *Directive on Results* (2016), ISC Evaluation undertook an evaluation of the Urban Programming for Indigenous Peoples (UPIP) Program, covering the period from 2017-18 (program inception) to 2021-22. UPIP was created in 2017 as the successor to the Urban Aboriginal Strategy. The program funds and supports activities that allow Indigenous organizations to serve clients, to deliver effective culturally appropriate programs and services to Indigenous Peoples in urban spaces, to provide urgent infrastructure and housing supports to Indigenous Peoples residing in urban, rural, and northern areas, as well as to invest in local partner coalitions across Canada. UPIP has six funding streams: Organizational Capacity; Programs and Services; Coalitions; Research and Innovation, Infrastructure, and Housing. Since the Infrastructure stream was only created four months before the end of the evaluation period and the Housing stream did not exist during the evaluation period, this evaluation looks primarily at the first four funding streams. Annual program expenditures averaged $199.6 million over the evaluated period, or $96.5 million excluding supplementary COVID-19 funding provided through the Indigenous Community Support Fund ($406.7 million in 2020-21 and $294 million in 2021-22).

This evaluation assesses UPIP's relevance, effectiveness and efficiency through the lens of the *Awakening the Journey* evaluation framework. In 2021 ISC Evaluation partnered with Johnston Research, Inc., a Toronto-based Indigenous evaluation firm, on the project Strengthening Indigenous Evaluation Frameworks and Practice. This led to the *Awakening the Journey* framework used in this evaluation, which serves as a prototype to explore the approach in an ISC evaluation. The framework uses the three pillars of Spirit, Relationships and Process, organized along four temporal periods: past, present, transition and future. Two additional pillars were incorporated—Governance and Outcomes—to capture findings related to more euro-western areas of evaluation focus. In addition, this evaluation also assesses the Program's impacts on Indigenous families and children, the extent to which the program advances self-determination and service transfer, and impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic. Wherever possible, it uses the lens of gender-based analysis to examine program impacts upon diverse genders and other intersectional groups.

Data collection, data analysis, and engagement used a "methodological toolkit" approach. The toolkit included both Indigenous and Western tools that could be applied flexibly from context to context. Tools evolved as the evaluation progressed to increasingly reflect guidance and input from partner organizations and the evaluation's Technical Advisory Committee (TAC), comprised of 12 members representing diverse program partners (UPIP funding recipients) from various distinction groups, geographic areas, organization types, and demographics. Tools included (among others): interviews, sharing circles, artistic (symbol-based) reflection, communal meals, ceremonies, and community tours. The final evidence base includes data gathered from 2 surveys, 55 Key informant interviews, 7 sharing circles, 2 focus groups, 4 community meals, 1 artistic (symbol-based) reflection activity, and 6 community tours. Contributors included ISC program staff; leadership and staff of Indigenous organizations who

receive UPIP funding; users of UPIP-funded programs; and - to highlight gaps in service – organizations and Indigenous Peoples in urban spaces who did not receive UPIP funding.

The *Awakening the Journey* evaluation framework outlines consensus decision-making as a way of establishing key findings. In alignment with this approach, the evaluation team and contractors held sense-making sessions to identify prevalent themes and reach a consensus on key findings. Following this initial consensus-based process, another sense-making session was held with the TAC, who provided feedback to triangulate findings and reach consensus between ISC Evaluation, the contractors, and Indigenous partners. The key findings of this evaluation are those which were determined by consensus to be most salient, and are those most significant in determining recommendations and next steps.

The evaluation highlights key areas where the program is both excelling and facing significant challenges across the domains of spirit, relationships, process, governance, and outcomes. These findings suggest that while UPIP is well-intentioned and impactful in some respects, there are critical gaps that need addressing to better support urban Indigenous communities.

Spirit: UPIP's flexibility in delivery allows Indigenous service providers to integrate diverse Indigenous values and ways of knowing into their work, which is a significant strength. However, the persistence of colonial values within the program underscores the urgent need to more fully centre Indigenous voices and knowledge in all aspects of the program. The greatest challenge lies in the instability and fragmentation of funding, which has led to a focus on short-term survival rather than long-term planning and innovation. There is a pressing need for a cohesive national urban Indigenous strategy that can drive system-level change and provide a stable foundation for the future.

Relationships: The effectiveness of UPIP is closely tied to the quality of relationships between ISC, funding recipients, and Indigenous organizations. While there has been progress in co-developing outcomes and indicators, Indigenous partners remain under-engaged in program design and administration. The duplication of efforts among federal departments further complicates collaboration. Establishing reciprocal relationships and robust feedback mechanisms is essential for advancing reconciliation efforts and improving the program's responsiveness to the needs of Indigenous Peoples in urban spaces.

Process: Data quality and accessibility are significant concerns that hinder the program's transparency and effectiveness. While UPIP is tailored to meet the needs of urban Indigenous communities, aspects of its funding model, particularly distinctions-based funding, may not fully align with operational realities. The program's definitions and approach also lack sensitivity to gender and diversity, limiting its reach to certain marginalized groups. Additionally, dissatisfaction with the reporting cycle, compounded by delayed funding disbursements and capacity limitations, points to a need for a more streamlined and culturally appropriate reporting process.

Governance: UPIP's governance structures, including its funding streams and Terms and Conditions, generally align with urban Indigenous priorities, but there is room for improvement in capturing these priorities more fully. The program's logic model does not fully reflect Indigenous perspectives of success, and there is a strong demand for Indigenous-led evaluations. Although

the program aligns with federal priorities and ISC's mandate, better alignment with urban Indigenous values and concerns is necessary to enhance its effectiveness and relevance.

Outcomes: Program outcomes are difficult to measure due to unreliable data and missing and/or inadequate or outdated targets, which impedes evidence-based decision-making. Despite these challenges, anecdotal reports suggest that UPIP funding is positively impacting the well-being of Indigenous Peoples in urban spaces. However, the lack of systematic data collection and analysis means these successes are not being fully captured or understood.

Cross-Cutting Issues: The evaluation highlighted that COVID-19 and climate change pose significant challenges for urban Indigenous communities. COVID-19 relief funds temporarily boosted resilience, showing that well-funded organizations can meet community needs when supported by the Government of Canada, but sustaining these efforts is now difficult as funding reverts post-pandemic. Climate change may be driving Indigenous migration to urban centres, further straining service providers and leaving marginalized groups without the familial support they would have in their home communities. This emphasizes the need for sustained funding and adaptive strategies to tackle these compounded challenges.

It is therefore recommended that ISC:

1. Take concrete steps to ensure the program reflects the diverse and evolving priorities, voices, and ways of knowing of Indigenous Peoples in urban spaces. Specifically, it is recommended that ISC:

A) Work with urban Indigenous partners to redesign the program logic model and performance indicators.

B) Establish a standing committee or other permanent mechanism that is representative of diverse Indigenous populations to provide advice on the ongoing strategic direction of the program.

2. Prioritize the collection of meaningful and reliable data regarding Indigenous Peoples in urban spaces to support decision making related to the need for the UPIP program and understanding of its impacts. Specifically, it is recommended that program officials consult with ISC's Chief Data Officer; the Chief Finances, Results and Delivery Officer; and/or Chief Information Officer to:

A) Produce estimates of the current and future demand for the program to inform and justify resourcing requests. To the greatest extent possible, these estimates should take into account changing and intersecting socio-demographic factors, and well as broader contextual considerations such as the potential impacts of climate change on Indigenous migration to urban environments.

B) Develop and implement a flexible reporting approach that is grounded in urban Indigenous priorities and ways of knowing, and which includes mechanisms for communicating back to recipients on UPIP performance.

C) Assess data gaps and data quality issues that are barriers to understanding the needs of Indigenous Peoples in urban spaces and the impact of UPIP, and develop a data strategy to address those gaps, including by actively participating in data planning efforts led by Statistics Canada and others.

3. Take concrete steps towards making funding stable, more sustainable, flexible, and readily accessible so that recipients can make the most of available funds. Specifically, it is recommended that ISC:

A) Develop concrete options and policy recommendations to establish stable, consistent and ongoing supports for Indigenous Peoples in urban spaces.

B) Work with the Urban Indigenous Programs Interdepartmental Directors General Working Group to develop, implement, and report on a concrete action plan for fulfilling the group's mandate to "identify strategic opportunities to leverage funding" to support Indigenous Peoples in urban spaces.

C) Strike an expert panel including program recipients to assess the program Terms and Conditions and make recommendations for eliminating unnecessary complexities and inflexibilities.

D) Streamline and simplify the UPIP application process across funding streams, in collaboration with Indigenous partners and organizations, and explore opportunities to partner with other funders on a common application process to reduce recipients' need to expend limited UPIP resources pursuing other scattered funding opportunities.

Management Response and Action Plan

Evaluation Title: Evaluation of the Urban Programming for Indigenous Peoples Program

Overall Management Response

Overview

- This evaluation covers the traditional subject areas of relevance, effectiveness, and efficiency through the lens of the *Awakening the Journey* framework: a hybrid evaluation framework grounded in Indigenous perspectives[1].

- The *Awakening the Journey* evaluation framework used in this evaluation includes five pillars: Spirit, Relationships, Process – organized along four temporal periods: past, present, transition and future – Governance, and Outcomes.

- The evaluation primarily covers the period from start of fiscal year 2017-18 to end of fiscal year 2021-22, and also includes COVID-19 recovery efforts and early lessons learned through to the end of 2021 (2021-22 fiscal year).

- The Urban Programming for Indigenous Peoples (UPIP) program was created in 2017 as the successor to the Urban Aboriginal Strategy and is ISC's only program specifically focused on funding organizations that provide programs and services to Indigenous Peoples living in, transitioning to, or accessing services in urban centres.

- Core findings of this evaluation are the very same issues that UPIP recipients and key partners consistently highlight to the program, namely:
  - negative operational impacts of unstable, unreliable and inflexible funding;
  - performance frameworks that do not reflect Indigenous methodologies, collection processes and indicators of success;
  - lack of meaningful and reliable data collection of Indigenous needs in urban centres; and,
  - inefficient and restrictive program policies.

- The findings and recommendations of this evaluation will guide upcoming policy, planning, and delivery efforts including: stabilization of core funding; implementation of a redesigned Indigenous-led and co-developed program performance framework; and, meaningful research and data collection to more accurately reflect the current and evolving realities of Indigenous Peoples living in urban centres.

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[1] In 2021 ISC Evaluation partnered with Johnston Research, Inc., a Toronto-based Indigenous evaluation firm, on the project *Strengthening Indigenous Evaluation Frameworks and Practice*. This led to *Awakening the Journey* evaluation framework used in this evaluation, with the pillars of Spirit, Relationships and Process organized along four temporal periods: past, present, transition and future.

- UPIP has six funding streams: Organizational Capacity; Programs and Services; Coalitions; Research and Innovation, Infrastructure, and Housing[2]. The findings and recommendations stemming from this evaluation will inform required program changes to promote flexible funding between streams, thereby supporting organizations to better respond to emerging needs of the populations they serve.

- In accordance with ISC's devolution mandate the program is committed to seeking input and guidance from Indigenous partners with the objective of co-developing Indigenous-led recommendations for program and policy changes.

Assurance

- The Action Plan presents appropriate and realistic measures to address the evaluation's recommendations, as well as timelines for initiating and completing the action.

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[2] The housing stream operates under a separate, independent process from the other five UPIP streams.

Action Plan Matrix

Sector: Education and Social Development Programs and Partnerships
Program: Urban Programming for Indigenous Peoples Program

Recommendation 1	Actions	Responsible Manager (Title / Sector)	Planned Start and Completion Dates	Action Item Context/Rationale
1) Take concrete steps to ensure the program reflects the diverse and evolving priorities, voices, and ways of knowing of Indigenous Peoples in urban spaces. Specifically, it is recommended that ISC: **1A)** Work with urban Indigenous partners to redesign the program logic model and performance indicators. **1B)** Establish a standing committee or other permanent mechanism that is representative of diverse Indigenous populations to provide advice on the ongoing strategic direction of the program.	We **do** concur. **Recommendation 1A):** The program is in the final approval stages to implement a redesigned, Indigenous-led and co-developed performance framework, which is based in Indigenous methodologies, measures of success and performance indicators. This new performance framework is expected to take effect on April 1, 2025. **Recommendation 1B):** Building on the success of the Indigenous-led and co-developed performance framework process, the program will establish a guidance committee in the short-medium term as it reviews necessary modifications that are within its existing program authorities. In the longer-term, the program will work, with the continued input of the guidance committee, to develop the parameters, including scope, of a permanent body that would provide strategic direction when the program seeks updated program authorities.	Director General, Education and Social Development Programs and Partnerships	**Start Date:** April 2025 **Completion:** September 2026	<u>**Status:**</u> ☐ Fully Implemented **X** Partially Implemented ☐ Implementation did not Commence ☐ Obsolete **Update/Rationale:** These action items are currently in the development and planning phase, with a scheduled implementation date set for April 2025. The timeline for establishment of a permanent mechanism is TBD because it is dependent on updated program authorities that must be sought via a Memorandum to Cabinet. **Last updated: November 2024**

Recommendation 2	Actions	Responsible Manager (Title / Sector)	Planned Start and Completion Dates	Action Item Context/Rationale
2) Prioritize the collection of meaningful and reliable data regarding Indigenous Peoples in urban spaces to support decision making related to the need for the UPIP program and understanding of its impacts. Specifically, it is recommended that program officials consult with ISC's Chief Data Officer; the Chief Finances, Results and Delivery Officer; and/or Chief Information Officer to: **2A)** Produce estimates of the current and future demand for the program to inform and justify resourcing requests. To the greatest extent possible, these estimates should take into account changing and intersecting socio-demographic factors, and well as broader contextual considerations such as the potential impacts of climate change on Indigenous migration to urban environments. **2B)** Develop and implement a flexible reporting approach that is grounded in urban Indigenous priorities and ways of knowing, and which includes mechanisms for communicating back to recipients on UPIP performance. **2C)** Assess data gaps and data quality issues that are barriers to understanding the needs of Indigenous Peoples in urban spaces and the impact of UPIP, and develop a data strategy to address those gaps, including by actively participating in data planning efforts led by Statistics Canada and others.	We **do** concur. **Recommendation 2A)**: In collaboration with the Chief Data Officer (CDO), UPIP program officials will develop options for estimating current and future demand for the UPIP program by December 31, 2025. By March 31, 2026, UPIP program officials will finalize an implementation strategy based on the selected option. By March 31, 2027, estimates will be finalized. **Recommendations 2B) and 2C):** In collaboration with the ISC CDO and ISC data and performance management experts, UPIP program officials will articulate a plan to optimize use of existing data, by March 31, 2026 as well as the key data gaps that challenge the design and delivery of the UPIP program. By December 31, 2026, UPIP program officials will complete a data strategy defining how those gaps will be addressed, to the greatest extent possible given financial and logistical constraints, and attention to respondent burden. As part of this work, and leveraging engagement opportunities organized or facilitated by the CDO, UPIP program officials will provide feedback to Statistics Canada on key data collection activities that they undertake - such as the Census of Population and the Indigenous Peoples Survey - to provide advice on how those instruments could be adjusted to improve data related to Indigenous Peoples in urban centres.	Director General, Education and Social Development Programs and Partnerships	**Start Date:** October 2025 **Completion:** 2026-2027	<u>Status:</u> ☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented **X** Implementation did not Commence ☐ Obsolete **Update/Rationale:** This action item is currently in the development and planning phase, with a scheduled implementation date set for 2026-2027. **Last updated: November 2024**

Recommendation 3	Actions	Responsible Manager (Title / Sector)	Planned Start and Completion Dates	Action Item Context/Rationale
3) Take concrete steps towards making funding stable, more sustainable, flexible, and readily accessible so that recipients can make the most of available funds. Specifically, it is recommended that ISC: **3A)** Develop concrete options and policy recommendations to establish stable, consistent and ongoing supports for Indigenous Peoples in urban spaces. **3B)** Work with the Urban Indigenous Programs Interdepartmental Directors General Working Group to develop, implement, and report on a concrete action plan for fulfilling the group's mandate to "identify strategic opportunities to leverage funding" to support Indigenous Peoples in urban spaces. **3C)** Strike an expert panel including program recipients to assess the program Terms and Conditions and make recommendations for eliminating unnecessary complexities and inflexibilities. **3D)** Streamline and simplify the UPIP application process across funding streams, in collaboration with Indigenous partners and organizations, and explore opportunities to partner with other funders on a common application process to reduce recipients' need to expend limited UPIP resources pursuing other scattered funding opportunities.	We **do** concur. **Recommendation 3A):** The program will develop concrete policy options and recommendations to establish stable and consistent funding supports that organizations can depend upon on an ongoing basis. **Recommendation 3B):** The program will work with the Urban Indigenous Programs Interdepartmental Directors General Working Group to develop, implement, and report on a concrete action plan for fulfilling the group's mandate to "identify strategic opportunities to leverage funding" to support Indigenous Peoples in urban spaces. **Recommendation 3C)**: Building on the success of the Indigenous-led and co-developed performance framework process, the program will begin, in September 2025, the establishment of a guidance committee, including grassroots program recipients, to assess the program's Terms and Conditions and make recommendations for eliminating unnecessary complexities and inflexibilities. The results of this review will form part of the program's policy recommendations. **Recommendation 3D):** Building on the success of the Indigenous-led and co-developed performance framework process, the program will begin, in September 2025, the establishment of a guidance committee and collaborate with Indigenous partners to explore streamlining within and outside the UPIP program.	Director General, Education and Social Development Programs and Partnerships	**Start Date***:* October 2024 **Completion:** 2026-2027	<u>**Status:**</u> ☐ Fully Implemented ☐ Partially Implemented **X** Implementation did not Commence ☐ Obsolete **Update/Rationale:** The action item is currently in the development and planning phase, with a scheduled implementation date set for 2026-2027. **Last updated: November 2024**

Introduction

The federal *Financial Administration Act* (1985) requires departments to conduct five-year reviews of the relevance and effectiveness of each ongoing grant and contribution program over $5 million. The 2016 Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat's (TBS's) *Policy on Results* and *Directive on Results* require departments to, among other things, maintain five-year evaluation plans that are updated annually; carry out program evaluations in accordance with these plans; and consider relevance, effectiveness and efficiency when undertaking evaluations. These obligations support the basis of the evaluation work carried out at Indigenous Services Canada (ISC).

In 2016 the Government of Canada adopted and committed to the implementation of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) which calls for governments to obtain Indigenous Peoples' free, prior, and informed consent in administrative and legislative processes. *The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* (2021) sets out the Government of Canada's obligations to address injustices, combat prejudice, and eliminate all forms of violence, racism, and discrimination; promote mutual respect and understanding and maintain good relations with Indigenous Peoples; and implement measures related to monitoring, oversight, recourse, remedy or other forms of accountability, among other imperatives. In the context of program evaluation, this entails close consultation with Indigenous partners at all stages of an evaluation; ensuring that program evaluation works to further service transfer and self-determination; and drawing upon Indigenous worldviews to inform evaluation methods, analysis and deliverables, including culturally relevant knowledge dissemination.

The need to fully implement the rights enshrined within UNDRIP has been echoed by the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) Calls to Action[3], the Final Report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls (MMIWG)[4], and the most recent Mandate Letter to the Minister of Indigenous Services Canada[5].

ISC Evaluation is increasingly emphasizing models of co-development with Indigenous partners across evaluation projects. In the short- to medium-term, this includes ways to integrate Indigenous evaluation expertise, knowledge, worldviews and/or Indigenous capacity development at key points in evaluation phases (planning, methodology, data collection, data analysis/development of findings, and recommendations/reporting). In the long-term, a goal is to support Indigenous evaluation functions beyond/outside of the Government of Canada.

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[3] Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. (2015). Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to action. Available online.

[4] National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. (2019). Reclaiming power and place: The final report of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. Available Online.

[5] Office of the Prime Minister. (2021). Minister of Indigenous Services and Minister responsible for the Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario Mandate Letter. Available online.

This evaluation, which strives to respond to these mandates and goals, examines the Urban Programming for Indigenous Peoples program (UPIP) from 2017-18 to 2021-2022. The purpose of this evaluation is to:

• assess the extent to which and how the program recognizes and supports the rights, autonomy, worldviews, and cultural heritage of Indigenous Peoples;

• consider how or whether the program meets community needs, priorities, visions, and goals;

• identify areas for improvement or transformation, lessons learned, practices to continue, and recommendations; and

• examine the relevancy, effectiveness, and efficiency of the program.

The evaluation also assesses impacts on Indigenous children and families; early impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic; progress, challenges, and barriers regarding eventual service transfer; and climate change. Wherever possible, the evaluation employs a gender-based analysis plus lens to examine impacts upon diverse genders and other intersectional groups. Evaluation findings are intended to inform ISC and partner organizations on areas for improvement to program effectiveness and to support programming decision-making.

ISC Evaluation has partnered with Johnston Research Inc. on an exploratory project entitled Strengthening Indigenous Evaluation Frameworks and Practice which aims to build dynamic evaluation tools that are relevant and appropriate for ISC, Indigenous partners and communities. Rooted in the notion that Indigenous nations, communities and Peoples have historically embedded evaluation into their worldviews and knowledge systems, this project advances a framework that attempts to overcome the limitations of the colonial underpinnings of logic models, such as linear progression, an emphasis on cause-and-effect, and a focus on numerical indicators such as dollars saved or clients served as indicators of success. The framework, entitled *Awakening the Journey*, is founded upon three key pillars (Spirit, Relationships, Process) that work together to ground community-centred evaluation priorities, needs, ideas of progress, and perspectives on change over an expansive view of time. The *Awakening the Journey* framework is presented in **Section 2.1.**

A component of this project involves piloting the framework with evaluation projects both internal and external to ISC. Piloting the *Awakening the Journey* framework in live evaluations enables further adaptation of the model to ensure that it is relevant and appropriate. ISC Evaluation determined that the UPIP program evaluation would be the internal demonstration project through which to gain experience with the framework. Johnston Research was consulted in the development of the Terms of Reference and evaluation questions, and will be briefed post-evaluation on the evaluation findings and recommendations as well as the evaluation team's reflections on the *Awakening the Journey* framework.

1. Urban Programming for Indigenous Peoples Program Overview

1.1 Background

The final report of the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) in 1996 highlighted that a significant proportion of Indigenous people in Canada reside in urban areas, bringing to the forefront issues concerning urban self-governance and disputes over government obligations in service provision. The Government of Canada responded to this through *Gathering Strength–Canada's Aboriginal Action Plan* (1998), which was its official policy response to the RCAP findings. This response coincided with a period marked by the international assertion of both individual and collective rights of Indigenous Peoples, eventually culminating in the passage of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) in 2007.

Gathering Strength delineated a policy framework for federal action, centred around four key objectives. It particularly addressed the issue of self-governance outside of reserves, notably in urban settings, emphasizing the negotiability of direct programming control by Indigenous institutions and governments. Objectives such as "Renewing the Partnership" and "Supporting Strong Communities, People, and Economics" made commitments aimed at more effectively addressing the needs of urban Aboriginal (today urban Indigenous) populations, including the establishment of urban youth centres. Simultaneously, especially in the western provinces, there were calls to mitigate the socio-economic disparities between Indigenous and non-Indigenous urban residents.

Launched in 1998, the Urban Aboriginal Strategy (UAS) aimed to improve federal policy and program development through collaboration with other governments, emphasizing "local determination" and "partnership." Administered by the Privy Council Office and overseen by the Federal Interlocutor for Métis and Non-status Indians (OFI), the UAS spurred community initiatives nationwide.

The UAS adhered to a "community of interest" model, featuring self-governing sectoral Indigenous institutions, such as Friendship Centres who allocated funding to their members, aiming to deliver services with better outcomes while also serving as mechanisms for supporting Indigenous identity. The Government of Canada sought to partner with other governments, the Indigenous charitable and not-for-profit sector,[6] Indigenous peoples, and the private sector to back projects addressing local needs. By 2000, various cities, including Edmonton, Calgary, and Vancouver, saw the formation of community partnership committees and the inception of innovative projects like the single window concept[7] and urban Indigenous strategy development.

When the UAS was initially established, no OFI contribution funding was available to support community-level projects. However, in 2003 the UAS was allocated $25 million aimed at

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[6] In this report, for brevity, the Indigenous charitable and not-for-profit sector is referred to as Indigenous Service Provider Organizations or simply as Indigenous SPOs.

[7] A single-window approach involves "the bringing together of government services, or information about them, in order to reduce the amount of time and effort citizens must expend to find and obtain the services they need" (CCMD, 1999, p.2) – for more information, see Canadian Centre for Management Development [CCMD]. (1999). *Innovations and good practices in single-window service*. Ottawa: Government of Canada. Available online.

supporting projects in eight pilot cities, followed by an increase to $50 million when four more cities joined in 2004. The UAS was renewed in 2007 for an additional five years with funding of $68.5 million, including $50 million for contributions to recipients. Between 2012 and 2014, urban Indigenous programming from Canadian Heritage and Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) was merged. This consolidated four programs into two streams, with the National Association of Friendship Centres (NAFC) receiving $43 million annually to deliver an annual call for proposals, while INAC administered $10 million for regional and community strategic plans.

To address concerns with the consolidated model of the UAS, the 2017 evaluation recommended several improvements. These included enhancing fairness and transparency in funding allocations, expanding access to funding for Indigenous Service Provider Organizations (SPOs), increasing support for multi-jurisdictional networks and cultural programming, and better aligning with community priorities beyond economic participation. The Urban Programming for Indigenous Peoples program replaced the UAS in 2017 following these recommendations.

1.2 Program Description

The Urban Programming for Indigenous Peoples (UPIP) program was designed to assist First Nations (status and non-status), Inuit, and Métis living in or transitioning to urban areas by funding Indigenous SPOs to deliver culturally appropriate programming. It seeks to invest in local partner coalitions across Canada and to support research and pilot projects to better understand the urban Indigenous context. UPIP also aims to facilitate greater federal coordination of programming.

UPIP operates through six funding streams— organizational capacity, programs and services, housing, coalitions, research and innovation, and infrastructure—each with specific goals, although during the evaluation period the housing stream had not yet been created. The infrastructure funding stream was implemented in 2020 and was only in effect for the final four months of the evaluation period.

Due to overwhelming demand in the initial call for proposals in 2017-2018, no further calls were made during the evaluation period. Annual expenditures averaged $199.6 million over the evaluated period (2017-18 to 2021-22), or $96.5 million adjusted to remove supplementary COVID-19 funding from the Indigenous Community Support Fund administered via the UPIP Terms and Conditions, funding which was discontinued after the pandemic. UPIP funding has supported and continues to support over 120 organizations, projects, or initiatives for durations ranging from one to five years. Detailed program resources and expenditures are available in **Annex D**.

1.3 Program Objectives and Expected Outcomes

UPIP was created in 2017-18 under Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada's strategic objective of The Land and Economy in the Departmental Results Report. Coming under ISC's purview in 2018-19, it was originally linked to the Core Responsibility of Individuals and Families

within ISC's Departmental Results Framework, and in 2021-22 was linked to the Core Responsibility of Health and Social Services. As of 2023-24, it has been linked to the Core Responsibility of Children and Families. This evaluation acknowledges these evolving Core Responsibilities and makes an effort to consider each of their contexts throughout its analysis. These contexts are each well aligned with ISC Evaluation's typical areas of focus, where evaluations explicitly focus on children and families, as well as impacts on the land, economy, and health and social services. The logic model framing UPIP during the evaluation period was created in 2018-19, but as of 2024-25 is in the process of redevelopment.

UPIP is part of a suite of programs intended to support the well-being of Indigenous children, individuals and families on reserve and in urban centres through the delivery of services. UPIP contributes to the following departmental results: Indigenous students receive an inclusive and quality education; Indigenous children and families receive child and family wellness services; and, Indigenous peoples receive essential social services

The *ultimate outcome* of UPIP is:

- Improved socio-economic opportunities for Indigenous Peoples in urban centres.

The *intermediate outcomes* of UPIP are:

- Indigenous Peoples have increased access to programs and services

- Better understanding of Indigenous Peoples in urban contexts

The *immediate outcomes* of UPIP are:

- Indigenous organizations have organizational capacity to serve clients

- Programs and services are delivered to Indigenous Peoples in urban centres

- Coalitions are active or established

- Improved collaboration between federal departments delivering urban Indigenous programming

- Research and innovative pilot projects are conducted

The full UPIP Logic Model is presented in **Annex C**. This logic model is currently being redesigned and does not reflect the *Awakening the Journey* principles of this evaluation.

1.4 Program Management, Key Partners, and Beneficiaries

ISC headquarters in the National Capital Region oversees all programming streams through the UPIP team, while program administration staff manage program operations and Grants and Contributions (G&Cs) streams. Economics and Social Services (EC) staff lead policy

development and corporate reporting, and manage UPIP authorities. They also chair the Interdepartmental Working Group, overseeing the annual work plan.

Regional Offices in British Columbia, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, Quebec, and Atlantic provinces represent ISC on local coalition tables, engaging in strategic planning and funding decisions. They collaborate with local and regional urban Indigenous organizations, governments, and partners. Headquarters maintains management of the North, facilitating interactions with the Northern Affairs Organization Sector and existing partnerships.

The National Review Committee (NRC) facilitates proposal reviews and enhances transparency in annual calls for proposals. It submits a prioritized list of projects to ISC and provides funding recommendations. Validating local recommendations, the NRC considers inputs from coalitions before making final funding recommendations. It primarily focuses on projects not linked to coalitions and excludes funding allocations to First Nations, Métis, and Inuit, as they manage their own funding decisions.

An Interdepartmental Working Group guides the NRC through application review, discusses program renewal, and explores funding leverage opportunities. Its aim is to enhance federal collaboration and coordination of urban Indigenous services while reducing program duplication. Membership includes representatives from ISC, Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, Canadian Heritage, Correctional Services Canada, Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada, Employment and Social Development Canada, Infrastructure Canada, Justice Canada, Public Health Agency of Canada, Public Safety Canada, Royal Canadian Mounted Police, Statistics Canada, and Women and Gender Equality.

2. Evaluation Background and Methodology

2.1 Scope and *Awakening the Journey* Framework

The evaluation of UPIP primarily covers the period from start of fiscal year 2017-18 to end of fiscal year 2021-22, and also includes COVID-19 recovery efforts and early lessons learned through to the end of 2021 (2021-22 fiscal year). The evaluation was carried out in compliance with the Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat's *Policy on Results* and Section 42.1(1) of the *Financial Administration Act*.

In 2021, ISC Evaluation collaborated with Johnston Research, Inc., an Indigenous evaluation firm based in Toronto, on the project titled "Strengthening Indigenous Evaluation Frameworks and Practice." This partnership resulted in the *Awakening the Journey* evaluation framework used in this evaluation. While the conventional evaluation areas of relevance, effectiveness, and efficiency are addressed, they are approached through the perspective of a hybrid framework grounded in Indigenous perspectives.

The *Awakening the Journey* framework guides the UPIP program evaluation by facilitating a holistic view along the following four temporal axes : 1) **past/beginning**, 2) **present/current experience**, 3) **transitionary period**, and 4) **future**. and is founded upon three core pillars: Spirit, Relationships, and Process.

• **Spirit** refers to the qualities which form the definitive character of a person, nation, or group, such as thoughts, attitudes, values, emotions, identity, connectedness to the past, and sense of self in the present. In the context of a program or evaluation, Spirit can include supportive positive energies in the program or evaluation space; foundational values; group or individual supports; acknowledgment of what we have and what we have already received; and program or evaluation staff who have an ethic of care towards their colleagues, clients, and partners.

• **Relationships** refers to the range of interactions and connections that run through the program and evaluation, including relationship-building, and encompass connections throughout the past, present and future between spirit, ancestors, land, non-human relatives, kin, communities, program partners, and funders.

• **Process** refers to how the program conducts programming and how the evaluation carries out methodologies and data analysis. This includes what is done in program and evaluation planning and how those plans are implemented.

This evaluation adapts the *Awakening the Journey* framework to include two additional pillars which respond specifically to capture findings related to more euro-western areas of evaluation focus. These additional pillars are **Governance** and **Outcomes**.

• **Governance** refers to how processes align with Government of Canada legislative frameworks and priority areas, including the UNDRIP (2021), the UNDRIP Action Plan (2023)[8], the *Financial Administration Act* (1985), and the TBS *Policy on Results*.

• **Outcomes** refers to how logic model outcomes and actual past, present and future program outcomes respond to the needs and priorities of Indigenous Peoples in urban centres and to Government of Canada mandates.

This evaluation also considers several crosscutting issues, including service transfer, Gender-Based Analysis (GBA) Plus, COVID-19, and climate change. COVID-19 and climate change are significant global challenges that have distinct and far-reaching impacts, making it essential to address them in their own evaluation questions and findings. This approach allows for a focused analysis of how these crises affect specific outcomes. GBA Plus, on the other hand, is an analytical tool that examines how various identity factors intersect to affect people's lived experiences across all contexts. This evaluation integrates GBA+ throughout all evaluation questions as a fundamental principle, ensuring that intersecting identities are considered in

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[8] Key points from the UNDRIP Action Plan that are relevant to this pillar include **1. Self-determination**: Indigenous Peoples have the right to develop their own decision-making systems; **2. Participating in Decision-Making**: Indigenous Peoples should fully participate in the decisions affecting them, aligning with goals to involve Indigenous voices in program governance; and **3. Free, Prior and Informed Consent** (FPIC): Indigenous Peoples should consent to policies and programs impacting them, reinforcing the importance of inclusive governance.

every aspect of the evaluation and thereby promoting a more comprehensive and inclusive analysis.

Annex E provides the specific questions that guided the evaluation.

2.2   Collaboration and Ethical Engagement

The evaluation team has applied fundamental principles of research ethics to this evaluation, including respect for persons through the application of voluntary informed consent from contributors; consideration of optimizing benefits for contributors (see "reciprocity" below), and a commitment to minimize risk and do no harm. The evaluation team strives to protect the confidentiality of contributors and of evaluation data to the greatest extent possible in the federal context of the *Access to Information Act* and *Privacy Act (ATIP)*, but has also allowed contributors and communities to be identified in the reports if they so choose, in order for stories to be told if their authors agree and provide permission.

The evaluation was overseen by a team from the Evaluation Branch at ISC, with the support of Bell, Browne, Molnar and Delicate Consulting. A 12-member Indigenous partner-led TAC was established during the development of the evaluation Terms of Reference and included various UPIP funding recipients, representing diverse communities, regions, organization types, distinctions groups, and intersectional identities. The TAC played a central role in guiding the evaluation process through consultations at various stages of the evaluation, including reviewing evaluation questions, the Terms of Reference, methodology, key findings, early recommendations, and next steps. The TAC will also play a leadership role in the creation of the community report.

As recommended by the TAC, the evaluation team has striven to practice the "6 R's" ethics of research and methods in Indigenous contexts (Kirkness and Barnhardt, 1991; Harris and Wasilewsky, 2004; Kovach, 2021). The 6 R's of ethical research are the following:

Respect, or valuing diverse individual, cultural, and community knowledge. Respect includes understanding and practicing community protocols, being reflective and non-judgmental, being able to hear what is being said, and building on cultural, social and spiritual values that can only come from the community.

Implementation: all contributors to this evaluation were surveyed in advance of participation in order to ascertain the methods and practices through which they wished to engage with the evaluation team. The methodology of this evaluation (see **Section 2.3**) has been designed to accommodate diverse means of engagement, with an emphasis on participatory methods that are relevant to communities; contributors themselves have defined the nature and boundaries of their participation.

Relevance to community and cultural needs and experiences. Communities should be part of designing the research questions as well as the methods and interpretation of findings. The researcher/evaluator must be clear about their intentions, and factual information must be useful for the local governance.

Implementation: the TAC was created with a goal of representing diverse communities and cultures, including partners from all distinction groups. The evaluation team held consultations with each TAC partner on the evaluation Terms of Reference and methodology, including the evaluation questions, and made an effort to reflect all suggestions, revisions and feedback in the evaluation deliverables and design. In addition, the evaluation methodology has been designed to accommodate culturally relevant means of engagement.

Reciprocity, where both the community and researcher/evaluator benefit from a two-way process of learning and research. The evaluator must ask questions including: What will be left behind? What has the community learned/gained? Has knowledge been shared through the whole process?

Implementation: the evaluation will include a community report, which will go beyond a technical report to disseminate findings to communities in an accessible way through a medium identified by the TAC as relevant and engaging. Portions of evaluation deliverables have been translated into Indigenous languages in order to increase accessibility, to date including Plains Cree, Michif, Inuktitut, Mi'kmaq, Ojibwe, Dene and Inuinnaqtun. Languages were selected based on prevalence within distinctions groups and across Canada, geographic representation, and feedback from the TAC. Contributors to the evaluation have had the opportunity to review their contributions and decide how their data is used (for instance, whether they are directly quoted), including the ability to edit or revoke their own data up until the submission of the final evaluation report.

Responsibility, where there is active empowerment for community members through full engagement and participation, and active accountability on the part of a researcher. Responsibility means that the evaluator continues to develop and maintain credibility with the community by considering all perspectives, being transparent about the evaluation process, striving to provide value to involved communities, working collaboratively, and sharing findings.

Implementation: Consultations at various stages of the evaluation and one working meeting with TAC members has allowed for a range of perspectives to shape the evaluation process, findings, and reports. Community members have engaged with the evaluation on their own terms. Informed consent was always collected before engagement, and whenever data was collected, contributors were able to review their contributions and decide how they were used. An effort has been and will continue to be made to make findings accessible and relevant to communities (see 3 above).

Relationship between complex layers of Indigenous identity, land, nature, ancestors, community, and future generations. Relationship is built upon honesty and trust, and acknowledges that Indigenous knowledges are relational and that all living things embody knowledge. An evaluator is accountable to all relationships.

Implementation: where possible and when desired by contributors, the evaluation team has made an effort to engage with communities in person and in communities themselves. A methodological emphasis has been placed on participatory methods which centre human relationships, creative expression, and on-the-land engagement.

Representation, where the voices of diverse Indigenous communities and individuals are heard and have a presence in the evaluation. Representation requires that evaluators be cognizant of the history of colonized research conducted on marginalized and Indigenous populations and that research reflecting Indigenous communities be represented using a strengths-based (rather than deficit- or damage-based) approach.

Implementation: the evaluation team has had frank discussions with TAC partners about their previous experiences with colonial research and interactions with the Government of Canada, with the goal of identifying and mitigating negative impacts. These discussions have shaped the evaluation process, including efforts to ensure reciprocity and accessibility of findings. "Do no harm" is a fundamental ethical principle of this evaluation, and open lines of communication were established between partners/contributors and the evaluation team to facilitate ongoing, frank discussions regarding the application of this principle.

2.3   Design and Methods

Planning for the Evaluation began in winter 2022, with the Terms of Reference finalized November 2022. The Methodology Report was finalized in the summer 2023, with primary data collection occurring from August 2023 to March 2024.

This evaluation employs a "methodological toolkit" approach. The methodological toolkit encompasses a collection of rigorous research methods that reflect diverse perspectives, traditions, and forms of knowledge (both Western and Indigenous). Evaluators can determine which methods to use based on community or individual preference, context, and/or need. Much like one tool cannot be used for every job, the philosophy of this approach is that one method may not suit everyone who engages in the evaluation process. Instead, just as specialized tools are selected for specialized tasks, the most appropriate method is selected based on contributors' worldviews and preferred methods for engagement. This ensures that contributors have their voices heard, have more agency by engaging with the evaluation on their own terms, and are engaged more actively in the data collection process, in addition to allowing for the prioritization of Indigenous ways of knowing. This methodological flexibility and adaptability stems from the Relationships and Process pillars of the *Awakening the Journey* evaluation framework and from principles of abductive reasoning[9].

The evaluation incorporates various lines of evidence collected in English and in French from contributors in nine provinces, including a review of literature, UPIP-related documents and data, 55 key informant interviews, 7 sharing circles, 2 focus groups, 4 community meals, 1 artistic (symbol-based) reflection activity, 6 community tours, and 2 surveys. Contributors included ISC program staff, leadership and personnel from Indigenous organizations receiving UPIP funding, beneficiaries of UPIP-funded programs and, to pinpoint service gaps, organizations not receiving UPIP funding.

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[9] As described by Margaret Kovach in her book *Indigenous methodologies, 2nd edition* (2021).

2.4 Data Analysis

Indigenous-inspired methodologies extend from how data are collected to how data are interpreted and presented. To determine the strength and importance of findings, Indigenous approaches to data analysis often focus on narrative salience and incorporate collaborative sense-making[10], rather than codification and qualification. The *Awakening the Journey* framework outlines consensus decision-making as a way of establishing key findings.

In line with this approach, the evaluation team and the contractors held three three-hour sense-making sessions to identify prevalent themes in the data and to reach a consensus on key findings. Following this initial consensus-based process, another sense-making session was held with the TAC, who provided feedback to triangulate findings and reach consensus between ISC Evaluation, the contractors, and Indigenous partners. The key findings of this evaluation are those which were determined by consensus to be most salient, and are those most significant in determining recommendations and next steps.

2.5 Limitations

The main limitation of the evaluation was the evaluation team's inability to evaluate program performance against expectations for the majority of UPIP Performance Information Profile (PIP) indicators. This limitation was primarily due to missing targets[11] and unreliable or unavailable performance data. Consequently, the evaluation team was unable to ascertain the program-level impact of UPIP. Although contributors provided qualitative information at the project-level and on the program in general, this was insufficient to evaluate the impact of UPIP at the program-level in relation to the indicators and outcomes in the PIP.

2.6 Previous Evaluation

Following the consolidation of all urban Indigenous programming previously delivered by Canadian Heritage and Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) into the singular Urban Aboriginal Strategy, the previous evaluation of the program examined activities from April 2014 to July 2016.The previous evaluation's key findings and recommendations related to the UAS are found in **Annex F**.

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[10] Collaborative sense-making sessions are group discussions where analysts jointly interpret qualitative data to identify key themes. This is an established means of data analysis (see, for example, Abma, T., Banks, S., Cook, T. and Dias, S. [2019]. Sense making: The process of data analysis and interpretation. *Participatory Research for Health and Social Well-being* [157-182].) that has been adapted to the *Awakening the Journey* context used in this evaluation. In this case, sense-making sessions focused on the collective data from all data collection methods. Narrative salience refers to the poignancy and prevalence of stories or themes that emerge from this data, helping to highlight the most relevant findings.

[11] "Targets" refers to the thresholds regarding indicators from the Performance Information Profile that are intended to measure the success of outcomes. While some indicators have thresholds listed for green (successful), yellow (moderately successful), and red (unsuccessful), several are listed as "TBD".

3. Findings

The key findings below have been sorted in to the five pillars of the *Awakening the Journey* framework. A media collage of photos taken by the evaluation team while visiting communities and learning on the land is another way to convey the themes running through these findings. This media collage – including artwork, ceremony, community spaces, outdoor spaces, and other visual media – is provided in **Annex A**. The evaluation team obtained informed consent from all contributors to showcase the images included in the collage.

3.1: Spirit

UPIP's flexibility in delivery allows Indigenous service providers to integrate diverse Indigenous values and ways of knowing into their work, which is a significant strength. The greatest challenge lies in the instability and fragmentation of funding, which has led to a focus on short-term survival rather than long-term planning and innovation. There is a pressing need for a cohesive national urban Indigenous strategy that can drive system-level change and provide a stable foundation for the future.

Finding 1: Despite facing challenges related to funding and implementation, the flexibility of UPIP's delivery model empowers Indigenous service providers to integrate a diverse array of Indigenous values and ways of knowing into their service delivery.

> *When I'm in this part of town I'm just another person, but does it make a difference to me that I can hear drumming when I walk down the street or that this space is here downstairs and I can get sweetgrass or sage? I think it matters.*
>
> -Indigenous Contributor, West Coast

Flexibility in the Terms and Conditions of funding agreements refers to the adaptability and latitude built into these agreements to allow Indigenous service providers to decide how funds are used. This flexibility enables service providers to tailor the use of funding according to their community-specific needs and priorities, integrating Indigenous values, cultural practices, and traditional knowledge into their service delivery. It ensures that funding is not constrained by rigid, one-size-fits-all requirements but can be adjusted to align with Indigenous ways of knowing and community-driven approaches, fostering more effective and culturally appropriate outcomes.

This flexibility is in alignment with the Department's vision for "program transfer", which refers to "support[ing] Indigenous Peoples in assuming control of the delivery of services at the pace and in the ways in which they choose"[12] . This process, founded upon four pillars of "planning, partnerships, operations, and people"[13], aims to bring decision-making closer to the people and

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[12] Indigenous Services Canada. (2020). *Indigenous Services Canada: Strategic plan 2020-2025* (p.1). Available online.

[13] *Ibid* (p.4-5).

regions affected by those decisions, often to improve governance, enhance efficiency, and better address local needs and conditions.

In 1992, the Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) established an Urban Governance Working Group to explore governance for Indigenous communities within urban settings. Three approaches were recommended. The first was self-governance through Indigenous institutions in urban areas managing key services. The second was co-management, where Indigenous authorities collaborate with local and federal, provincial and territorial governments to ensure Indigenous cultures are reflected in urban planning and service delivery. The third was reforming municipal governments and local public authorities to better represent Indigenous residents. These approaches all prioritized the incorporation of Indigenous values and knowledge in the urban contexts[14].

Successive cycles of the Urban Aboriginal Strategy (UAS) have highlighted the significance of local autonomy and collaboration. Since its inception in 1997, the UAS has evolved through multiple iterations, consistently prioritizing local autonomy and collaboration in addressing the needs of Indigenous peoples in urban areas. These core principles have been integral to the program's design, aiming to improve the socio-economic conditions of Indigenous Peoples in urban spaces through partnerships involving federal, provincial, and municipal governments, Indigenous organizations, and the private sector.

RCAP emphasized the need for self-governing Indigenous institutions in urban areas. It proposed three approaches: outright self-government, co-management agreements, and the reform of municipal governments to include guaranteed Indigenous representation on public authorities.

The UAS was initiated in 1997 to respond to the growing population of Indigenous Peoples in urban spaces and the socio-economic challenges they face. From 1997-2004, it focused on forming partnerships and supporting projects that addressed local priorities. Community Partnership Committees were established in cities like Regina, Saskatoon, and Prince Albert, involving Indigenous organizations and all levels of government. These committees facilitated dialogue and community processes to develop localized strategies for Indigenous Peoples in urban spaces. The federal government allocated $59 million to enhance existing programs through the UAS, specifically addressing Indigenous homelessness in urban centres. This period saw significant community-driven initiatives across Canada, including the development of the single-window concept in Edmonton and Calgary, which streamlined access to services for Indigenous peoples.

From 2004-2010 the UAS further expanded with a commitment to local determination and partnership. This approach aimed to address socio-economic disparities while fostering social cohesion and urban competitiveness. From 2010 onward the UAS (and then UPIP) continued to emphasize local autonomy by supporting Indigenous-led service delivery and governance

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[14] Graham, K. (1995). *Report on the urban governance working group.* Ottawa: Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples. Available online.

models. This has encouraged the development of umbrella organizations that represent the collective interests of Indigenous Peoples in urban spaces, ensuring that services are culturally appropriate and community-driven. These self-governing Indigenous organizations provide services that respect Indigenous spiritualities, ceremonies, language, and beliefs. For instance, in Nova Scotia, one organization offers a walk-in medical clinic that offers both Western and traditional medicine, merging Western medical practices with Indigenous approaches to healthcare. This emphasis on culturally relevant services was notably inherited by UPIP and has been a cornerstone of Government of Canada urban programming since the inception of the first Urban Aboriginal Strategy cycle. For example, program Terms and Conditions mandate that eligible recipients must be Indigenous, while non-Indigenous Service Provider Organizations must show demonstrated support from Indigenous organizations or community groups.

Contributors to this evaluation generally concur that UPIP's delivery model has effectively operated on the premise that funding recipients will inherently integrate Indigenous values and ways of knowing into UPIP funded initiatives and projects, respecting the diverse array of Indigenous Peoples in urban areas. Funding is project-based and operates on the assumption that funded organizations will have integrated culturally relevant services into the projects that are funded, which overwhelmingly appears to hold true. While there are significant critiques of restrictions of the delivery model (reflected in several findings below), the flexibility to reflect diverse values and ways of knowing in service delivery is something that contributors do appreciate about the program, and are important to flag as program strengths.

One organization in British Columbia, for instance, teaches youth traditional land-based hunting, gathering and conservation practices, which program clients shared enables them to connect with their culture when, living and/or growing up in urban areas rather than in their home communities, they do not always have the opportunity to learn these practices first-hand. An organization in Labrador offers monthly cultural activities such as beading and cooking nights, which serve the dual function of bringing Indigenous community members together and providing an opportunity to engage in traditional cultural practices. An organization in Saskatchewan offers health and sexual education tailored to issues prevalent within Indigenous communities and specifically among Indigenous youth, administering this programming on-reserve to bypass provincially-imposed restrictions on sexual education in provincially-run educational facilities.

One youth shared with program administrators that they had applied what they had learned from this programming to go in to a sexual health clinic to be tested for sexually transmitted illnesses after engaging in sexual activity, thanking program administrators for the knowledge they had gained about sexually transmitted illness prevalent within the community. Several clients of an Atlantic organization share that culturally relevant services have provided them with a sense of belonging, offering that "It has brought wholeness to be a part of this community" and that this organization is their "home away from home". As one client shares, "If I did not come here, I would not know where I would be right now." Another concurs: "This place is important, way more important than what I could put in a picture." In Halifax, Atelihai Inuit created wall hangings to convey their experience of belonging and what the program means to them, artistically highlighting these themes. These wall hangings appear below in **Figures 1** and **2**.

Figure 1: Wall Hangings Created by Atelihai Inuit, Halifax, NS

Figure 2: Wall Hangings Created by Atelihai Inuit, Halifax, NS

Contributors also recognize the complexity of Indigenous culture, particularly in urban environments, where multiple cultures coexist. They note that offering culturally-specific services may not adequately address the diverse cultural needs of communities, for example, as in Vancouver's Downtown Eastside and in other large urban centres. It is often that only one organization exists to provide services to all Indigenous Peoples within an urban space or to all members of a distinction group within an urban space, and resources do not always exist to offer the diversity of programming that would be ideal. For instance, only one organization exists to provide culturally-relevant services to the Inuit community across all of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island. This dearth of programming means that all community members are served by the same programming, which, if bolstered and potentially offered by multiple organizations, could grow in specificity and become even more culturally relevant. However, despite this, the programming is demonstrably benefitting community members. One program recipient offers that, "These people opened their door to me and helped me get back my identity, this is the family I never had and I always wanted," and another shares that, "Before I felt like I was not Inuk enough, but [the Program] made me feel welcome." A media collage illustrating the services provided at various service provider organizations across the country appears in **Annex A**.

Finding 2: Colonial values and practices persist within UPIP, emphasizing the imperative to comprehensively centre Indigenous voices, values, and knowledge.

> *We need to look at how are we decolonizing. There is a misalignment in how we do things [such as partnerships]. It may not make sense to the non-Indigenous community, but we do things because it is a best practice for our Indigenous community, led by what Elders say. We need to be doing these things to decolonize western ideologies. We need to be critical and say "this does not work for Indigenous People". Elders have the lived experiences, [and with] their knowledge and world views, we want to apply this to the work we do.*
> -Indigenous Contributor, Prairie Provinces

Historically, colonial values and practices have significantly influenced the development of policies, programming, and attitudes towards Indigenous Peoples. A clear illustration of this influence is seen in the *Indian Act* of 1876, which imposed a system of governance on Indigenous Peoples that undermined their traditional forms of governance and authority and currently remains guiding legislation of federal departments including ISC, although the Government of Canada has recognized that it "is a colonial-era law designed to exert control over the affairs of First Nations, and as such, the *Act* will never be fully aligned with the UN Declaration [on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples]"[15] The *Indian Act* has approaches to Indigenous services that are often top-down and bureaucratic, and which frequently prioritize federal interests over Indigenous self-determination and community needs. This approach is evident in the design and implementation of programs like the UPIP, where decision-making authority and funding allocation predominantly rest with the federal government rather than Indigenous communities themselves (see **finding 3**), and in the bureaucratic processes and program reporting requirements which are burdensome and disconnected from the cultural

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[15] Justice Canada. (2023). *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act action plan. Ottawa: Government of Canada*. Available online.

values and priorities of Indigenous communities, further reinforcing colonial power dynamics (see **finding 9**).

One Indigenous contributor from the Prairie provinces shares that through UPIP funding, "the government has brought Indigenous People into their positions [at Indigenous service provider organizations]. They [these Indigenous employees] understand the Indigenous worldview, and they have a vested interest in Indigenous Peoples. So the missing piece is [for the government] to give them the autonomy to run the program." They ask, "Why hire them, and dictate that they run things from a colonial perspective?" Another contributor from the Prairies shares that she "was invited […] to meet with 14 federal Deputy Ministers. They wanted to learn, what are my struggles? They wanted to talk about reconciliation. I was not scared; they are just people. They wanted to hear about the legacy of residential schools and how to fix it. I said, 'You can't fix it; you're government.' They were frozen. I said, 'Indigenous organizations can fix it with creative ways of changing things, and you can support it financially; that is all you can do'."

Indigenous contributors credit Indigenous Services Canada for the commitment to address colonial legacies and advance Indigenous self-determination in urban settings; however, substantial challenges persist in the process of making UPIP more culturally respectful and more self-determined by Indigenous Peoples. Three main issues were highlighted by contributors, stressing the need for more meaningful engagement and collaboration to further refine UPIP to address historical injustices, to better align with their priorities, and to acknowledge their aspirations: chronic funding shortages, problematic expectations on project design, and unsuitable definitions of success.

The first issue, chronic funding shortages, is acknowledged by all contributors as particularly urgent. Funding gaps have perpetuated existing inequalities and further marginalized Indigenous Peoples in urban spaces, eroding their knowledge, cultures, and governance systems. Funding levels, their impacts, and these gaps are discussed in detail in **finding 3**.

The second issue revolves around the conflict between a program that relies on a flexible, community-based approach centred on local Indigenous knowledge, values and self-determination and Indigenous Services Canada's expectations on project design. For instance, UPIP prioritizes partnerships: there is an expectation embedded within UPIP funding requirements that recipients partner with other organizations. The overall UPIP Terms and Conditions describe that "funding applications may be assessed against the following criteria: […] applicant's demonstrated ability to leverage other funding", and the Terms and Conditions for the Infrastructure funding stream stipulate that "for major infrastructure projects (projects valued at more than $1M), there will be a cost sharing requirement to leverage a minimum of 25% of total funding and the identification of other sources of funding will be a mandatory criterion". While partnerships can be positive, for instance, by maximizing positive outcomes particularly in restrictive budgetary settings, the evaluation team heard that this expectation fails to recognize that Indigenous Service Provider Organizations can face challenges in aligning their values and worldviews with those of partners, especially with non-Indigenous Service Provider Organizations – and that mandatory partnershipping runs the risk of partners' needs overshadowing organizations' own needs. Moreover, within urban Indigenous service provider organizations, each has its own specific mandate and may cater to different demographics.

Organizations themselves, the evaluation team heard, are confident in their ability to determine the most effective approaches to serve their community, which may or may not involve forming appropriate partnerships if necessary.

An Indigenous contributor from Saskatchewan highlights the problem of government dictating there must be partnerships and how these will be formed: "Indigenous organizations have specific mandates, and may be serving different demographics, so they are not like-minded in delivery. There should be less emphasis on 'you must have partners' and more emphasis on how best to serve the community. We will find the suitable partners to do so. We speak of the action involved—'partnershipping', the process—not the end 'partner'." This contributor urges Indigenous Services Canada to adopt the Indigenous value of "humility" by embracing diverse perspectives and trusting Indigenous Service Provider Organizations to make decisions that align with the circumstances and prioritize the interests of their clients.

The third concern centres on how success is defined, measured, and communicated, and the related expectation to adhere to Western standards of accountability and transparency, often conflicting with Indigenous governance approaches and cultural values. Indigenous contributors unanimously express dissatisfaction with the current reporting framework for UPIP, which prioritizes Western-centric metrics, such as financial expenditures and measurable outcomes like the number of clients served (reporting is discussed in more detail in **finding 13**). While these metrics provide some insights, they fail to fully capture the holistic impact of UPIP on the well-being of Indigenous individuals, families, children, and communities in urban spaces, or the effectiveness of culturally appropriate programs and services. It is imperative that Indigenous Peoples define how program success is measured and conveyed, as they conceptualize it, including the narrative salience of their stories in urban spaces, which is crucial to assessing program success.

Finding 3: The foremost challenge confronting urban Indigenous partners is inadequate, unstable, short-term and fragmented funding. This has hindered innovation and resulted in a shrinking network of service providers who are primarily focused on securing funding to sustain their operations and short-term survival, leaving little room for long-term planning.

> *The urban Indigenous population represents 80% of the population but they only get 20% of the funding. The on-reserve population is only 20% and they get 80% of the funding. Urban Indigenous service delivery organizations are supposed to do more with less, which does not make sense.*
>
> -Indigenous Contributor, Atlantic Region

Programs aiding urban Indigenous communities are profoundly impacted by inadequate, unstable, short-term, and fragmented funding. This has wide-ranging implications on the extent and variety of services and supports that can be provided to the population of Indigenous Peoples in urban spaces. This was, by far, the foremost concern among Indigenous contributors, who report many negative consequences of inadequate funding:

- With limited financial resources, Indigenous Service Provider Organizations struggle to reach all individuals and communities in need, resulting in gaps in service delivery.

- Short-term and fragmented funding limits the scope of activities that Indigenous Service Provider Organizations can undertake. Certain initiatives are prioritized over others, leading to incomplete or partial coverage of urban Indigenous community needs.
- Unstable funding undermines the stability of Indigenous Service Provider Organizations, making it difficult to plan for the long-term and sustain operations over time. Organizations face uncertainty regarding their financial future, leading to staffing challenges, program disruptions, and organizational instability. Even temporary program closures lasting only a few weeks or months can have profound impact on Indigenous clients.
- Short-term funding cycles hinder innovation and adaptation. Indigenous Service Provider Organizations may lack the resources necessary to invest in new initiatives, develop innovative approaches to service delivery, or respond effectively to emerging community needs.
- Inadequate funding limits the capacity of Indigenous Service Provider Organizations to build and strengthen their infrastructure, human resources, and organizational capacity. They struggle to attract and retain skilled staff, invest in staff training and development, or upgrade technology and infrastructure.
- Inadequate funding causes unhealthy competition among Indigenous partners trying to maintain their operations. This undermines the development of a collaborative, self-sustaining network of urban Indigenous Service Provider Organizations that promotes continual improvement.
- That the UPIP program prioritizes funding for Indigenous Service Provider Organizations with an established funding history excludes smaller, emerging organizations, and stifles innovation.
- Inadequate funding exacerbates existing inequities within Indigenous communities. Programs serving Indigenous Peoples in urban spaces receive less funding compared to those on-reserve, leading to disparities in access to services and supports.

Many Indigenous Service Provider Organizations share anecdotes underscoring the gravity of their funding situation. They describe a scenario of a decline in both the physical and mental well-being of their staff. One organization reveals that due to low wages, they have had to supplement with food vouchers so their staff could afford basic necessities. The evaluation observed on multiple occasions that several organizations' employees are recipients of their own organizations' essential item distribution programs. For example, an organization in Labrador provides personal hygiene items to several staff members in addition to community members, while an organization in Manitoba has distributed food hampers to some of their employees who cannot afford to purchase food. Many contributors tell of excessive unpaid overtime (one, for instance, indicates that she works 80 hours per week, more than half of which is unpaid) and incurring uncompensated personal expenses to support Indigenous clients and staff. Indigenous contributors were concerned of a potential collapse in the support system for the Indigenous population in urban spaces due to reliance on the good will and dedication of staff.

Figure 3 illustrates the trend in Urban Aboriginal Strategy and UPIP funding (in real terms) contrasted to the population growth of Indigenous Peoples in urban spaces, from 1991-2024. From 2003-04, when eight Urban Aboriginal Strategy pilot cities were initially funded, and 2012-

13, Government of Canada investments paralleled population growth. Between 2012-13 and 2014-15, the Government of Canada consolidated its urban Indigenous programming. It was at this juncture that Government of Canada investments started to drop from a high of $69M in 2012-13, to $56M in 2021-22. During the same period the population of Indigenous Peoples in urban spaces continued to grow, from an estimated 676,612 to 801,045 individuals.

Figure 3: Trend in Urban Aboriginal Strategy and UPIP funding (blue line) and the population growth of Indigenous Peoples in urban spaces (red line), 1991-92 to 2024-25
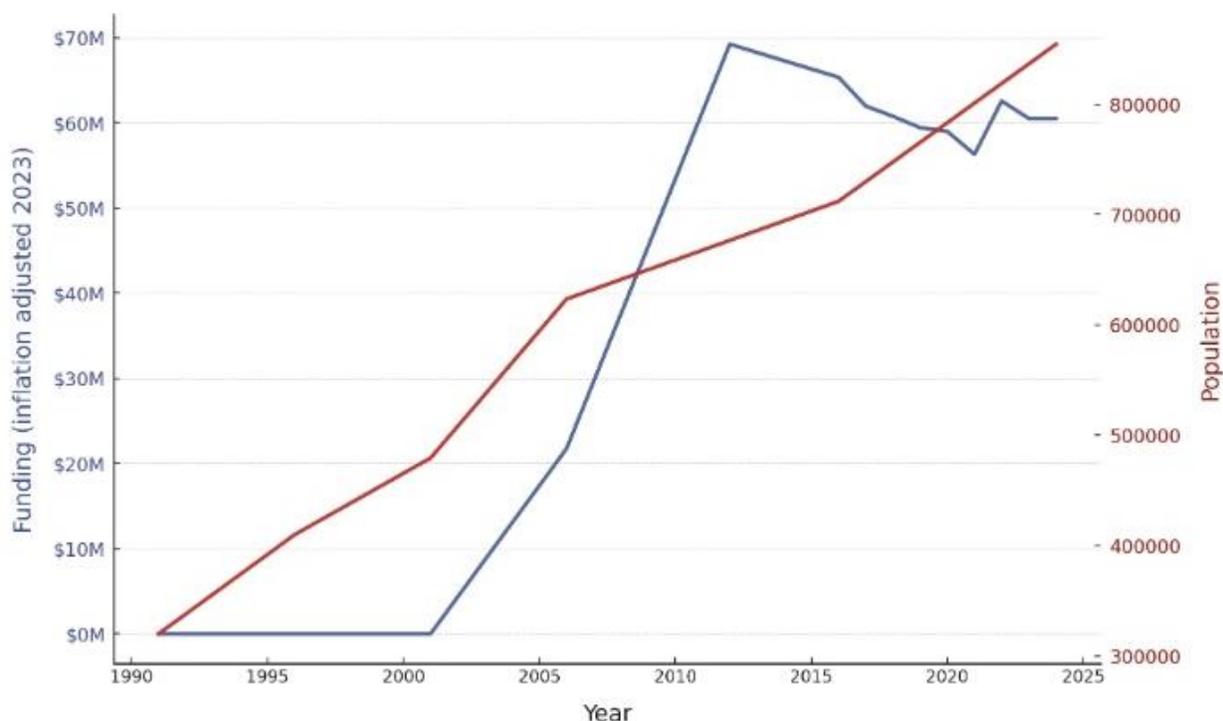
Source: Population figures from Statistics Canada Census of Population. Budget information from Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development, Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada, Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada and Indigenous Services Canada documents. Budget data excludes COVID-19 funding.

Additionally, Indigenous Services Canada's approach to fund Service Provider Organizations with a proven track record under the Urban Aboriginal Strategy resulted in fewer new Service Provider Organizations being funded, contributing to a decline in the total number of funded recipients. From 2017-18 to 2020-21, the number of recipients across all funding streams decreased by 23%, with a partial recovery of 10% by 2021-22[16]. It was noted that there was a reduction in recipients for programs and services, with figures declining by 51% and partially recovering by 35% respectively during the same period.

In real terms, the overall UPIP funding has remained relatively consistent across all years, except for a slight increase in 2020-21 (**Figure 4**). However, the number of Indigenous partners receiving UPIP funding decreased from 2017-18 to 2020-21, showing increases in 2021-22.

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[16] Note: supplementary COVID-19 funding was excluded from this analysis due to its temporary nature. For findings related to COVID-19 and related funds, see **Finding 20**.

Funding for the programs and services, organizational capacity and coalitions funding streams mirrors that of the overall UPIP funding (**Figure 5**).

Figure 4: Trend in total UPIP funding (blue bars) and the number of funded recipients (red line), 2017-18 to 2021-22
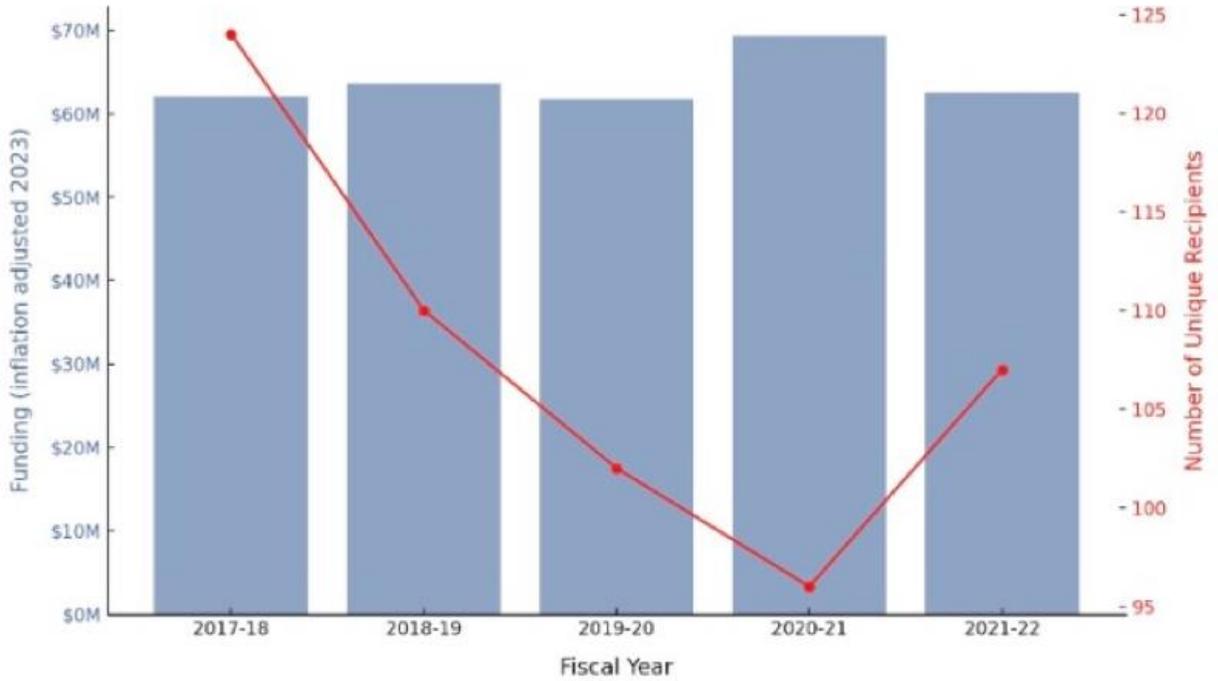
Source: UPIP program files.

Figure 5: Trend in UPIP funding by stream (blue bars) and the number of funded recipients (red line), 2017-18 to 2021-22

Source: UPIP program files.

Coalitions also contend with significant underfunding, receiving smaller proportions of Government of Canada support allocated co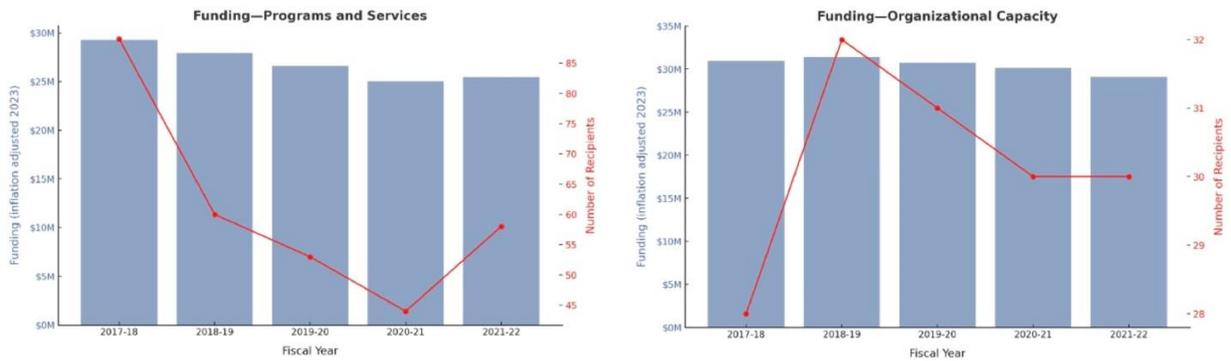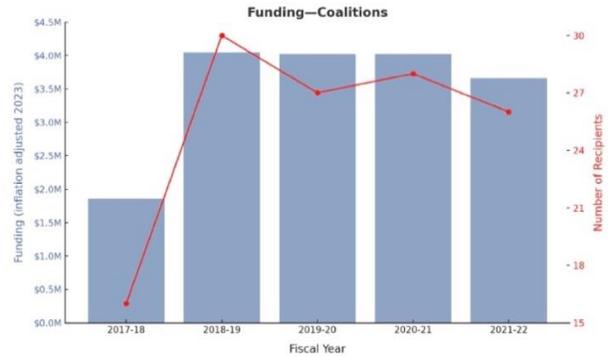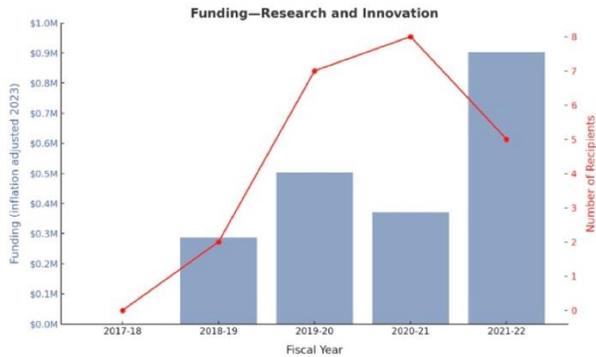mpared to previous Urban Aboriginal Strategy cycles. Indigenous Service Provider Organizations and coalitions alike encounter challenges in offering salaries comparable to market rates. Organizations in Newfoundland, Saskatchewan, Manitoba and British Columbia described facing difficulties in retaining employees since they cannot offer competitive salaries. One community leader in Manitoba told the evaluation team that, "We asked for a lot more and didn't receive an explanation for the amount rewarded. We just said 'thank you', [but the] money does not go far", stating further that there "needs to be better funding for salaries". An organization in British Columbia shared that UPIP funding could only support "3/4 of a part time co-management position" and described having to fund student positions "piecemeal via project funding", while an organization in Saskatchewan described that she had lost three employees due to more competitive salaries offered in the private sector.

Organizations describe that due to a lack of funding, the positions that they are able to fund have excessively long working hours (for instance, one staff member in Labrador whose position is funded by UPIP recounts working 80 hours per week), leading to the hiring of less experienced staff and to staff retention relying heavily on personal sacrifice and commitment to serving the urban Indigenous community. As one contributor from the Prairie provinces shares, "We don't have enough funding to pay someone to stick around in really key positions. Leads to [hiring of] either really junior staff without the skillset they require, or it is someone that is super-vested in the community, they don't prioritize remuneration over wanting to do the good work in the community, but they are needles in a haystack. To [our] Indigenous youth clients this is saying they don't matter much, [and that staff who are] less skilled, less educated and going to be here a short time…is good enough for you."

Finding 4: There is a need for the development of a cohesive national urban Indigenous strategy to bring about system-level change.

> *The federal policy of nation-to-nation and distinctions-based [funding] approach[es] is excluding Indigenous Peoples in urban spaces.*
>
> -Indigenous Contributor, Ontario

Contributors note the urgent need for the development of a cohesive national urban Indigenous strategy to bring about system-level change. This is grounded in the view that the current approach, characterized by project-based funding under UPIP, falls short of addressing the

complex and multifaceted challenges facing urban Indigenous communities. Many contributors highlight how UPIP has veered away from the Government of Canada's longstanding strategic approach towards urban Indigenous issues, instead becoming primarily focused on project-based funding.

Due to the inherent complexity and interconnectedness of urban systems, achieving significant improvements in the well-being of the population of Indigenous Peoples in urban spaces, as envisioned by Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples, *Gathering Strength–Canada's Aboriginal Action Plan*, the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action, could imply changes at the systems level. While incremental changes may address immediate issues, they often fail to address underlying systemic issues, leaving root causes unaddressed.

Systems change, on the other hand, could help to reconfigure the entire urban system, addressing systemic inequalities, power dynamics, and structural barriers and bring more sustainable, inclusive, and equitable outcomes for Indigenous Peoples in urban spaces. In alignment with the *UNDRIP Act* (2021) and Action Plan (2023), system-level changes could include changes in governance (greater inclusion of Indigenous voices in program design is needed to better align with Indigenous values and improve cultural relevance), data collection (a lack of reliable data hinders informed decision-making; participatory, culturally-relevant data collection methods are recommended), funding (current short-term, fragmented funding limits long-term planning; stable, flexible funding is essential for innovation and sustainability) and collaboration (better coordination between federal departments is needed to streamline service delivery and improve outcomes for urban Indigenous communities).

The Urban Aboriginal Strategy, launched in 1998, aimed to improve federal policy and program development through such a systems change approach, fostering collaboration with various partners including government levels, Indigenous organizations, and the private sector. However, over time this systems change approach shifted to a project-based funding model.

The limitations of the project-based funding model become apparent where it was necessary for organizations to close effective existing programming and create brand-new programming in order to qualify for UPIP funding. As one Indigenous contributor from the Atlantic Region states when describing how existing successful programming had to be replaced with new initiatives solely to qualify for UPIP funding as new initiatives, "We have to have a sexy new program to get that funding". This illustrates how the pursuit of funding can sometimes prioritize the creation of a new initiative over the continuation of one that is effective and established.

Additionally, the project-based funding approach creates administrative silos, constraining recipients' flexibility to allocate funds across budget lines or projects. This hinders their ability to respond promptly to emerging and urgent needs within urban Indigenous communities, or even to complete projects as intended. One funding recipient in Manitoba, for example, shares that, "You can't make projections years in advance. We wanted to buy a new building to be [a] new Friendship Centre, but […] funding through UPIP would only let us buy the building [because it allowed us to offer a program], not the land – how do you buy a building without the land?" Another example of this occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic, during which an organization

in British Columbia shared that, "The degree of grief and change changed the distribution of funding and funding needs. [We] needed to move money across budget lines [to start] offering teachings, handicrafts, gatherings, [and] social connectivity. [...] If there were authority to move funding across budget lines, we'd be able to do these things much more easily." Indigenous contributors overwhelmingly express the need for core capacity and program funding, at a level adequate to meet ongoing needs, that is not restricted to specific projects.

Finally, a cohesive national urban Indigenous strategy could help to facilitate more effective and broader discussions between Indigenous Service Provider Organizations and federal, provincial, and territorial governments, as well as municipal authorities. One contributor from the West Coast shares that, "You can't create a national voice if you don't have a process to get people's voices heard at the national level". A lack of productive dialogue with various levels of government prevents Indigenous Service Provider Organizations from being more strategic in developing a broader strategy to address barriers and challenges and better meet the diverse and multi-faceted needs of the community.

The evaluation team heard that Urban Indigenous Service Provider Organizations would like an opportunity to advocate for their inclusion in nation-to-nation conversations and would like to establish collaborative platforms, such as tri- or bi-lateral tables, to facilitate cooperation and address programmatic needs and gaps. As one contributor notes, "We want to be in the deep end, but we are at the side of the pool. A project is not a strategy. We need to find ways to freely identify and address the colonial system in play."

Establishing a national urban Indigenous governance strategy, complete with a national coordinator, dedicated staffing, and a network of affiliated organizations, could prove beneficial in giving a national voice to urban Indigenous communities. However, careful consideration would be required, especially regarding the leadership and form of such a mechanism.

3.2: Relationships

The effectiveness of UPIP is closely tied to the quality of relationships between ISC, funding recipients, and Indigenous organizations. While there has been progress in co-developing outcomes and indicators, Indigenous partners remain under-engaged in program design and administration. The duplication of efforts among federal departments further complicates collaboration. Establishing reciprocal relationships and robust feedback mechanisms is essential for advancing reconciliation efforts and improving the program's responsiveness to the needs of Indigenous Peoples in urban spaces.

Finding 5: There is a correlation between the effectiveness of UPIP and the quality of relationships between ISC, funding recipients, and Indigenous organizations.

[Indigenous partners and the government] coming together is exceptionally rare. Communications are very limited, email and phone calls [are] related to the funding agreement and reports, never asking how the project is going and could they use anything. We want the federal government and other funders to be part of the project, to be invested.

Indigenous Services Canada has made efforts to foster strong relationships with funding recipients, including engaging Indigenous parties in a participatory manner. The transition from Urban Aboriginal Strategy to UPIP involved extensive partner engagement in 2016. Three national meetings of UPIP coalitions led to the establishment of a national coalition advisory network in 2018. Subsequent discussions with coalitions have focused on shaping the research and innovation agenda and co-developing elements for a national urban Indigenous strategy.

Indigenous Services Canada also employs other methods to strengthen relationships with Indigenous communities. Indigenous Services Canada participates in local coalition tables to strengthen partnerships with service providers in urban spaces, while maintaining regular contact with UPIP recipients either through headquarters or regional offices. Surveys are also used to gather feedback from UPIP recipients, communities, and other partners.

However, the effectiveness of UPIP largely depends on individual relationships rather than institutional practices. For instance, funding recipients who did not have a relationship with ISC regional staff described that as a result they may not know the status of their funding, may not receive funds in a timely manner, may not know what happened with reports they submitted, may not know when to apply for new funding, and may not be aware of other funding opportunities, which would otherwise be shared with them as part of ongoing discourse.

The quality of interactions between UPIP headquarters and regional staff, as well as between UPIP staff and recipients, significantly impacts program success. Contributors from the West Coast and Prairie provinces highlight that their "key to success has been relationships" and that "relationships are key in everything". Regional UPIP staff express that, "It's hard to forget an organization when you meet with them in person as opposed to reading about them on paper", and that "relationships][…] raise visibility of the national [Indigenous] organization[s]." The importance of this face-to-face connection is not only highlighted by ISC staff, but also by national Indigenous organizations. A contributor from the Prairie Provinces, for instance, shares that it would "be a good idea for HQ to visit regions and directly experience what coalitions are going through, and see the success and where things still need to happen. [They] need to get out from the desk to get the full picture and experience hands-on." Another contributor from the West Coast points out that it is also important for non-Indigenous community members to experience organizations' work first-hand: "To find success in the work we're trying to do, we needed non-Indigenous people to feel like the space was also for them."

The staff of Indigenous service providers praise the efforts that ISC staff have made to forge deeper connections and establish meaningful relationships, and explain that these relationships contribute to feelings of sincerity, openness and care. A contributor from the Prairies applauds the support they had received from key ISC staff members, sharing that, "[Regional UPIP Official] is the contact, he has been fantastic. [We provide] info to him every three months showing the program is successful. [Official] is great at guiding and providing a challenge function for [the organization], very useful. [Official] really was supportive when the program had

to evolve and change. [He] was easy to deal with, helpful, especially with reports, and now we have a long-distance relationship where he can ask for other information."

Both funding recipients and Indigenous Services Canada contributors identify areas for improvement, such as in-person site visits and post-project follow-ups, that emphasize the need for increased investment in building relationships with Indigenous organizations through purposeful and frequent engagement. One regional staff member asked, for instance, "What happens after these projects are completed? The organizations do work, but what does government do to advocate for required funding based on ongoing need?" A contributor from the Prairies shares that "if there were more flexibility and improved lines of communication – perhaps being able to put a face to the name", they would be better equipped to communicate ongoing and shifting needs with ISC staff and potentially alter funding allocations or amounts. Indigenous Services Canada recognizes the necessity to enhance outreach to support urban Indigenous needs and gain a better understanding of how to assist organizations in this regard.

While ISC staff share that staffing levels are adequate, frequent turnover in personnel, particularly in recent years, has hindered UPIP's capacity to engage and establish relationships, resulting in a notable loss of institutional knowledge. Indigenous contributors specifically recommend assigning regional offices as the primary point of contact for all UPIP streams, rather than sharing this responsibility with headquarters, which is viewed as too far removed from the regions to have a fulsome understanding of community needs.

Finding 6: ISC collaborates with other federal departments through the Urban Indigenous Programs Interdepartmental DG Working Group. However, there is significant duplication among federal departments delivering urban Indigenous programming.

There is duplication across government and given that "we are all siloed" you could be doing something that someone else is doing [in government]. The Interdepartmental Indigenous Working Group ends up being an information dump. But it is important to have relationships between other departments to understand where the duplication lies. We need to do an audit of all Indigenous programs across government.

-ISC Staff Member, National Capital Region

Indigenous Services Canada is actively collaborating with other federal departments to establish long-term partnerships, secure additional funding, and coordinate efforts for a federal urban Indigenous strategy. The Urban Indigenous Programs Interdepartmental Directors General Working Group, facilitated by UPIP, convenes two to four times annually to strengthen relationships among departments offering programs and services to Indigenous people in urban settings. The working group aims to enhance collaboration, identify funding opportunities, provide guidance on application review and selection, discuss program renewal and longer-term objectives, and reduce program duplication. UPIP is responsible for preparing materials for these meetings. While some progress was made over the evaluation period, particularly regarding COVID-19 emergency funding, the working group has yet to address the critical issue of inadequate, unstable, short-term, and fragmented funding.

Finding 7: Although ISC has recently made progress in co-developing outcomes, indicators and targets, Indigenous recipients have limited engagement in program design and administration, and there is a strong desire for more involvement.

> *Kudos to the UPIP team that did come out. It is a really important first step. We felt there was a commitment to do things differently and stay in contact, and we appreciated that. It felt sincere and genuine.*
>
> -Indigenous Contributor, Prairie Provinces

Initially, the targets for UPIP performance indicators (as outlined in the Performance Information Profile) lacked alignment with community needs and failed to address administrative burdens effectively. As a condition of UPIP funding in 2017 and 2019, the Treasury Board's Secretariat of Canada mandated Indigenous Services Canada to establish indicators and targets in collaboration with Indigenous partners. This process, initiated in late 2023, also involves revising outcomes to prioritize an urban Indigenous vision for success at the forefront of UPIP's logic model.

Indigenous Services Canada has since engaged with key Indigenous partners to refine parameters and methodologies for data collection and continues to redevelop indicators and outcomes, facilitating discussions through meetings and conference calls to address reporting challenges. A draft of a new program logic model, developed in partnership with these partners, was completed in summer 2024. This new logic model integrates Indigenous perspectives and is different from the previous logic model in several key ways, including non-linearity and co-developed outcomes and indicators relating to – and capable of measuring – community wellness.

While this reflects Indigenous Services Canada's commitment to future programming developed by and for urban Indigenous communities, it remains crucial to engage Indigenous partners comprehensively in determining roles and responsibilities of the main partners, program delivery methods, and appropriate funding to ensure alignment with the scale of need. ISC staff well understand the importance of this, and identify that it is particularly important to bring partners together in contexts where they are in competition for funding, in order to create a more collaborative environment. As one staff member shares, program staff have "seen competition among urban organizations. They are all fighting for the same small pots of funding. They are competing against each other and this does not create collaborative environment.

Contributors emphasized that it is imperative that future programming is developed by and for urban Indigenous communities themselves, with an urban Indigenous vision for success at the forefront. The evaluation team heard that Indigenous Peoples are the only ones who can truly define the desired outcomes and attributes of culturally appropriate programs that effectively serve Indigenous communities in urban settings, considering their intersecting needs. This entails resolving jurisdictional challenges and ensuring that Indigenous perspectives and outcomes are reflected in logic models. Contributors agree that programs that are not developed and run by Indigenous Peoples are ineffective. One contributor from the North, for instance, shares that "programs are run by non-Indigenous [people] and don't fit our ideas or

vision. None of this makes sense to us." Another sums up this theme in one sentence: "Not my journey, not my story."

Contributors also highlighted that it is imperative to deepen the understanding of "co-development" as a process between the government and Indigenous communities, emphasizing shared interests to foster meaningful and equitable partnerships. Indigenous Services Canada has defined partnership as something that "can only be achieved through strong, respectful, effective and ethical relationships. In the spirit of treaties and land claims, these relationships are founded on the recognition of Indigenous rights and respect the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the Truth and Reconciliation Calls to Action. They are also founded on honesty and dignity."[17] The evaluation team heard that this process should also be strengths-based. As one contributor from the West Coast shares, "We're no longer victims."

Finding 8: Reciprocal relationships and feedback mechanisms play pivotal roles in reconciliation efforts; however, fundamental feedback mechanisms like sharing UPIP performance data with recipients have yet to be established.

> *Funders have a template they use in terms of data they want to collect, information they require as part of their reporting requirements, and some of it makes zero sense from [the Indigenous recipient] perspective and does not improve program delivery. As an Indigenous organization, the way they collect and report information needs to honour their people, to celebrate successes, and it should be done in the way we choose. Not my journey, not my story.*
>
> -Indigenous Contributor, Prairie Provinces

Indigenous contributors emphasize that current feedback mechanisms within UPIP and at the local level do not promote transparency, accountability, or inclusivity in decision-making affecting Indigenous Peoples in urban spaces. Specifically, they note that despite being the largest Indigenous group nationally, the urban Indigenous voice is marginalized, notably on the federal level by initiatives that focus on distinction groups where Indigenous Peoples in urban spaces are not represented. One contributor from the Prairies states that, "The historic urban voice should be viewed as distinct because urban contexts affect and shape people different than growing up or living in the reserve context, and in some distinct ways the urban context can be limiting." This concern is shared by a contributor on the West Coast who echoes that, "You can't create a national voice if you don't have a process to get people's voices heard at the national level."

Another contributor from the Prairies describes that government approaches to Indigenous programming can be top-down and fail to allow Indigenous Peoples autonomy to run their own programs. They detail that through UPIP funding, "the government has brought Indigenous People into their positions [at Indigenous service provider organizations]. They understand the Indigenous worldview, and they have a vested interest in Indigenous Peoples. So the missing

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[17] Indigenous Services Canada. (2020). *Indigenous Services Canada: Strategic plan 2020-2025*. Available online.

piece is to give them the autonomy to run the program. Why hire them, and dictate that they run things from a colonial perspective?" A contributor from Central Canada expands that, "Our people's needs are being met in colonial spaces of service delivery. These service delivery spaces are pulling in resources to Indigenize their space instead of channeling money to Indigenous organizations to provide services that are already culturally safe and informed."

Moreover, at the local level, the extent to which urban Indigenous voices are heard depends on the composition of coalitions and the individuals involved in decision-making. Indigenous contributors also highlight that basic feedback mechanisms, such as sharing UPIP performance data with funding recipients, have not been implemented, despite the program relying solely on recipient reporting for this information. A contributor from the West Coast shares that, "The program is really just a black hole, I don't know anything about it," while a contributor from Central Canada agrees: "We write the reports but hear nothing back." Contributors made clear that the labour that goes into reporting is not showing results: as one surmises, "We're putting way too much into this." Constraints from the considerable effort that must go into reporting was a common theme, which was recognized not only by funding recipients, but also by ISC staff, who attributed this to a lack of organizational capacity. One regional staff member shares that, "There are many others [who] cannot provide responses, which is due to limited organizational capacity. It is exactly these recipients not providing feedback that are the organizations that are really most important to engage."

A related issue concerns the First Nations principles of Ownership, Control, Access, and Possession, more commonly known as OCAP®[18]. The OCAP principles assert that First Nations have control over data collection processes, and that they own and control how this information can be used. A lack of feedback mechanisms in UPIP to relay collected data back to recipients and communities (for instance, what trends are observed by program staff in recipient reports), as well as how collected data is used (for instance, to make decisions about funding), currently impedes the ability for Indigenous recipients to have control over their data that is collected and for what purposes it is leveraged. Instead, data collection is, as one recipient in British Columbia shares, "a black box", where recipients do not know any aggregate trends, do not know how program data collection varies or is consistent between recipients, and do not know what becomes of their data after it is submitted to the program. This was relayed to the evaluation team repeatedly in the field. The First Nations Principles of OCAP® are outlined by the First Nations Information Governance Centre[19]:

> Ownership refers to the relationship of First Nations to their cultural knowledge, data, and information. This principle states that a community or group owns information collectively in the same way that an individual owns his or her personal information.
>
> Control affirms that First Nations, their communities, and representative bodies are within their rights to seek control over all aspects of research and information

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[18] First Nations Information Governance Centre. (1998). *First Nations Principles of OCAP.* Akwesasne, ON: FNIGC. Available online.
[19] *Ibid.*

management processes that impact them. First Nations control of research can include all stages of a particular research project-from start to finish. The principle extends to the control of resources and review processes, the planning process, management of the information and so on.

Access refers to the fact that First Nations must have access to information and data about themselves and their communities regardless of where it is held. The principle of access also refers to the right of First Nations communities and organizations to manage and make decisions regarding access to their collective information. This may be achieved, in practice, through standardized, formal protocols.

Possession: While ownership identifies the relationship between a people and their information in principle, possession or stewardship is more concrete: it refers to the physical control of data. Possession is the mechanism by which ownership can be asserted and protected. Some contributors note that reporting requirements infringe on their rights to control and own their data and narratives.

Furthermore, reporting places excessive administrative burdens on already resource-strained Indigenous Service Provider Organizations, diverting attention and resources away from service provision. Of particular concern is the underuse of performance data reported by recipients by Indigenous Services Canada for decision-making purposes (**see Section 8.1**). It is important to note that since legally reporting data to any federal department becomes the property of the Government of Canada and is subject to procedures such as Access to Information requests, full Indigenous possession of reported data is not currently possible. This problem is also reflected in evaluation practices, where collected data and reported findings similarly become the property of the Government of Canada.

<u>Finding 9</u>: Effective undertaking of service transfer requires a comprehensive and collaborative approach that prioritizes Indigenous self-determination, cultural revitalization, and community well-being.

> *Devolution is the transfer of underfunding. Don't do this. [We need] realistic funding so we can be successful, not just getting by with nothing, We do so much with nothing, imagine what we could do with real funding.*
>
> -Indigenous Contributor, Prairie Provinces

As identified in the evaluation document review, successful transfer of services depends on several factors, including effective collaboration between all partners, clear delineation of responsibilities, adequate funding and resources, transparent governance structures, and a comprehensive understanding of the needs and aspirations of the communities affected by the transfer. Transferring services in a complex multijurisdictional urban context presents unique challenges, such as the transfer of child and family services to First Nations and the necessity to meet the needs of diverse communities, which often span distinction groups or fall outside distinction groups completely.

As also identified in the document review, when transferring a program from one government to another, it is crucial that the program being devolved is a well-designed program because it is more likely to achieve its intended outcomes and deliver services effectively, inspiring confidence and trust among partners and funding recipients. Financial sustainability is also key, as it ensures the program can maintain its operations and services over the long term. Additionally, a healthy program minimizes disruption to services during the transfer process and ensures continuity of services for the population it serves, particularly important for vulnerable, at-risk and marginalized groups.

Additional measures are necessary on the part of ISC to improve UPIP's readiness for service transfer. Drawing from the recommendations and insights shared by Indigenous contributors, alongside lessons from previous practices and innovations, several fundamental strategies could facilitate successful service transfer within urban Indigenous contexts.

Firstly, it is imperative to recognize the diverse needs and aspirations of urban Indigenous communities and prioritize their self-determination in service delivery. This entails adopting governance models that empower urban Indigenous institutions and organizations to manage key services, fostering co-management arrangements that promote collaboration between Indigenous authorities and government entities, and advocating for the reform of municipal governments to better represent Indigenous residents. These approaches should be underpinned by Indigenous values, knowledge, and perspectives.

Secondly, program delivery should primarily occur through Indigenous Service Provider Organizations, leveraging their unique expertise and community connections to effectively support Indigenous Peoples in urban spaces. This requires growing and supporting the network of Indigenous Service Provider Organizations, enhancing their capacity and optimizing innovation.

Indigenous contributors note that commitments to reconciliation, nation-to-nation relationships, and self-determination from provincial, territorial, and municipal governments can vary significantly between administrations. This leads to uncertainty about policies, programs, and funding. There is a perception that the Government of Canada is more stable in this regard and is seen as a more reliable long-term partner. Consequently, Indigenous contributors agree that while self-determination is ideal, the Government of Canada should remain involved, at the very least in terms of federal coordination, collaboration, national convening, and funding. It is similarly widely agreed that providing greater autonomy to Indigenous Services Canada's UPIP regional offices would yield benefits, including reducing centralization and enhancing regional communication and collaboration with Indigenous partners, thereby enabling more effective responses to the needs of the Indigenous Peoples in urban spaces. In addition, to address issues such as funding inequity resulting from competition for limited funds (see below), there needs to be clear distinction between those responsible for allocating funding to Indigenous organizations and those facilitating coordination among Indigenous partners in urban areas.

The Urban Aboriginal Strategy emphasized local self-determination and partnership, employing a community of interest model where self-governing sectoral Indigenous institutions delivered services to enhance outcomes and support Indigenous identity. However, with the federal

Deficit Reduction Action Plan in 2012, the focus shifted towards economic participation, leading to reduced funding and administrative changes. This triggered concerns about fairness and transparency, resulting in decreased access to funding for Indigenous Service Provider Organizations and coalitions. This culminated in the launch of UPIP in 2017 in response to these challenges.

Since its launch then, UPIP has had to essentially reboot from the point of the federal Deficit Reduction Action Plan in 2012, aiming to rebuild trust and relationships, re-establish coalitions, and reconstruct the network of Indigenous Service Provider Organizations. However, there were significant new factors present that were absent in 2012, affecting both the design and delivery of UPIP, as well as partner expectations for the program. Foremost among these was the increasing momentum behind reconciliation efforts from around 2015, the endorsement of United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in 2016 and subsequent Royal Assent of the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* in 2021, the growing adoption of distinctions-based funding in programs previously of general application, and the declaration of the COVID-19 pandemic in March 2020. In light of these new factors, there is an opportunity to consider how best to emphasize self-determination, how partnership might take place in order to facilitate service transfer, and how service transfer could look within the urban Indigenous space.

3.3: Process

Data quality and accessibility are significant concerns that hinder the program's transparency and effectiveness. While UPIP is tailored to meet the needs of urban Indigenous communities, aspects of its funding model, particularly distinctions-based funding, may not fully align with operational realities. The program's definitions and approach also lack sensitivity to gender and diversity, limiting its reach to certain marginalized groups. Additionally, dissatisfaction with the reporting cycle, compounded by delayed funding disbursements and capacity limitations, points to a need for a more streamlined and culturally appropriate reporting process.

Finding 10: Accurate statistical data is indispensable for understanding, supporting, and advocating for the Indigenous Peoples in urban spaces, in addition to promoting transparency and accountability, yet it remains either absent or unreliable.

> *If there was strong data set as to why this funding is so important to meet needs of urban Indigenous people, then UPIP wouldn't be where they are today. They wouldn't be seeking renewal at last moment.*
>
> -ISC Staff Member, National Capital Region

Statistical data concerning Indigenous Peoples in urban spaces in Canada are essential for understanding their demographics, socio-economic status, and various needs. Despite being the fastest-growing demographic in Canada, Indigenous Peoples in urban spaces are underrepresented in official statistics. This data gap stems from historical undercounting, misclassification, and the lack of culturally appropriate methodologies for data collection.

As emphasized by contributors and literature alike, reliable statistics play a critical role for several reasons. Firstly, they facilitate the accurate identification of the needs and challenges faced by urban Indigenous communities. By understanding their demographic profiles, targeted interventions can be developed to address specific areas of concern. Secondly, accurate data is crucial for investment strategies, enabling the Government of Canada and other funders to allocate resources where they are most needed and ensure equitable distribution of funding. Thirdly, reliable statistics support advocacy efforts for the rights and interests of Indigenous Peoples in urban spaces. They provide evidence to support policy initiatives, funding requests, and calls for action on various issues, such as housing and healthcare. Lastly, reliable statistics promote transparency and accountability by enabling partners to monitor progress and evaluate the effectiveness of policies and programs aimed at improving the well-being of Indigenous Peoples in urban spaces, such as UPIP.

Tracking indicators over time allows for assessment of whether interventions are achieving their intended outcomes and informs adjustments to strategies as needed. UPIP staff from the National Capital Region highlight some of these benefits of reliable statistics, but express frustration that reliable data are not available. Unreliable program data includes information that lacks consistency, accuracy, or completeness, making it difficult to use as a credible source for evaluation or decision-making. This can include missing data points, discrepancies between reported and actual outcomes, outdated information, or data that is collected inconsistently across different regions or time periods. Unreliable data can lead to skewed analyses, misinformed conclusions, and ineffective policy recommendations, as it prevents a clear understanding of the program's true performance and impact. Consequently, the reliability of program data is essential for producing valid and actionable findings. One staff member shares that, "There is great need and few funds. A lot of the projects do align with needs; however, there is a lack of data collection […] that would help us really understand the breadth and diversity of need, [which] has impacted UPIP's ability to advocate for more funding for research and innovation." Another offers that, "From an internal government perspective, there is a lack of raising success stories or demonstrating promising practice, and this is one area that requires greater collaboration. And data collection in general."

Contributors acknowledge the pressing needs of the Indigenous Peoples in urban spaces and the evolving nature of these needs. However, obtaining reliable and comprehensive statistical data remains a challenge. The research and innovation stream was a promising source of potential statistical data, but it has not yielded the expected results. While coalitions have the potential to conduct community-based needs assessments, they face funding and organizational capacity limitations that hinder their ability to do so effectively. As an ISC staff member highlights, "There is a lack of support for organizations to collect data. This could be done through working groups or engagements that can inform program design." Despite long-standing awareness of this issue and importance again highlighted during the pandemic, Indigenous Services Canada has not made much progress towards addressing this issue. Ensuring the availability of accurate information will facilitate the clear identification of needs within urban Indigenous communities, aid in the development of appropriate policies and programs, identify priorities, and enable realistic funding commensurate with these needs.

Finding 11: UPIP funding streams and initiatives are tailored to the needs of urban Indigenous communities. However, certain aspects of the funding model, notably distinctions-based funding, warrant reconsideration to better reflect operational realities.

> *The investment from UPIP is laughable. The amount of work the Coalitions have committed to even with this little money is courageous. The federal mentality really needs to change, what seems simple is how the federal government views this.*
>
> -Indigenous Contributor, Central Canada

As found by the 2017 evaluation of the Urban Aboriginal Strategy[20] (see **Annex F**), the evaluation team heard that the transition from the *national* Urban Aboriginal Strategy to UPIP has led to significant changes and impacts for urban Indigenous communities, Indigenous Service Provider Organizations, and the program as a whole.

Under the Urban Aboriginal Strategy, the National Association of Friendship Centres annually received $43 million to administer an annual call for proposals. While some saw, and continue to see, this funding model as strengthening connections between national and local Friendship Centres, it faced widespread criticism for lacking transparency, fostering divisiveness, and triggering lateral violence among Indigenous Service Provider Organizations and within urban Indigenous communities. Challenges in accessing funding due to this focus on Friendship Centres were raised by Métis, Inuit and non-aligned, non-registered Friendship Centres serving urban Indigenous communities.

To address these concerns, UPIP implemented two specific changes. First, it allocated resources specifically to Métis and Inuit distinctions groups. Second, it introduced additional funding streams, such as housing and infrastructure, alongside programs and services, organizational capacity, research and innovation, and coalitions, aiming to better meet the diverse needs of Indigenous Peoples in urban spaces.

However, despite these changes, Indigenous contributors are skeptical about whether the overall situation has significantly improved. First, the transition from the UAS to UPIP resulted in service delivery gaps. A contributor from the Prairies recounts that, "The transition from UAS to UPIP was difficult; [we] nearly had to shut down as funding paused for two years." A contributor from Central Canada tells of similar transitionary challenges: "A lot of organizations shut down or employees left once UAS stopped and UPIP started. […] Some did connect with Friendship Centres which had this bridge funding available, so employees could be kept on. The other coalitions had to pretty much start again, there was a break in service, [they] had to rehire, etc. [It is] very important not to have a break in service – sometimes it takes an activity five years to get set up, established, and get going."

Distinctions groups and Friendship Centres received the majority (79%) of UPIP funding (per stream: 77% programs and services, 89% organizational capacity, 100% infrastructure), leaving all other Indigenous and non-Indigenous Service Provider Organizations competing for the remaining funds. Consequently, there are reports of intense competition among Service

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[20] Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada. (2017). Evaluation of the Urban Aboriginal Strategy. Available online.

Provider Organizations for limited funding. A contributor from the West Coast describes this competitiveness, speaking positively about the former UAS model: "The UAS looked at the landscape in a more holistic way. When [the UAS] switched to UPIP it created hyper-competitiveness around a pot of money that hadn't grown, because new organizations qualified for the funding who hadn't previously been competing before." A UPIP staff member acknowledges this change has presented barriers: "UAS was more focused on participation in economy and on social enterprises. UPIP focuses on service delivery. But when devolved to regions, regions' focus was on-reserve and this left urban organizations behind."

An Indigenous contributor from Central Canada describes how service provider organizations are required to do the same amount of work with fewer resources since a majority of funding is being directed toward distinctions groups and Friendship Centres: "We lost funding. The biggest beneficiaries were Friendship Centres. As the money was being chipped away, everyone around the table did [their normal work] anyway, [which] keeps eroding capacity, almost intentionally grinding us down. The Federal Government is taking advantage of this." Another contributor from Central Canada agrees, sharing that, "The NAFC experiment did not work for the urban Indigenous community across the country." This situation is worsened by the fact that overall funding across all streams has remained stagnant in real terms since 2017-18, even decreasing by 13% for the programs and services stream.

Furthermore, the distinctions-based funding approach is criticized for its failure to reflect the complex reality of urban centres, which include mixed-distinction Indigenous communities served by Indigenous Service Provider Organizations regardless of cultural identity, and may lead to inequitable distribution of funding. A contributor from Ontario expresses that the federal policy of nation-to-nation and distinctions-based approaches is excluding Indigenous Peoples in urban spaces. Contributors from the West Coast concur. One expresses that, "When we get to working at the government, one of the challenges is that we experience […] a government-to-government approach […] that doesn't include Indigenous Peoples in urban spaces. We're not a government, so it doesn't fall into that government-to-government relationship building that they focus on. Another succinctly offers that, "The government doesn't know what [inclusion of Indigenous Peoples in urban spaces] means. They don't know about urban people."

One key criticism is the failure of the distinctions-based funding model to adequately reflect the nuanced realities of urban centres and complexity of urban Indigenous communities. Unlike on-reserve, rural and remote communities, urban environments are characterized by a diverse mix of Indigenous peoples from various cultural backgrounds and geographical regions with varying identities, histories, and needs. Within these urban settings, Indigenous Service Provider Organizations play a vital role in delivering essential services and support to these Indigenous individuals and families, and most do so irrespective of cultural identity. This diversity challenges the applicability of a one-size-fits-all funding model, which can lead to disparities in funding allocation, with certain groups or regions receiving disproportionate support. As one contributor summarizes, "Where you reside should not dictate whether you are Indigenous or have access to Indigenous services."

Moreover, this model often overlooks mixed-distinction communities within urban settings, further exacerbating inequities in funding distribution. As one contributor shares, "Government

policies around the 60s scoop and residential schools resulted in urbanization of Indigenous People. These people are not affiliated necessarily with a band. This is a huge contradiction that is not being addressed and it is colonialization all over again. Government is trying to disenfranchise the funding." Additionally, critics argue that the distinctions-based approach fails to address the unique needs of Indigenous Peoples in urban spaces, such as access to housing, healthcare, and employment opportunities. Its current structure limits flexibility and responsiveness, hindering efforts to adapt to evolving challenges and priorities within urban Indigenous communities.

A contributor from the Prairie provinces shares that the "distinctions-based approach isn't working for Indigenous Peoples in urban places – it's an exclusionary policy; it isn't inclusive. It leaves out voices." A contributor from the Atlantic region highlights that distinctions-based funding for Indigenous Peoples in urban spaces can carry on historical exclusions of those who fall outside distinctions groups: "In many of our experiences with Canada, distinctions-based approaches have been used to exclude our mixed community as not cleanly falling under one of the three major distinctions of First Nations, Inuit or Métis."

As a result, some have called for the development of more inclusive funding models. One proposed solution is the inclusion of an "urban" distinction category within funding frameworks, which would acknowledge the unique challenges and opportunities faced by Indigenous Peoples in urban spaces. This designation would require a careful and comprehensive understanding of identity and indigeneity issues within urban contexts, empowering programs to tailor their services to effectively meet the diverse needs of Indigenous individuals and communities in urban spaces.

Finding 12: While UPIP's community-driven approach allows for responsiveness to local priorities and needs, there are concerns that the program and its definitions (for example, of an urban centre) do not take a gender- and diversity-sensitive approach, impacting its ability to reach certain marginalized groups.

For me personally, I believe we will reach reconciliation when we reach equality in our community, when we are judged for who we are, when we are welcoming and accepting of everyone.

-Indigenous Contributor, Prairie Provinces

In Canada's urban centres, the Indigenous population is incredibly diverse, representing many cultures, languages, and traditions. Indigenous people in urban areas come from diverse backgrounds, including First Nations, Inuit and Métis communities, each with its unique histories and contemporary realities. As one contributor shares, "To someone who is white presenting, it can be hard. Here it was the first time that I felt welcome." This diversity brings richness to urban environments but also presents challenges in addressing the distinct needs and priorities of different Indigenous people and communities. Additionally, Indigenous Peoples in urban spaces often face unique challenges stemming from the interplay of urbanization, colonization, and systemic inequalities.

Canada's Urban centres are complex, diverse, and growing rapidly. With federal, provincial, territorial, and municipal governments, as well as Indigenous governments and self-governing sectoral Indigenous institutions in some, governance is multi-layered and intricate. Each level of government has distinct mandates, responsibilities, policies, regulations, and programs. Additionally, a wide array of Service Provider Organizations operate independently with their own mandates. Other partners, such as businesses and advocacy groups, add to the complexity. The multijurisdictional complexity can lead to fragmentation in service delivery and service gaps and overcoming some of these jurisdictional barriers could be key to ensuring that Indigenous people receive the support they need, particularly for those that are from vulnerable, at-risk and marginalized groups.

Indigenous Services Canada employed Gender-based Analysis Plus and a distinctions-based approach to shape UPIP's funding streams, eligibility criteria, and overall funding approach. The focus was on supporting various vulnerable, marginalized and at-risk groups within the population of Indigenous Peoples in urban spaces, including women; children; youth; seniors; Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer or Questioning, and Two-Spirit individuals; former inmates; and individuals with disabilities. This strategy aimed to mitigate the heightened marginalization experienced by Indigenous individuals during their transition to urban areas, where they may lack familiar support systems, including culturally relevant assistance.

There are two notable examples of this approach. Firstly, Indigenous Services Canada expanded the eligibility criteria for the programs and services stream, allowing Indigenous Service Provider Organizations the flexibility to address locally identified needs, particularly those related to at-risk and marginalized populations. Secondly, Indigenous Services Canada designed the infrastructure stream to support the needs of Indigenous seniors and individuals with disabilities by improving the physical infrastructure of Friendship Centres and other Indigenous Service Provider Organizations. This aimed to increase accessibility and safety, reduce social isolation, and improve access to cultural and community-based supports.

Indigenous contributors, however, view the program as employing a one-size-fits-all approach that is inadequate to meet the complex and nuanced needs of urban communities, and raise concerns regarding the program's inclusivity. A contributor from Central Canada shares that differences are "completely eradicated under this one-sized fits all approach". These concerns are also described by UPIP regional staff members. One reveals, for instance, that, "Regions are rarely included, or asked for input, when HQ makes funding decisions. [There is] room to be more inclusive in this respect. Each region has its own priorities, and this needs to be considered. Some decisions HQ makes are running at odds to the priorities [of regions]." Another concurs, describing that, "Each urban area has its own unique priorities." These concerns suggest that there is room for improvement in fully implementing a gender- and diversity-sensitive approach within the program. Moreover, the program data do not reflect the specific needs of vulnerable, marginalized, and at-risk populations, posing challenges to adequately address their needs.

Some Indigenous contributors also highlight concerns about the marginalization of smaller urban centres and question the adequacy of the program's definition of urban centres. Requiring a minimum population of 1,000 people and a population density of at least 400 people per

square kilometer may be problematic, especially in more sparsely populated regions like Inuit Nunangat, other northern areas, and Prince Edward Island, where areas that fall below this threshold may still be considered urban and have distinctly urban needs. This criterion also fails to accurately reflect the realities of certain contexts, particularly in areas where nomadic Peoples have been forced into less active lifestyles by government policies[21]. In such cases, any permanent settlement, regardless of its characteristics, can be considered urban, highlighting the need for a more nuanced approach to defining urban areas.

The lack of comprehensive program performance and demographic data hindered the evaluation team's assessment of whether Gender-based Analysis Plus and the distinctions-based approach made during UPIP's design phase yielded the anticipated results during implementation. From a planning standpoint, the absence of such data makes it challenging to employ an evidence-based approach to pinpoint service gaps and prioritize funding to areas where it is most needed. This may contribute to the sentiment among some Indigenous contributors that UPIP does not sufficiently integrate a gender- and diversity-sensitive approach.

Finding 13: While ISC has made efforts to streamline reporting, there is widespread dissatisfaction with UPIP's reporting cycle. Delayed funding disbursement worsens the reporting burden, compounded by colonial forms of reporting, capacity limitations and funding shortages.

UPIP reporting could be improved by being more narrative-based, less formulaic, more about perspective…for example some other funders seek interfacing, meetings, checking-in, rather than burdensome reporting.

-Indigenous Contributor, Prairie Provinces

Urban Indigenous Service Provider Organizations and coalitions play crucial roles in coordinating, planning, and implementing initiatives within their respective areas of operation. However, their primary involvement in ongoing program administration and activities typically occurs through UPIP's monitoring and reporting processes. In addition, it was noted that Indigenous Services Canada does not use non-financial data obtained from recipient reporting to inform program decisions (see **finding 19**).

The evaluation observed that there are capacity restraints with respect to reporting. A contributor from the Prairie provinces describes the strain that this can place on service provider organizations: "[It] seems very exploitative that we are asked to get [information] from our clients. But there is a need, we need the programming. How do you support them? […] All the clients are trying to survive. All we are doing is being a good relative to give them the space to survive. The federal government is detached. How do you reconcile this, how do you collaborate to benefit the people that really need it?"

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[21] See, for instance, Anderson, E. and Bonesteel, S. (2010). A brief history of federal Inuit policy development: Lessons in consultation and cultural competence. Aboriginal Policy Research Consortium International. Available online.

Acknowledging the limited capacity of recipients for reporting, Indigenous Services Canada has taken steps to streamline reporting practices. These measures include conducting surveys and inclusive meetings to gather comprehensive feedback from recipients and other Indigenous partners, as well as transitioning to a UPIP-specific data collection instrument. Indigenous Services Canada contributors note a significant improvement in the quality of reporting as a result of these initiatives.

Many Indigenous contributors also acknowledge improvements in reporting processes, while offering suggestions for further enhancement, such as standardizing reporting requirements across Government of Canada programs supporting urban Indigenous communities. One contributor from the Atlantic region suggests that it "would be great if all departments […] would merge together and give funding [together] for Indigenous initiatives. That would allow the organization to report to ONE entity. Having that central point of contact would allow the organization to have a true and real relationship with one federal worker to access support and collaboration from the program." Another offers that it would be beneficial to have only one stream of funding, since all funding streams are interrelated: "One of the weaknesses of UPIP is that it tries to compartmentalize all of these programs and streams, but it would be helpful if they could simply apply to one stream since all of them are kind of inter-connected." Another suggestion is to limit financial reporting to just those activities funded by UPIP; currently, all program funding and program activities are reported.

Indigenous contributors express a strong desire to play a more active role in ongoing program administration and activities, particularly in reporting. However, they face challenges due to limited funding and reporting requirements. Many contributors prefer alternative reporting methods such as video or conversation-based reporting, which they find more meaningful and consistent with their cultural practices. One contributor from the Atlantic region states that it "would be great if the reporting structure would be more adaptable, such as making videos showing how the program had impacted [the organization]." A contributor from the West Coast shares that it would be helpful to have "the reporting be available in various different ways except the one written way," explaining that, "Other organizations allow video reporting and some Indigenous communities don't have the same reporting capacities as other communities that are more privileged." United Way is one example of an organization that allows video reporting for certain projects.

In Newfoundland, the evaluation team heard that it "would be great if the reporting structure would be more adaptable, such as making videos showing how the program had impacted it". An organization in Labrador mentions that video reporting or having funders visit the community would make the funding, and projects supported by it, far more meaningful. A British Columbian organization mentions that "other organizations allow video reporting" and points out that "some Indigenous communities don't have the same reporting capacities as other communities that are more privileged." This organization offers that while they "do the Excel reporting, […] it's better to do reporting by video [to] get the context and everything, what the money's being spent on". Another contributor from the West Coast describes that other funders offer non-conventional forms of reporting: "We […] had conversation reporting. We had to provide a small written component and a financial, but [the funder] offered to have a conversation."

Indigenous contributors also commonly express dissatisfaction with UPIP's reporting cycle. These concerns include inadequate communication from UPIP headquarters, repetitive requests for reports despite prior submissions (in some cases resulting in funding suspension, despite all reporting having been completed on time), and frustration over reporting to headquarters rather than regional offices where closer relationships exist. Additionally, contributors cite challenges with delayed funding disbursement, which exacerbates the burden of reporting, already strained by capacity limitations and funding shortages. While ISC has made efforts to streamline reporting practices to demonstrate project impact, fully implementing these suggestions is currently hindered by limited funding and rigid reporting expectations.

3.4: Governance

UPIP's governance structures, including its funding streams and Terms and Conditions, generally align with urban Indigenous priorities, but there is room for improvement in capturing these priorities more fully. The program's logic model does not fully reflect Indigenous perspectives of success, and there is a strong demand for Indigenous-led evaluations. Although the program aligns with federal priorities and ISC's mandate, better alignment with urban Indigenous values and concerns is necessary to enhance its effectiveness and relevance.

Finding 14. UPIP funding streams and Terms and Conditions generally align with the priorities of Indigenous Peoples in urban spaces; however, their scope, particularly program eligibility criteria, could capture urban Indigenous priorities more fully.

One success story has been the food program through the outreach van. We started serving soup and snacks as a way to connect with people and make the van approachable, rather than offering an explicit program giving out food. This way people can overcome the stigma of coming to the van; the van is not associated only with accessing harm reduction supplies.

-Indigenous Contributor, Prairie Provinces

UPIP Terms and Conditions provide eligible organizations with flexibility in using funding across various streams, including organizational capacity, programs and services, coalitions, and research and innovation. Eligible recipients include Indigenous organizations, municipal governments, education authorities, and non-Indigenous organizations, with initiatives varying by stream. In the housing and infrastructure streams, eligible recipients include not-for-profit Indigenous organizations, Inuit governments, Métis representatives, and non-Indigenous organizations. Through these streams, initiatives like Indigenous housing projects and capital projects for health, safety, and energy efficiency have been supported. These expansive criteria have enabled a wide range of recipients to receive funding for a wide range of projects which may not be eligible under narrower eligibility criteria.

Although Indigenous contributors generally appreciate the Terms and Conditions' flexibility, they do express concerns about the limitations of certain eligibility criteria, particularly related to organizational capacity. Indigenous Services Canada contributors note that compared to other

programs, UPIP Terms and Conditions offer less flexibility, with a burdensome approval process for modifications, involving delays due to ADM and UPIP headquarters involvement. Additionally, the effectiveness of UPIP headquarters approval processes and centralized decision-making contrasts unfavorably with the regional offices' better understanding of local needs and organizations.

The COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated that the Terms and Conditions and eligibility criteria can become flexible and overcome these criticisms if a strong enough impetus exists for change, with UPIP swiftly streamlining administrative processes and facilitating delivery of the Indigenous Community Support Fund through amended Terms and Conditions. This fund provided urban Indigenous organizations with the flexibility to design and implement community-based solutions to prevent, prepare and respond to the spread of COVID-19 within their communities. This effective and efficient response to the pandemic shows that it is within the Government of Canada's capacity to provide the flexibility and inclusivity that funding recipients desire; however, these improvements lasted only for the duration of the pandemic. For a more thorough discussion of the impacts of COVID-19, see **finding 20**.

Finding 15: The UPIP logic model is incongruent with urban Indigenous perspectives of success. Refining UPIP's indicators to better reflect Indigenous perspectives and priorities will help to address concerns about overly broad metrics.

> *We are willing to work together and to dedicate time to it. The model needs to be reflective [of Indigenous Peoples' perspectives] and transparent.*
>
> -Indigenous Contributor, Central Canada

Government of Canada program design typically involves creating a logic model, which links resources and activities to expected results, while outlining clear roles and responsibilities for the main partners. As highlighted above, Indigenous contributors view UPIP's logic model as incongruent with their understanding of success, and advocate for community-driven performance frameworks. They define success using holistic and culturally relevant measures that encompass the well-being of their communities, as well as the sustainability of their organizations, services, and supports. These measures include qualitative indicators related to self-determination, self-governance, community empowerment, cultural revitalization and preservation, connection to the land, the ability to effectively address the diverse needs of Indigenous Peoples in urban spaces, and improved socio-economic outcomes.

Indigenous contributors stress the importance of aligning UPIP's outcomes, indicators, and data collection and reporting methods with urban Indigenous perspectives. Some argue that UPIP's indicators are overly broad, impeding understanding of the program's impact. Quantitative metrics are insufficient in capturing the program's full breadth and achievements. Furthermore, the lack of robust performance data, including success stories, is seen as a factor contributing to UPIP's limited visibility, posing challenges in advocating for additional funding.

It is important to note that the UPIP program is currently collaborating with Indigenous partners to redevelop UPIP's logic model and indicators; these concerns, therefore, have been acknowledged by the program and efforts are already underway to mitigate them.

Finding 16: Partners expressed the need for Indigenous approaches to program evaluation, and many were interested in undertaking their own program evaluations.

There needs to be an independent, critical evaluation of UPIP. Indigenous Peoples in urban spaces should have control over how their information is used and disseminated.

-Indigenous Contributor, Central Canada

Presently, prevailing evaluation practices within the Government of Canada can overlook Indigenous perspectives and methodologies, prioritizing conventional evaluation criteria such as relevance, effectiveness and efficiency, with the current evaluation being a notable exception. Despite being often overlooked, integrating Indigenous approaches into evaluations is crucial. Indigenous Services Canada Evaluation's Five-Year Plan highlights this importance: "ISC Evaluation is increasingly emphasizing models of co-development and co-creation with Indigenous partners in all evaluation projects. In the short- to medium-term, this includes ways to integrate Indigenous evaluation expertise, knowledge, world views and/or Indigenous capacity development at key points in evaluations (planning, methodology, data collections, and development of findings and recommendations). In the long-term, the ultimate goal is to support the establishment of Indigenous evaluation functions outside of government."[22]

The eligibility of UPIP's research and innovation stream does include projects exploring Indigenous community-driven evaluation approaches. Some UPIP recipients, like the Ontario Federation of Indigenous Friendships Centres and National Urban Indigenous Coalition Council, have shown interest in conducting their own evaluations. This would enable Indigenous communities to tell their own stories and journeys, avoiding what some Indigenous contributors view as insensitive site visits frequently requested by funders (described as "poverty tours" or "feel-good stories"). Evaluations conducted outside of government would also allow for the adherence to OCAP principles, where Indigenous contributors could maintain full ownership and control of the data they provide. This would overcome a notable limitation of Government of Canada evaluations, which by definition cannot fully adhere to these principles[23].

Finding 17: UPIP aligns with federal government priorities and Indigenous Services Canada's mandate, and ISC's priority areas are well-aligned with the values and

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[22] Indigenous Services Canada. (2023). Five-year departmental evaluation plan 2023-2024 to 2027-2028. Available online.

[23] Information collected though ISC evaluations is managed in accordance with applicable legislation including the *Privacy Act, Access to Information Act,* and the *Library and Archives Act*. The provisions of this legislation do not always allow for the degree of First Nations control over First Nations data that are enshrined in the First Nations principles of OCAP®.

concerns of Indigenous Peoples in urban spaces; however, there is still considerable room for improved alignment.

> *There are so many realms that focus on service provision to indigenous people in every location, including the urban. But government narrows the focus as it works with national partners to address these commitments.*
>
> -ISC Staff Member, National Capital Region

UPIP supports the Government of Canada's commitment to renew and strengthen its relationship with Indigenous Peoples. The program aligns closely with the Prime Minister's mandate letters, which emphasize collaboration, partnership-building, and the revitalization of Indigenous-Crown relations. UPIP also supports the Government of Canada's efforts to address the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action and its endorsement of the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.

Furthermore, UPIP's itself originates from Budget 2016 and Budget 2019 (infrastructure stream) commitments aimed at enhancing programming for Indigenous Peoples in urban spaces, contributing significantly to the government's overarching goal of bridging socio-economic gaps between urban Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians and promoting inclusivity within Canadian society.

Indigenous contributors report that Indigenous Services Canada's key areas of priority—women, vulnerable populations, youth, transition services, outreach programs, and community wellness—are well-aligned with their values and concerns, as well as those of Indigenous Peoples residing in urban areas more generally. These priorities reflect the visions, mandates, and program and service offerings of many Indigenous Service Provider Organizations, and their commitment to supporting Indigenous Peoples living in urban areas through tailored interventions, services and supports.

UPIP also aligns with Indigenous Services Canada's mandate to work collaboratively with partners to improve access to high quality services for First Nations, Inuit and Métis, and supports the department's vision to support and empower Indigenous Peoples to independently deliver services and address the socio-economic conditions in their communities. UPIP was incorporated into Indigenous Services Canada's "The People" pillar and the strategic outcome of "individual, family, and community well-being for First Nations and Inuit"[24], which, with partnerships across various levels of government and non-governmental organizations, is anticipated to contribute to the program's long-term goals, as outlined in UPIP's Performance Information Profile, which focuses on enhancing socio-economic opportunities between urban Indigenous and non-Indigenous Canadians. Additionally, UPIP contributes to mitigating Indigenous Services Canada's corporate risk particularly in terms of Indigenous Relationship Risk and Implementation Risk. This is achieved through the program's attention to diverse

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[24] Indigenous Services Canada. (2023). Terms and conditions for ISC transfer payments. Available online.

community needs, its provision of flexibility to Coalitions, and its monitoring of the implementation of program reforms.

UPIP seeks to uphold the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples by striving to enhance access to programs and services for Indigenous communities, ultimately leading to improved outcomes. However, current funding practices do not explicitly recognize the distinct needs and rights of Indigenous communities in urban settings. For example, as noted in **finding 3**, funding distribution has favoured more established Indigenous service provider organizations with historical ties to the program, leaving others under-resourced. This reinforces inequalities within urban Indigenous communities, where access to essential services and support can already be limited. Additionally, the funding practices of UPIP may not fully align with the principles of self-determination and autonomy outlined in United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples. Particularly, the top-down approach to funding allocation risks overlooking the unique needs and priorities identified by Indigenous communities themselves, undermining their right to determine their own development paths.

Respecting the right to free, prior, and informed consent (articles 19 and 23 of UNDRIP) necessitates active involvement of Indigenous Peoples in urban spaces in program planning and implementation, and while UPIP has made some progress, substantial work remains to be done. However, as detailed in **finding 7**, Indigenous Services Canada can fall short in ensuring meaningful engagement and consultation with urban Indigenous communities. Decisions related to UPIP design, funding allocation, and service delivery are frequently made without the full involvement or consent of the affected Indigenous populations. This lack of consultation undermines the agency and self-determination of Indigenous Peoples in urban spaces. Notably, the UPIP program is currently taking steps towards addressing this concern by collaborating with Indigenous partners to redesign the program logic model, outcomes and indicators.

UPIP also is not well-aligned with upholding the survival, dignity, and well-being of Indigenous Peoples in urban spaces (article 43 of UNDRIP). For example, as noted in **finding 3**, UPIP's funding levels have not kept up with the growth of the Indigenous Peoples in urban spaces and their needs, perpetuating systemic inequalities, contributing to the ongoing marginalization of this population. Their distinct needs remain only partially (?) addressed, impeding their capacity to fulfill their potential on par with other Canadians.

While UPIP supports reconciliation efforts highlighted in 2019 and 2020 Speeches from the Throne, there are challenges in translating these commitments into meaningful action, particularly concerning urban Indigenous communities. In relation to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's Calls to Action, there is a widely held perception among Indigenous contributors that progress in meeting the needs of Indigenous Peoples in urban spaces has been slow. This perception is compounded by the overwhelming funding allocations towards the on-reserve population.

These shortcomings are recognized by program staff, one of whom offers that, "The Truth and Reconciliation Commission calls us to do more than what UPIP is doing. You also need an agency that serves urban [Indigenous Peoples]. UPIP should be much bigger if government is serious about reconciliation." There is a consensus among contributors that more significant

strides towards reconciliation are also needed at the municipal and local level to achieve equality, understanding, and acceptance of Indigenous communities.

Finding 18: Urban Indigenous organizations must expend considerable effort pursuing various and disparate funding opportunities; UPIP's organizational capacity funding supports these efforts.

> *UPIP is the base for other things in the community […] Without UPIP's Organizational Capacity stream funding, we wouldn't be able to lobby for other pots of funding. We need funding from many departments and streams, all of which have separate application and reporting processes.*
>
> -Indigenous Contributor, Prairie Provinces

Urban Indigenous organizations face significant challenges as they must expend considerable effort pursuing various and disparate funding opportunities. A substantial portion of frontline employees' time is consumed by the need to apply for funding just to keep their organizations afloat—time that could be better spent actually serving their communities. One Indigenous contributor from the Prairie Provinces highlights this challenge, stating, "The work that we do on a daily basis is a success. It's a shame that we must come here and lobby for more funding. [We] shouldn't be here begging for more money." Another Indigenous contributor from the West Coast expresses similar frustrations, describing their "number one frustration" as the fact that "UPIP only provides 40% of the $250,000 for the [project]. So time-consuming to find other pieces of funding […] cobbled together from many sources." These statements reflect the widespread frustration many organizations feel when forced to focus on survival rather than on service delivery.

Despite these challenges, UPIP's organizational capacity funding does provide crucial support, allowing these organizations to maintain basic operations and continue their services. As one Indigenous contributor from the West Coast mentions, "Without UPIP's Organizational Capacity stream funding, we wouldn't be able to lobby for other pots of funding." Another contributor from the Prairie Provinces echoes this sentiment, stating, "Without the funding, the [organization] would not be what it is today… able to secure the positions which helped the day-to-day operations, and gave them the space to find other sources of funding."

However, while the organizational capacity funding is valuable, it does not fully address the underlying issue of funding instability and there remains a clear need for more streamlined and consistent funding mechanisms to ensure that urban Indigenous organizations can focus on delivering essential services rather than on securing the funds needed to survive. An Indigenous contributor from Central Canada shares, "The little pittance UPIP received has got to be spread across the country; it is not reasonable. We are grateful for the funding, but it does not meet the needs of the people we serve." This sentiment underscores the inadequacy of current funding levels, which fail to match the scale of need within urban Indigenous communities.

While UPIP's support is essential, there is a clear need for more streamlined and consistent funding mechanisms to ensure that urban Indigenous organizations can focus on delivering

essential services rather than on securing the funds needed to survive. These organizations require not just the means to operate but the stability to innovate, plan long-term, and fully meet the needs of the communities they serve.

3.5: Outcomes

Program outcomes are difficult to measure due to unreliable data and missing targets, which impedes evidence-based decision-making. Despite these challenges, anecdotal reports suggest that UPIP funding is positively impacting the well-being of Indigenous Peoples in urban spaces. However, the lack of systematic data collection and analysis means these successes are not being fully captured or understood.

Finding 19: Program decision-making appears not to be evidence-based and there is uncertainty surrounding how recipient-reported data and program performance data are used by ISC, if at all. Challenges such as unavailable data, unreliable data, and missing targets significantly impeded the evaluation of the program's effectiveness, although anecdotal reports indicate that UPIP funding is improving the well-being of Indigenous Peoples in urban spaces.

> *When [the government] ask[s] us for the information, what do they do with it? Check off a box, or really look at to see where there are deficits and gaps?*
>
> -Indigenous Contributor, Prairie Provinces

The evaluation team encountered widespread challenges in assessing UPIP's performance against expectations described in the PIP. Issues such as unavailable data, unreliable data, and missing targets significantly impeded the assessment of the program's effectiveness. Without reliable and comprehensive data, it is challenging to ascertain the extent to which the program is meeting its objectives and delivering meaningful outcomes for Indigenous Peoples in urban spaces. For example, among the eleven indicators with both targets and data, the team lacked confidence about the reliability of ten. Presently, only four out of twenty-three PIP indicators offer insights for program decision-making. Seventeen indicators show potential but require significant improvement, while the remaining two are considered by the evaluation team to be of minimal value. Additionally, the indicators themselves generally do not accurately represent the associated outcomes.

There is uncertainty surrounding how recipient reports are used by Indigenous Services Canada for monitoring and decision-making. This raises concerns about Indigenous Services Canada's ability to make informed decisions and allocate resources effectively based on reliable evidence and data-driven insights. The lack of clarity about how information is used speaks to the potential of diverse needs not being met – in other words, since recipients are unaware of how collected information is used, there is uncertainty whether this information is being used to identify diverse needs and address them. Additionally, the absence of reliable statistical data on Indigenous Peoples in urban spaces further complicates program evaluation and decision-making.

There are also significant data stewardship issues. Delays in accessing UPIP performance data, coupled with uncertainty about calculation methods, consistency, and completeness of data, further undermine the reliability and usability of the data for decision-making purposes. Addressing these data stewardship challenges is essential to ensure that the program has access to timely and accurate information to inform its operations and decision-making processes.

- Additionally, the evaluation noted that Indigenous Services Canada may be facing risks in terms of fully meeting requirements as outlined in the Treasury Board of Canada's Secretariat *Policy on Results (*i.e. in the provision of transparent, clear, and useful information on results for UPIP).

However, in the Fall of 2023, Indigenous Services Canada began a process to overhaul UPIP outcomes, indicators, and introduce baselines, targets, and detailed expenditure breakdowns across the program's four funding streams. Through its engagement approach, the department has aimed to prioritize an urban Indigenous vision for success within UPIP's Performance Information Profile.

A consequence of poor performance data for UPIP is that the evaluation could not rely on quantitative information to assess the program results. However, a robust qualitative approach was adopted and feedback provided by Indigenous contributors provided important insights on each of the UPIP outcomes. While these have been discussed above under their own respective findings, a summary of each program outcome follows:

- **Immediate Outcome—Indigenous organizations have organizational capacity to serve clients:** Urban Indigenous Service Provider Organizations face significant capacity challenges, impeding effective client service. Despite some program support, persistent challenges remain, and Indigenous Service Provider Organizations often face difficult choices between direct service, client advocacy, and cultural mediation for non-Indigenous groups.
- **Immediate Outcome—Programs and services are delivered to Indigenous Peoples in urban centres:** Urban Indigenous Service Provider Organizations encounter challenges in program delivery due to capacity limitations and UPIP's definition of "urban." Nevertheless, community organizations, including Friendship Centres, play a crucial role in supporting Indigenous people in urban areas, and there are many examples of successful initiatives.
- **Immediate Outcome—Coalitions are active or established:** Despite the intended goal of fostering collective action and cooperation, UPIP's funding approach inadvertently led to a competitive and non-collaborative environment for Indigenous Service Provider Organizations. There is a lack of clarity regarding the role of coalitions, with varying opinions on their purpose and effectiveness in driving change. While some advocate for locally-led coalitions tailored to specific community needs, others push for a national urban Indigenous strategy, posing challenges due to inter-organizational politics and other historical factors. Despite these challenges, coalitions have improved

cooperation and understanding among previously isolated organizations, fostering new networks within the urban Indigenous community.

- **Immediate Outcome—Research and innovative pilot projects are conducted:** The funding for research was oversubscribed. Furthermore, there has been an issue with the research conducted by recipients not being effectively shared or used to influence program development. Most Indigenous contributors were unaware of the research outcomes stemming from this funding stream, suggesting a potential need for a knowledge translation and exchange strategy to enhance communication and dissemination of research findings.

- **Immediate Outcome—Improved collaboration between federal departments delivering urban Indigenous programming:** Collaboration among federal departments delivering urban Indigenous programming has seen minimal improvement and program duplication remains. Indigenous contributors report that they submit funding proposals for the same initiatives to different federal funding sources. Basket funding[25] and horizontal Terms and Conditions should be explored by the Interdepartmental Working Group.

- **Intermediate Outcome—Indigenous Peoples have increased access to programs and services:** Funding recipients express gratitude for Indigenous Services Canada's recognition of urban Indigenous community needs. Indigenous Services Canada's perceived requirement to fund only new programs led to some organizations shutting down existing ones. Many Indigenous contributors also emphasized the importance of Indigenous Service Provider Organizations (vs. non-Indigenous organizations) exclusively providing urban Indigenous programs and services.

- **Intermediate Outcome—Better understanding of Indigenous Peoples in urban contexts:** This remains a work in progress. Challenges include a lack of understanding regarding the impact of migration patterns on urban demographics, insufficient coordination and data sharing, and generally unreliable and inconsistent data. Conducting needs assessments is deemed critical by Indigenous contributors, but limited funding is available.

- **Ultimate Outcome—Improved socio-economic opportunities for Indigenous Peoples in urban centres:** Contributors note that this outcome takes a considerable amount of time to achieve, and UPIP does not explicitly focus on socio-economic results.

3.6: Cross-Cutting Issues

The evaluation identified significant cross-cutting challenges related to COVID-19 and climate change that disproportionately impact urban Indigenous communities. The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated existing barriers, but the mobilization of relief funds temporarily boosted resilience, demonstrating that adequately funded organizations can effectively address the needs of

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[25] Basket Funding refers to a financial model where multiple funding sources are pooled together into a single "basket," allowing for greater flexibility, coordination, and efficiency in the allocation and use of funds. Instead of having separate streams of funding with specific restrictions, basket funding allows for a more integrated approach, enabling recipients to prioritize and allocate resources based on their specific needs and objectives.

Indigenous Peoples in urban spaces. However, as these funds have dwindled, sustaining such initiatives has become increasingly difficult. Climate change may be driving Indigenous Peoples to migrate to urban centres, adding further strain to an already overburdened network of service providers. Marginalized groups are particularly affected, lacking the familial and community supports they would have in their home communities, which increases their vulnerability in urban environments. These findings underscore the need for sustained funding and adaptive strategies to address the compounded challenges of health crises and environmental change.

Finding 20 (COVID-19): The pandemic amplified existing barriers in urban Indigenous communities, but COVID-19 relief funds effectively – yet temporarily – enhanced resilience. Mobilisation of relief funds provided two crucial insights. First, adequately funded organizations can effectively address the needs of Indigenous Peoples in urban spaces. Secondly, the Government of Canada can demonstrate flexibility, adaptability, and responsiveness to these needs.

> *COVID-19 funding funded community support hampers that addressed food insecurity for households all over the province and city. But now it's hard with COVID dollars drying up; we're not sure how to maintain the program.*
>
> -Indigenous Contributor, Central Canada

The COVID-19 pandemic amplified pre-existing socio-economic challenges and exacerbated vulnerability within urban Indigenous communities, limiting access to essential health and social services. For example, in Saskatchewan, the pandemic triggered a surge in food insecurity, affecting 68.4% of Indigenous Peoples in urban spaces due to rising food prices and limited market access, and 41.8% struggled to obtain traditional foods,. Despite some reliance on community support and government aid, 43.6% received no government aid.[26]

To mitigate the pandemic's impact, the Government of Canada introduced the Indigenous Community Support Fund and Emergency Food Security Fund. Both funds leveraged UPIP authorities to provide flexible funding for essential support to marginalized community members. During 2020-21 and 2021-22, Indigenous Community Support Fund and Emergency Food Security Fund funding represented 31% and 83% of UPIP expenditures respectively. Funding supported a wide range of initiatives, such as food hampers, educational assistance for children, mental wellness programs, and vaccination campaigns. However, the demand for COVID-19 funds for Indigenous Peoples in urban spaces far exceeded the available resources. Compounded by jurisdictional issues between Indigenous Services Canada and provincial and territorial authorities, delays ensued, prolonging support for marginalized communities.

During the pandemic, Indigenous Services Canada implemented several administrative changes. Processes for demonstrating Indigenous support for non-Indigenous organizations

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[26] Shafiee M., Lane G., Szafron M., Hillier K., Pahwa P., Vatanparast H. Exploring the Implications of COVID-19 on Food Security and Coping Strategies among Indigenous Peoples in urban spaces in Saskatchewan, Canada. *Nutrients.* 2023 Oct 15(19): 4278. Available online.

and municipal governments were streamlined. Application procedures for distinctions-based funding were modified. Funds from the programs and services and coalition streams were allowed for COVID-19-related expenses. Adjustments were made to funding disclosure timing, and advance payments were expedited for urgent needs. Additionally, the requirement for detailed budget and cash flow statements could be waived on a case-by-case basis, and reporting timelines were more flexible. Contributors point out these instances as examples of how the Government of Canada can exhibit flexibility, adaptability, and responsiveness to the needs of urban Indigenous communities.

COVID-19 relief funding provided valuable insights for shaping the future of UPIP. These include recognizing the capabilities of well-funded urban Indigenous Service Provider Organizations and the importance of robust partnerships with Indigenous communities and leadership. Additionally, lessons highlight the effectiveness of streamlined single-window approaches, direct funding allocation, and adaptable program Terms and Conditions. Virtual service delivery emerged as a valuable tool, reducing stigma and increasing accessibility to support services, and prompting more people to seek assistance. Additionally, the importance of a more thorough understanding of the urban and off-reserve service delivery landscape was underscored, with funding extended to other organizations previously that were not part of usual funding streams.

Indigenous contributors concurred that the infusion of COVID-19 relief funds played a crucial role in bolstering the resilience of urban Indigenous communities during an unprecedented crisis. However, in many cases, contributors share that the COVID-19 pandemic did not create brand new problems – rather, it laid bare significant service gaps, such as in food security, housing, and mental wellness, and provided new means to meet these gaps. In other words, COVID-19 funding provided the flexibility and additional resourcing to meet problems that existed pre-pandemic but couldn't previously be addressed. This issue of unaddressed gaps underscores the ongoing underfunding for Indigenous Peoples in urban spaces, which has further been emphasized as pandemic support has sunsetted. The needs that were met by COVID-19 relief funds have not disappeared with the end of the pandemic.

Finding 21 (climate change): Climate change presents significant challenges for urban Indigenous communities, and marginalized groups disproportionately bear the brunt of these impacts. Climate change may be prompting the migration of Indigenous Peoples to urban centres, contributing to rapid population growth of Indigenous Peoples in urban spaces and placing immense pressure on the already strained network of urban Indigenous service providers.

> *Climate change is causing people to be displaced from their communities and they end up in the city. But they don't have the family supports and can get lost in the crowd.*
>
> -Indigenous Contributor, Central Canada

Climate change is significantly affecting Indigenous communities across Canada. Indigenous contributors highlight that climate change-induced shifts in weather patterns are disrupting traditional hunting and gathering practices in rural and remote areas of Canada, resulting in

changes to routes taken on both ice and land. Globally, there is widespread recognition that climate variability and change play a significant role in human migration and displacement. While this evaluation cannot definitively prove a direct correlation between climate change and migration to urban centres, the significant increase in the population of Indigenous Peoples in urban spaces is evident. The Indigenous population residing in major urban areas—totaling 801,045 people—grew by 12.5% from 2016 to 2021, placing immense pressure on the network of urban Indigenous Service Provider Organizations. Climate change could be a factor driving Indigenous Peoples to urban areas, in conjunction with increased self-identification, the pursuit of housing, education, and economic opportunities, and access to services unavailable in their home communities.

Climate change manifests in various ways, including heightened physical and emotional stress and exacerbated structural inequities. However, there remains little research on the experiences of urban Indigenous communities with climate change, as most studies focus on rural and remote populations. Indigenous contributors tell of the impact of record-breaking heatwaves in urban areas, affecting both housed and unhoused community members. Limited access to amenities such as air conditioning, cooling shelters, public restrooms, and clean water exacerbates the challenges faced. Additionally, seniors, unhoused individuals, and evacuees displaced by community emergencies[27] face heightened risks when government support systems fail to provide essential measures for well-being, such as cooling centres and potable water.

Climate change impacts have also been shown to be more pronounced among older adults with a strong connection to the land, illustrating that attachment to and responsibility for the environment tends to grow with age. Current feminist literature underscores the essential roles that women, including Indigenous women, can play in advocating for feminist and Indigenous worldviews and aligning them with climate action strategies, but research on specific climate change impacts on women is limited.

Paradoxically, climate change can also reinforce community cohesion and cultural ties, for example by: reliance on traditional knowledge and cultural practices to adapt and build resilience, catalysing a renewed interest in preserving and reclaiming cultural practices; community-based approaches to climate change adaptation, emphasizing collective decision-making, collaboration, and mutual support; opportunities for intergenerational knowledge transmission; and collective action and advocacy efforts to address environmental and climate injustices and protection of rights.

3.7: Future Considerations

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[27] As of October 2024, an evaluation of the Emergency Management Assistance Program is currently underway and is scheduled for completion before the end of fiscal year 2024-25. This will shed light on the relevance, effectiveness and efficiency of existing emergency response tools that could potentially mitigate some of these risks.

Contributors shared insights with the evaluation team that fall outside the scope of the current evaluation, yet may warrant further consideration in future evaluations. These include:

- A belief that Indigenous Services Canada may benefit from service provider organization staff dedication to assist communities, where ISC can positively report on the success of funded programming which exists due to staff sacrifice and hardship rather than due to adequacy of funds.

- ISC staff recognizing the need to be more collaborative in the future. As one staff member shared, "We need to ask what co-development means and how to do this, for example, by creating [performance measurement indicators] or improving data collection instruments – there are a lot of ways that government can work with Indigenous Peoples to address their needs, whether project-based or reporting. There needs to be more of an open dialogue and understanding of what this looks like."

- The role of municipal governments in funding and managing urban service delivery, and the role that municipal governments may play in reconciliation efforts.

- The translation of consultation to action: whether consultation may sometimes be viewed as an obligation and may be unlikely to lead to concrete change. As one contributor from the West Coast shares, "They hire people intentionally to be nice and smiley, but their actions are maintaining the status quo. It's my job and I have to do this paperwork, and it maintains the system."

- Future integration of and the development of best practices in Indigenous approaches to evaluation, such as community-based evaluators and community-driven and culturally sensitive methodologies.

- How to provide Indigenous partners with a platform to voice their opinions, concerns, needs, and perspectives so these voices are heard and acknowledged in urban decision-making processes.

- The role of feedback mechanisms in holding decision-makers accountable for their actions and decisions, as well as in improving policies, programs, services, and supports by identifying service gaps and areas for program enhancement.

4. Complete List of Key Findings

Spirit

Finding 1: Despite facing challenges related to funding and implementation, the flexibility of UPIP's delivery model empowers Indigenous service providers to integrate a diverse array of Indigenous values and ways of knowing into their service delivery.

Finding 2: Colonial values and practices persist within UPIP, emphasizing the imperative to comprehensively centre Indigenous voices, values, and knowledge.

Finding 3: The foremost challenge confronting urban Indigenous partners is inadequate, unstable, short-term and fragmented funding. This has hindered innovation and resulted in a shrinking network of service providers who are primarily focused on securing funding to sustain their operations and short-term survival, leaving little room for long-term planning.

Finding 4: There is a need for the development of a cohesive national urban Indigenous strategy to bring about system-level change.

Relationships

Finding 5: There is a correlation between the effectiveness of UPIP and the quality of relationships between ISC, funding recipients, and Indigenous organizations.

Finding 6: ISC collaborates with other federal departments through the Urban Indigenous Programs Interdepartmental DG Working Group.

Finding 7: Although ISC has recently made progress in co-developing outcomes, indicators and targets, Indigenous recipients have limited engagement in program design and administration, and there is a strong desire for more involvement.

Finding 8: Reciprocal relationships and feedback mechanisms play pivotal roles in reconciliation efforts; however, fundamental feedback mechanisms like sharing UPIP performance data with recipients have yet to be established.

Finding 9: Effective undertaking of service transfer requires a comprehensive and collaborative approach that prioritizes Indigenous self-determination, cultural revitalization, and community well-being.

Process

Finding 10: Accurate statistical data is indispensable for understanding, supporting, and advocating for Indigenous Peoples in urban spaces, in addition to promoting transparency and accountability, yet it remains either absent or unreliable.

Finding 11: UPIP funding streams and initiatives are tailored to the needs of urban Indigenous communities. However, certain aspects of the funding model, notably distinctions-based funding, warrant reconsideration to better reflect operational realities.

Finding 12: While UPIP's community-driven approach allows for responsiveness to local priorities and needs, there are concerns that the program and its definitions (for example, of an urban centre) do not take a gender- and diversity-sensitive approach, impacting its ability to reach certain marginalized groups.

Finding 13: While ISC has made efforts to streamline reporting, there is widespread dissatisfaction with UPIP's reporting cycle. Delayed funding disbursement worsens the reporting burden, compounded by colonial forms of reporting, capacity limitations and funding shortages.

Governance

Finding 14. UPIP funding streams and Terms and Conditions generally align with the priorities of Indigenous Peoples in urban spaces; however, their scope, particularly program eligibility criteria, could capture urban Indigenous priorities more fully.

Finding 15: The UPIP logic model is incongruent with urban Indigenous perspectives of success. Refining UPIP's indicators to better reflect Indigenous perspectives and priorities will help to address concerns about overly broad metrics.

Finding 16: Partners expressed the need for Indigenous approaches to program evaluation, and many were interested in undertaking their own program evaluations.

Finding 17: UPIP aligns with federal government priorities and Indigenous Services Canada's mandate, and ISC's priority areas are well-aligned with the values and concerns of Indigenous Peoples in urban spaces; however, there is still considerable room for improved alignment.

Finding 18: Urban Indigenous organizations must expend considerable effort pursuing various and disparate funding opportunities; UPIP's organizational capacity funding supports these efforts.

Outcomes

Finding 19: Program decision-making appears not to be evidence-based and there is uncertainty surrounding how recipient-reported data and program performance data are used by ISC, if at all. Challenges such as unavailable data, unreliable data, and missing targets significantly impeded the evaluation of the program's effectiveness, although anecdotal reports indicate that UPIP funding is improving the well-being of the Indigenous Peoples in urban spaces.

Cross-Cutting Issues

Finding 20 (COVID-19): The pandemic amplified existing barriers in urban Indigenous communities, but COVID-19 relief funds effectively – yet temporarily – enhanced resilience. Mobilisation of relief funds provided two crucial insights. First, adequately funded organizations can effectively address the needs of Indigenous Peoples in urban spaces. Secondly, the Government of Canada can demonstrate flexibility, adaptability, and responsiveness to these needs.

Finding 21 (climate change): Climate change presents significant challenges for urban Indigenous communities, and marginalized groups disproportionately bear the brunt of these impacts. Climate change may be prompting the migration of Indigenous Peoples to urban centres, contributing to rapid population growth of Indigenous Peoples in urban spaces and placing immense pressure on the already strained network of urban Indigenous service providers.

5. Conclusions

Given these 21 key findings, the evaluation team has formulated the following conclusions:

- **Integration into a Comprehensive National Strategy:** UPIP's effectiveness hinges on its seamless integration into a comprehensive national strategy to address the issues of the Indigenous Peoples in urban spaces and advance Indigenous self-determination. This strategy must simultaneously address immediate needs while driving broader systemic changes.
- **Advocating for Recognition:** Advocating for the inclusion of an urban distinction category acknowledges the unique identity, needs and right of self-determination of Indigenous Peoples in urban spaces, and helps to ensure that Indigenous Peoples in urban spaces have a significant voice in discussions at all levels of government.
- **Redefining Success:** Program success must be redefined to reflect Indigenous perspectives, enabling Indigenous communities to tell their own stories. Outcomes and

metrics should encompass holistic well-being, cultural revitalization, self-determination, organizational sustainability, and socio-economic outcomes valued by urban Indigenous communities.

- **Addressing Funding Challenges:** Addressing funding challenges is crucial for delivering culturally appropriate, effective, and sustainable services to Indigenous Peoples in urban spaces. A network of robust and innovative Indigenous Service Provider Organizations is essential to address the multifaceted needs of these communities.

- **Closing Data Gaps:** Accurate and relevant statistical and program data are indispensable for informed policymaking, program development and investment strategies. Bridging data deficiencies is essential for identifying priorities and allocating resources effectively. Reliable data also enhance accountability and transparency, through monitoring and evaluation.

- **Empowerment through Flexible Delivery:** UPIP's flexible delivery model empowers Indigenous Service Provider Organizations to integrate diverse Indigenous values and ways of knowing into service delivery. However, efforts are needed to dismantle colonial structures and comprehensively centre Indigenous perspectives. Adopting flexible funding mechanisms tailored to diverse needs and priorities of Indigenous Peoples in urban spaces that empower Indigenous organizations to determine resource allocation based on community requirements is vital.

- **Strengthening Relationships and Engagement:** Strengthening relationships among all urban partners and ensuring meaningful engagement of Indigenous partners in program design and delivery are critical for success. Reciprocal relationships foster trust, transparency and inclusivity, which are crucial for reconciliation. Establishing transparent, inclusive feedback mechanisms, and regular consultations and data-sharing, are critical.

- **Political Commitment and Collaboration:** Political commitment and collaboration across all levels of government, among all partners, and across all sectors are imperative for UPIP's success. Meaningful change demands Indigenous voices and values steer collective efforts.

- **Empowering Indigenous Voices:** It is imperative to prioritize Indigenous empowerment and sustainable funding to centre Indigenous self-determination and community well-being. Future programming must reflect Indigenous worldviews and aspirations. Evaluation practices, such as participatory and developmental evaluation, that centre Indigenous perspectives are essential for assessing program effectiveness.

6. Recommendations

Based on the findings and conclusions above, the evaluation presents the following recommendations for the Urban Programming for Indigenous Peoples Program. It is recommended that ISC:

1. Take concrete steps to ensure the program reflects the diverse and evolving priorities, voices, and ways of knowing of Indigenous Peoples in urban spaces. Specifically, it is recommended that ISC:

A) Work with urban Indigenous partners to redesign the program logic model and performance indicators.

B) Establish a standing committee or other permanent mechanism that is representative of diverse Indigenous populations to provide advice on the ongoing strategic direction of the program.

2. Prioritize the collection of meaningful and reliable data regarding Indigenous Peoples in urban spaces to support decision making related to the need for the UPIP program and understanding of its impacts. Specifically, it is recommended that program officials consult with ISC's Chief Data Officer; the Chief Finances, Results and Delivery Officer; and/or Chief Information Officer to:

A) Produce estimates of the current and future demand for the program to inform and justify resourcing requests. To the greatest extent possible, these estimates should take into account changing and intersecting socio-demographic factors, and well as broader contextual considerations such as the potential impacts of climate change on Indigenous migration to urban environments.

B) Develop and implement a flexible reporting approach that is grounded in urban Indigenous priorities and ways of knowing, and which includes mechanisms for communicating back to recipients on UPIP performance.

C) Assess data gaps and data quality issues that are barriers to understanding the needs of Indigenous Peoples in urban spaces and the impact of UPIP, and develop a data strategy to address those gaps, including by actively participating in data planning efforts led by Statistics Canada and others.

3. Take concrete steps towards making funding stable, more sustainable, flexible, and readily accessible so that recipients can make the most of available funds. Specifically, it is recommended that ISC:

A) Develop concrete options and policy recommendations to establish stable, consistent and ongoing supports for Indigenous Peoples in urban spaces.

B) Work with the Urban Indigenous Programs Interdepartmental Directors General Working Group to develop, implement, and report on a concrete action plan for fulfilling the group's mandate to "identify strategic opportunities to leverage funding" to support Indigenous Peoples in urban spaces.

C) Strike an expert panel including program recipients to assess the program Terms and Conditions and make recommendations for eliminating unnecessary complexities and inflexibilities.

D) Streamline and simplify the UPIP application process across funding streams, in collaboration with Indigenous partners and organizations, and explore opportunities to partner with other funders on a common application process to reduce recipients' need

Annex A: Media Collage
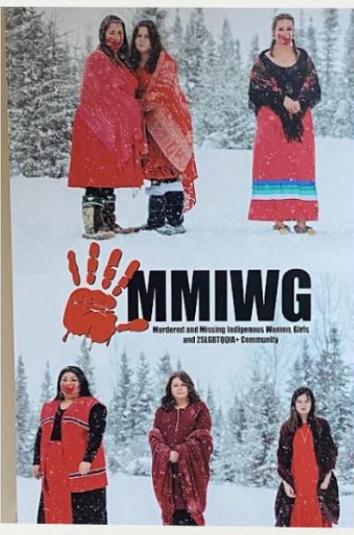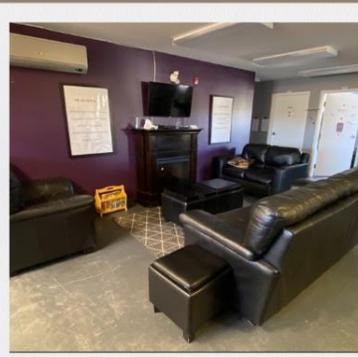
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Annex C: Original Program Logic Model (2018-2019)

Activities	Provide organizational capacity funding to Indigenous organizations	Provide funding to organizations for programs and services	Provide funding to support local coalitions	Coordinate urban Indigenous programming across federal departments and liaise with other stakeholders	Provide funding for research and pilot projects
Outputs	Contribution agreements in place with Indigenous Organizations	Contribution agreements in place with local service delivery organizations	Contribution agreements in place with coalition tables	Interdepartmental Working Group created and Annual Workplan developed	Contribution agreements in place to conduct research and innovative pilot projects
Immediate Outcomes	Outcome 1: Indigenous organizations have organizational capacity to serve clients	Outcome 2: Programs and services are delivered to urban Indigenous peoples	Outcome 3: Coalitions are active or established	Outcome 5: Improved collaboration between federal departments delivering urban Indigenous programming	Outcome 4: Research and innovative pilot projects conducted
Intermediate Outcomes	Outcome 6: Indigenous peoples have increased access to programs and services				Outcome 7: Better understanding of urban Indigenous population
Final Outcomes	Outcome 8: Improved socio-economic opportunities for urban Indigenous Canadians				
Core Responsibility	Individuals and families				

* Note: an updated logic model co-designed with Indigenous partners is currently in development. The 2018-2019 logic model does not reflect the principles of co-development that have been adhered to in the forthcoming 2024-25 logic model.

Annex D: Program Resources and Expenditures

Program Expenditures by Vote: 2018-2019

	18-19		
	Vote 10	Vote 1	Total
P5101 - ORGANISATIONNAL CAPACITY	**$26,430,910**		**$26,430,910**
NPQA - ORG. CAPACITY FC	$23,000,000		$23,000,000
NPQD - ORG. CAPACITY OTHERS	$3,133,014		$3,133,014
NPQB - ORG. CAPACITY INUIT	$297,896		$297,896
NPQC - ORG. CAPACITY METIS			$0
P5102 - PROGRAMS & SERVICES	**$21,758,635**		**$21,758,635**
NPQG - PROGRAMS & SERV. FC	$1,950,000		$1,950,000
NPQJ - PROGRAMS & SERV. OTHERS	$11,368,500		$11,368,500
NPQH - PROGRAMS & SERV. INUIT	$1,170,136		$1,170,136
NPQI - PROGRAMS & SERV. METIS	$7,270,000		$7,270,000
P5103 - RESEARCH & INNOVATION	**$251,381**		**$251,381**
NPQO - RESEARCH & INNOVATION	$251,381		$251,381
P5104 - COALITION	**$3,120,345**		**$3,120,345**
NPQT - COALITION OPERATIONS	$1,746,340		$1,746,340
NPQU - COALITION PROJECTS	$1,374,005		$1,374,005
P5105 - UPIP ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS		**$1,911,427**	**$1,911,427**
NPQZ - UPIP ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS		$1,911,427	$1,911,427
Grand Total	**$51,561,272**	**$1,911,427**	**$53,472,699**

Program Expenditures by Vote: 2019-2020

	19-20		
	Vote 10	Vote 1	Total
B3910 - ORG. CAPACITY	**$26,505,380**		**$26,505,380**
Q2DJ - ORG. CAPACITY INUIT	$70,500		$70,500
Q2DK - ORG. CAPACITY MÉTIS			
Q2DL - ORG. CAPACITY FC	$23,000,000		$23,000,000
Q2DM - ORG. CAPACITY OTHERS	$3,434,880		$3,434,880
Q2DN - MINOR CAPITAL FC			
Q2DO - MINOR CAPITAL METIS			
Q2DP - MINOR CAPITAL INUIT			
B3911 - PROGRAMS & SERVICES	**$21,109,804**		**$21,109,804**
Q2DT - PROGRAMS & SERV. FC	$1,983,872		$1,983,872
Q2DU - PROGRAMS & SERV. INUIT	$1,218,344		$1,218,344
Q2DV - PROGRAMS & SERV. MÉTIS	$7,270,000		$7,270,000
Q2DW - PROGRAMS & SERV. OTHERS	$10,637,588		$10,637,588
B3912 - RESEARCH & INNOVATION	**$331,000**		**$331,000**
Q2E0 - RESEARCH & INNOVATION	$331,000		$331,000
B3913 - COALITION	**$3,327,154**		**$3,327,154**
Q2E6 - COALITION OPERATIONS	$1,735,165		$1,735,165
Q2E7 - COALITION PROJECTS	$1,591,989		$1,591,989
B3914 - UPIP ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS		**$1,892,710**	**$1,892,710**
Q2EA - UPIP ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS		$1,892,710	$1,892,710
Grand Total	**$51,273,338**	**$1,892,710**	**$53,166,049**

Program Expenditures by Vote: 2020-2021[28]

	20-21			
	Vote 10	**Statutory**	**Vote 1**	**Total**
B3910 - ORG. CAPACITY	**$31,906,041**		**$19,043**	**$31,925,085**
Q2DJ - ORG. CAPACITY INUIT	$250,172			$250,172
Q2DK - ORG. CAPACITY MÉTIS	$0			$0
Q2DL - ORG. CAPACITY FC	$23,000,000		$19,043	$23,019,043
Q2DM - ORG. CAPACITY OTHERS	$3,359,530			$3,359,530
Q2DN - MINOR CAPITAL FC	$3,726,268			$3,726,268
Q2DO - MINOR CAPITAL METIS	$1,339,491			$1,339,491
Q2DP - MINOR CAPITAL INUIT	$230,580			$230,580
B3911 - PROGRAMS & SERVICES	**$20,331,451**	**$221,589,529**	**$19,043**	**$241,940,024**
Q2DT - PROGRAMS & SERV. FC	$7,961,822	$33,821,135	$19,043	$41,802,001
Q2DU - PROGRAMS & SERV. INUIT	$1,230,074	$69,909,029		$71,139,103
Q2DV - PROGRAMS & SERV. MÉTIS	$7,270,000	$55,966,730		$63,236,730
Q2DW - PROGRAMS & SERV. OTHERS	$3,869,555	$61,892,635		$65,762,190
B3912 - RESEARCH & INNOVATION	**$321,000**			**$321,000**
Q2E0 - RESEARCH & INNOVATION	$321,000			$321,000
B3913 - COALITION	**$3,128,860**		**$38,087**	**$3,166,947**
Q2E6 - COALITION OPERATIONS	$2,017,560		$19,043	$2,036,603
Q2E7 - COALITION PROJECTS	$1,111,300		$19,043	$1,130,343
B3914 - UPIP ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS			**$2,449,087**	**$2,449,087**
Q2EA - UPIP ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS			$2,449,087	$2,449,087
B3915 - INFRASTRUCTURE	**$3,253,663**			**$3,253,663**
Q2FB - MINOR INFRASTRUCTUR INUIT				$0
Q2FC - MINOR INFRASTRUCTUR METI	$70,000			$70,000
Q2FD - MINOR INFRASTRUCTURE FC	$3,183,663			$3,183,663
B3916 - ICSF WAVE 2 UPIP	**$3,042,618**	**$38,535,011**		**$41,577,629**
Q2JL - ICSF WAVE 2 UPIP	$3,042,618	$38,535,011		$41,577,629
B3917 - COVID19 OTHE-UPIP-OTH SEC	**$1,753,106**			**$1,753,106**
Q2JQ - COVID19 OTHE-UPIP-OTH SEC	$1,753,106			$1,753,106
B3918 - COVID -19 FOOD SECUR UPIP	**$25,413,943**			**$25,413,943**
Q2JV - COVID -19 FOOD SECUR UPIP	$25,413,943			$25,413,943
Q2JW - FOOD SECUR FN OFF RESERVE				
Q2JX - FOOD SECURITY INUIT				
Q2JY - FOOD SECURITY METIS				
Q2JZ - FOOD SECURITY OTHER ORGS				
B3919 - COVID-19 ICSF WAVE 3 UPIP	**$40,526,650**			**$40,526,650**
Q2K0 - COVID-19 ICSF WAVE 3 UPIP	$40,526,650			$40,526,650
B3920 - COVID-19 ICSF-3 NEED BASE	**$75,832,063**			**$75,832,063**
Q2KB - COVID-19 ICSF-3 NEED BASE	$75,832,063			$75,832,063
Grand Total	**$205,509,396**	**$260,124,540**	**$2,525,260**	**$468,159,196**

Program Full-Time Employees

18-19	**19-20**	**20-21**
19	20	23

1. FTEs are based on data from the Departmental Results Report.
2. FTEs are based on information pulled from the Special Access Program Salary Forecasting Tool on January 10th 2022.

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[28] FN in this table refers to First Nations.

Program Salary Expenses

	18-19	19-20	20-21
	Salary	Salary	Salary
P5105 - UPIP ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS	$1,775,192		
NPQZ - UPIP ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS	$1,775,192		
B3910 - ORG. CAPACITY			$19,043
Q2DJ - ORG. CAPACITY INUIT			
Q2DK - ORG. CAPACITY MÉTIS			
Q2DL - ORG. CAPACITY FC			$19,043
Q2DM - ORG. CAPACITY OTHERS			
Q2DN - MINOR CAPITAL FC			
Q2DO - MINOR CAPITAL METIS			
Q2DP - MINOR CAPITAL INUIT			
B3911 - PROGRAMS & SERVICES			$19,043
Q2DT - PROGRAMS & SERV. FC			$19,043
Q2DU - PROGRAMS & SERV. INUIT			
Q2DV - PROGRAMS & SERV. MÉTIS			
Q2DW - PROGRAMS & SERV. OTHERS			
B3912 - RESEARCH & INNOVATION			
Q2E0 - RESEARCH & INNOVATION			
B3913 - COALITION			$38,087
Q2E6 - COALITION OPERATIONS			$19,043
Q2E7 - COALITION PROJECTS			$19,043
B3914 - UPIP ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS		$1,714,499	$2,421,692
Q2EA - UPIP ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS		$1,714,499	$2,421,692

Program Employee Benefit Plan Expenditures

	17/18	18/19	19/20	20/21
D0039 - URBAN PROG INDIG PEOPLES				
B3910 - ORG. CAPACITY				$2,731
B3911 - PROGRAMS & SERVICES				$2,731
B3913 - COALITION				$5,462
B3914 - UPIP ADMINISTRATIVE COSTS	$204,121	$230,493	$236,196	$341,400
Grand Total	$204,121	$230,493	$236,196	$352,325

Program Treasury Board of Canada Secretariat's Funding

Description	2018-19	2019-20	2020-21
From the Department of Agriculture and Agri-Food to the Department of Indigenous Services to help improve access to food and increase food supply for Indigenous Peoples			30,000,000
Funding for supportive care in Indigenous communities (COVID-19)			
Funding for the Urban Aboriginal Strategy (TB 837366)	11,517,071	11,517,071	11,517,071
Funding for Urban Programming for Indigenous Peoples (Budget 2017) (TB 838196)	22,700,000	22,700,000	22,700,000
Funding to support the Indigenous Community Support Fund (COVID-19) [1]			119,401,331
Infrastructure Funding for Urban Programming for Indigenous Peoples Service Providers (Budget 2019) (TB 839834)			8,550,000
	34,217,071	**34,217,071**	**192,168,402**
Payments to the Indigenous Community Support Fund pursuant to the Public Health Events of National Concern Payments Act [1]			177,624,540
Payments to urban and regional Indigenous organizations pursuant to the Public Health Events of National Concern Payments Act [1]			75,000,000
	0	**0**	**252,624,540**
Funding for Urban Programming for Indigenous Peoples (Budget 2017) (TB 838196)	1,000,000	1,000,000	1,000,000
	1,000,000	**1,000,000**	**1,000,000**
Infrastructure Funding for Urban Programming for Indigenous Peoples Service Providers (Budget 2019) (TB 839834)			277,007
	0	**0**	**277,007**
Infrastructure Funding for Urban Programming for Indigenous Peoples Service Providers (Budget 2019) (TB 839834)			22,719
	0	**0**	**22,719**

Annex E: Evaluation Questions

Spirit

Beginning/Past	Experiences/Present	Transition	Future/Current State
Project activities begin in ceremony	**Funding arrangements and program design are flexible and reflect the intervention context**	**Time for reflection is built into the process from a place of spirit**	**Future planning is done from a place of spirit first and foremost**
In what ways does program design (and implementation) reflect Indigenous ways of knowing and values (i.e., to what extent have Indigenous peoples been consulted to support the design/re-design of the program architecture)?	In what ways do the programs support the well-being of individuals, families and children, and communities?	How did COVID-19 impact organizations funded by the UPIP program?	How do program activities and implementation processes account for the impacts of climate change?
	Is the current funding model and suite of programs the most efficient way to achieve outcomes?	What role did funded organizations play in the response to COVID-19?	
	Is funding flowing in a predictable and timely manner?	How did COVID-19 highlight the need for urban programming?	What are the expected long-term impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic (e.g., on program activities, on needs, on gaps in programming)?
	How do funding recipients experience the reporting cycle?	How was UPIP leveraged during COVID-19 to support Indigenous Peoples living in urban settings?	
	In what ways are Indigenous spiritualties, ceremonies, language, beliefs and/or value systems integrated into program activities?	Is there adequate space and time for funding recipients and Indigenous Peoples living in urban settings to reflect upon program activities using Indigenous spiritualities, beliefs and value systems?	Which practices or innovations could improve the cultural appropriateness of program activities?
	Are Indigenous spiritualities, ceremonies, language, beliefs, and/or value systems integrated into program activities in a culturally appropriate way? (sub-question to above)		What might (Indigenous-led?) programming supporting Indigenous Peoples living in urban settings look like if it fully reflected Indigenous spiritualities, ceremonies, language, beliefs, and value systems?

Relationships

Beginning/Past	Experiences/Present	Transition	Future/Current State
Relationships are built on Indigenous values and culture	**Relationships are conducted in a manner that reflect Indigenous ways of knowing and doing**	**Relationships are supportive allowing for reflection and ethical space**	**Plans are made within relationships as equals applying principles of ethical space and Indigenous position**
Have relationships between ISC and funded recipients been rooted in Indigenous values, culture, and ways of knowing?	What role do urban Indigenous partners and Indigenous Peoples living in urban settings play in ongoing program administration and program activities?	In what ways can urban Indigenous partners and peoples provide ongoing feedback on current and future program design and activities? How does ISC provide mechanisms for ongoing feedback?	How can future practices and innovations ensure that Indigenous partners and Indigenous Peoples living in urban settings are able to design and/or control program administration and program activities?
Is there collaboration between Indigenous organizations and ISC? What areas lack collaboration? In what ways can collaboration be fostered between Indigenous organization and ISC?	What methods have departmental staff used to construct/foster strong relationships between recipients and the department?	How has the federal government ensured that partners can contribute, are aware of the mechanisms to contribute, and feel that they can contribute to program design and activities? How could feedback from Indigenous partners and Indigenous Peoples living in urban settings be incorporated in meaningful ways into future program design and activities? What barriers and challenges impact the formation of meaningful relationships between ISC and urban Indigenous partners and peoples?	

Process

Beginning/Past	Experiences/Present	Transition	Future/Current State
Processes reflect Indigenous practices and community strengths	**Processes are experienced by target audience from a place that is molded by cultural ways of being and community building**	**Processes are evaluated using Indigenous values and community sovereignty**	**Planning is made from a place of community strengths, opportunities, and sovereignty**
How are the UPIP suite of programs designed to address the priorities of Indigenous peoples?	In what ways does the funding process support the implementation of UPIP activities in a way that aligns with community-identified needs?	How does the existing program architecture meet success, as defined by Indigenous Peoples?	What could the advancement of service transfer entail within the context of the UPIP program, and how does this respect self-determination?
How does the design and delivery of the UPIP funding streams account for 'vulnerable populations'?	How do the specifics of the UPIP terms and conditions provide organizations the ability to use UPIP's funding in achieving organizational objectives?	What are indicators of success, as defined by Indigenous Peoples?	What are the opportunities and/or best practices for service transfer?
	To what extent does current funding enable or hinder program access for Indigenous Peoples living in urban settings?	In what ways have evaluation practices employed Indigenous approaches, and how could these be foregrounded in the future?	What barriers must be addressed before service transfer can occur?
	What additional barriers and challenges impact program access for Indigenous Peoples living in urban settings?	What timeframe would be best to measure movement for each indicator?	How could future planning reflect best practices and lessons learned?
	How have the current processes contributed to the growth/understanding of Indigenous communities, in urban settings?		How could future planning ensure that negative impacts or outcomes are avoided?

Governance

Beginning/Past	Experiences/Present	Transition	Future/Current State
Processes align with GoC mandates and priority areas	**Program is ready for the eventual transfer of services (Transition)**	**Data collection and reporting mechanisms efficiently capture data that is relevant to GoC mandates and priority areas (Present)**	**Planning promotes efficiency and data collection that is relevant to GoC mandates and priority areas**
In what ways are the programs consistent with federal priorities and mandates, including *Policy on Results* and UNDRIP?	How ready is the program for the eventual transfer of services, based on the needs of the program and of Indigenous Peoples living in urban spaces?	How could ISC enhance the efficiency and relevance of reporting mechanisms?	Are there practices or innovations that could make program delivery more efficient?
How has the COVID-19 pandemic affected the programs (i.e., effects on planned activities)?		Do data collection mechanisms align with program architecture and their associated performance measures?	In what ways can the program architecture be adapted to better assess the realities of the UPIP funding streams and their impacts?
Do the terms and conditions provide adequate flexibility to deliver funding to organizations throughout the COVID-19 pandemic?			
What are the impacts of UPIP's funding on the six key areas of priority for ISC, including women, vulnerable populations, youth, transition services, outreach programs, and community wellness?	What performance data collected by ISC do partners currently have access to?	What are the main challenges in delivering the program efficiently?	
How do the six key areas of priority for ISC align with the values and concerns of program partners and Indigenous Peoples living in urban spaces?	What ongoing effects does the COVID-19 pandemic have upon the programs (i.e., effects on planed activities)?	What performance data collected by ISC would it be useful for partners to have access to in order to better meet GoC mandates and priority areas?	

Outcomes

Beginning/Past	Experiences/Present	Transition	Future/Current State
Program design and logic model outcomes reflect GoC mandates	**Program outcomes respond to the priorities and needs of Indigenous Peoples in urban spaces**	**Program outcomes facilitate service transfer**	**Future program outcomes reflect both GoC mandates and the priorities/needs of Indigenous Peoples in urban spaces**
To what extent do program design and logic model outcomes respond to the mandate of the *Policy on Results* and UNDRIP?	Are current program outcomes aligned with the current needs of program partners and Indigenous Peoples living in urban spaces?	To what degree do program outcomes support service transfer?	What indicators should be added or changed to better measure improved outcomes for urban Indigenous partners and peoples?
To what extent have the programs contributed to the outcomes identified within the logic model?	During the COVID-19 pandemic, was the program design in congruence with the needs of Indigenous Peoples living in urban centres?	To what degree does service transfer still need to take place?	How can the program and the Government of Canada support developing indicators through Indigenous measures of success?
To what extent has COVID-19 impacted the program's ability to meet the mandate of the *Policy on Results* and UNDRIP?	How does UPIP funding contribute to the advancement of priorities identified by Indigenous Peoples, outside from those outlined in the logic model?		In what ways can program outcomes better respond to the mandate of the *Policy on Results* and UNDRIP?
How does the flowing of Indigenous Community Support Fund funds through the UPIP terms and conditions correlate with the UPIP logic model and program architecture?	Have there been any unexpected positive or negative outcomes?		In what ways can program outcomes better respond to the needs and priorities of urban Indigenous partners and peoples?

Annex F: Previous Evaluation Key Findings and Recommendations

Key Findings

The previous evaluation of the Urban Aboriginal Strategy examined activities from April 2014 to July 2016, following the consolidation of all urban Indigenous programming previously delivered by Canadian Heritage and Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada into a single Urban Aboriginal Strategy (which was replaced by UPIP in 2017). Key findings of the previous evaluation include:

- Jurisdictional responsibility for service provision for Indigenous Peoples living in urban centres continues to be a barrier to needed programs and services;

- Among programs and services that are provided, there is a clear need for cultural appropriateness to encourage the participation of Indigenous Peoples;

- The ultimate objective of the strategy and eligibility criteria were perceived to be too rigid;

- Many organizations expressed a perception of funding preferences in favour of the National Association of Friendship Centres, and that a pan-Indigenous program delivered by a non-governmental, status-blind third party lacks sensitivity to the distinct needs and identity of the Métis and Inuit;

- The requirement for organizations to be "status-blind" limits the organizations that can apply for funding while attempting to ensure that the Strategy does not favour a particular group; in fact, Métis- and Inuit-specific organization faced barriers accessing funding; and

- The one-year funding model for the Community Capacity Support Program appears burdensome for service delivery organizations, and limits results to short-term assistance to individuals, rather than longer-term impacts for families and communities.

Recommendations

The evaluation put forward seven recommendations related to the Urban Aboriginal Strategy:

- Support efforts to enhance cultural sensitivity among social service organizations and the wider social service delivery network, at all jurisdictional levels, in order to render existing services more accessible;

- Create multi-jurisdictional networks, involving all levels of government and key organizations, in order to support more coordinated and culturally accessible services for Indigenous Peoples;

- Broaden the orientation of the urban Indigenous programming to include community priorities beyond the narrow focus of economic participation;

- Widen the network of those able to access funding in support of Indigenous Peoples in urban centres while ensuring that there is limited duplication of and coordinated use of available resources;

- Employ multi-stream communications strategies to ensure a wide range of eligible organizations are aware of the Urban Aboriginal Strategy in order to ensure application by these organizations;

- Implement a funding model that includes strong monitoring practices and allows for the renewal of funding beyond a single year for projects that demonstrate achievement of results; and

Ensure fairness and transparency of funding allocations by clarifying terms and conditions to include detailed definitions of eligible recipients and expenditures.