



# Evaluation of the Indigenous Entrepreneurship and Business Development Program

December 2023



Indigenous Services  
Canada

Services aux  
Autochtones Canada

Canada

## Table of Contents

List of abbreviations and acronyms .....	i
Executive Summary.....	ii
Management Response and Action Plan.....	iv
Overall Management Response.....	iv
Overview .....	iv
Assurance .....	v
Action Plan Matrix .....	vi
1. Introduction.....	1
2. Program description.....	1
2.1 Background.....	1
3. Evaluation methodology .....	3
3.1 Scope and evaluation issues .....	3
3.2 Design and methods .....	4
3.3 Limitations.....	6
4.0 Key Findings.....	7
4.1 Key Findings: Relevance .....	7
4.2 Key Findings: Service Transfer .....	8
4.3 Key Findings: Effectiveness .....	11
4.4 Key Findings: Efficiency .....	26
5. Conclusions .....	29
6. Recommendations.....	31
6.1 Service Transfer.....	31
6.2 Achieving and Measuring Program Outcomes.....	31
6.3 Financial and Human Resources .....	32
Appendix A: IEBD Logic Model and Budget .....	33
Appendix B: Evaluation Questions .....	35
Appendix C: Detailed Participant Information .....	36

# List of abbreviations and acronyms

ABO	Access to Business Opportunities
ATC	Access to Capital
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease
IEBD	Indigenous Entrepreneurship and Business Development
IFI	Indigenous Financial Institution
ISC	Indigenous Services Canada
MCC	Métis Capital Corporation
NACCA	National Aboriginal Capital Corporations Association
PSIB	Procurement Strategy for Indigenous Business
2SLGBTQI+	Two-Spirit, Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Intersex Plus

## Executive Summary

As part of Indigenous Services Canada's commitments under the Treasury Board *Financial Administration Act* (1985), *Policy on Results* (2016) and *Directive on Results* (2016), from 2021-2023 ISC Evaluation undertook an evaluation of the Indigenous Entrepreneurship and Business Development (IEBD) Program (in this document referred to as "the Program"), covering the five-year period from 2015-16 to 2020-21. This IEBD Program consists of three complementary sub-programs that support Indigenous entrepreneurs in Canada: Access to Capital (ATC), Access to Business Opportunities (ABO) and Procurement Strategy for Indigenous Business (PSIB) programs. IEBD Program spending averaged approximately \$47 million per year over the period of the evaluation.

This evaluation assesses the Programs' relevance, effectiveness and efficiency, as per the definition of "Evaluation" under the *Policy on Results*:

- **Relevance:** The extent to which the programs address and are responsive to the needs of First Nations, Inuit and Métis business owners and entrepreneurs. Also, the extent to which programs align with federal government priorities and responsibilities
- **Effectiveness:** The extent to which programs achieve their expected outcomes and objectives, as identified in the logic model (Appendix A)
- **Efficiency:** The extent to which resources (e.g. funding) are used to produce program outputs or outcomes

In addition, this evaluation also assesses the Program's impacts on families and children, the extent to which the programs advance self-determination and service transfer, and the Program's responsiveness to business needs during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The evaluation collected data from four key lines of evidence: a literature review of relevant program documents, performance data and other publications; individual interviews with 45 key informants; a survey of 441 Indigenous entrepreneurs across Canada; and a series of discussion circles with representatives of Indigenous Financial Institutions (IFIs), MCCs, and PSIB coordinators.

### Program strengths

The evaluation found that the IEBD Program remains relevant to both Indigenous and federal priorities, including a priority to advance Indigenous self-determination. The Program helped remove barriers to Indigenous People seeking business capital and supports, and is meeting the intended outcomes of sustaining the network of Indigenous lending institutions, creating and expanding Indigenous businesses, and creating or maintaining jobs through lending.

During the evaluation period, the administration and delivery of the ATC program was transferred to Indigenous partners representing the network of Indigenous-owned lending institutions (IFIs and MCCs), which overall went well and is widely supported by Indigenous partners. The importance of continued funding to support the ATC program is also underscored by findings that Indigenous entrepreneurs feel a stronger and more personal relationship with IFIs and MCCs than with mainstream lending institutions. In addition, the

program has had positive impacts for individuals, families and communities, and the lending system moved quickly to respond to the needs of Indigenous entrepreneurs and businesses amid the COVID-19 pandemic.

## **Program limitations**

There continue to be barriers to Indigenous entrepreneurship and business that are not addressed by the current scope of the program. The evaluation found that the program's investment in the Indigenous lending system is not sufficient to meet current and anticipated future levels of demand for loans and business supports, given the anticipated growth in the Indigenous population. The evaluation also found that there is an ongoing need for targeted investments in pre- and post-care to facilitate success across all stages of business development. As well, a siloed approach to funding across the IEBD sub-programs creates challenges for entrepreneurs, particularly when navigating various supports and requirements. Also, the transfer of the ATC program is currently limited to the delivery of contributions, and further work is required to fully transfer the suite of IEBD programs.

Although efforts have been made to improve the inclusivity and reach of programs across distinctions, gender and age groups, more work is needed to reach and monitor equity in access. The current logic model and inconsistent program data do not reflect outcomes relevant to Indigenous entrepreneurs, nor do they allow for the assessment of program impacts. An updated performance measurement framework is required in order to reflect outcomes relevant to Indigenous entrepreneurs and key program partners. The evaluation also found that the Indigenous lending system does not have sufficient funding under the program to meet current and anticipated future levels of demand. This said, the lending system moved quickly to respond to the needs of Indigenous entrepreneurs and businesses amidst the COVID-19 pandemic.

## **Recommendations**

It is therefore recommended that ISC:

- 1.** Engage First Nation, Inuit and Métis partners to explore options to transfer the full IEBD program, including the Indigenous Business Directory and the ABO stream of funding. This includes a recommendation to:
  - a)** Work with First Nations, Inuit and Métis partners to fully transfer the ATC program, including the design, delivery, eligibility, and reporting of results on a distinctions basis.
- 2.** Engage First Nations, Inuit and Métis partners of all program streams to develop an approach to further reduce barriers to entrepreneurship, including by broadening program access for Indigenous Peoples who are harder to reach and/or face exacerbated barriers to the pursuit of entrepreneurship. This includes recommendations to:
  - a)** Engage First Nations, Inuit and Métis partners of all program streams to consistently support pre- and post-care for Indigenous entrepreneurs;
  - b)** Explore and ensure that the federal procurement process is equally accessible to First Nations, Inuit and Métis businesses; and

c) Perform ongoing monitoring of the adjustments resulting from the modernization initiative to ensure that adjustments prove effective.

3. Co-develop with First Nations, Inuit and Métis Peoples a new program logic model and performance measurement framework that contains broader outcome measurements supported by Indigenous partners. This includes a recommendation to:

a) Collaborate with internal and external partners to expand and employ Gender-Based Analysis Plus to their data collection, and sustainable targeted approaches meeting the needs of diverse groups.

4. Explore options to increase the funding envelope under IEBD, allowing for greater reach, impact and transparency. This includes recommendations to:

a) Work with ATC partners to explore long-term funding mechanisms that will better support the sustainability of IFIs and their ability to deliver developmental lending; and

b) Work with First Nations, Inuit and Métis partners to explore targeted approaches and better leverage existing approaches to support IFIs/MCCs in retaining skilled employees; and

5. Standardize the PSIB Coordinator role and provide ongoing centralized support to the PSIB Coordinator Network. This support may include ensuring Coordinators have sufficient onboarding, training, and capacity to perform the functions of this role, and that there is a consistent and transparent line of communication between ISC and the Network of Coordinators.

## Management Response and Action Plan

Evaluation Title: Evaluation of the Indigenous Entrepreneurship and Business Development Program

### Overall Management Response

#### Overview

- This evaluation examines the relevance, effectiveness and efficiency of the Indigenous Entrepreneurship and Business Development (IEBD) program, covering a five-year program cycle from 2015-16 to 2020-21.
- The IEBD program is designed to support business and economic development efforts of Indigenous entrepreneurs and communities.
- The IEBD program is comprised of three program areas that support Indigenous entrepreneurs in Canada:
  - Aboriginal Entrepreneurship Program – Access to Capital (AEP-ATC) provides funding to establish, expand and diversify the network of Indigenous Financial Institutions (IFIs) and Métis Capital Corporations (MCCs) providing

- developmental capital to Indigenous entrepreneurs, thereby enhancing access to capital for Indigenous entrepreneurs across Canada.
- Aboriginal Entrepreneurship Program – Access to Business Opportunities (AEP-ABO) provides funding to promote a culture of entrepreneurship, improve access to business opportunities and to enhance the capacity of Indigenous businesses.
  - The Procurement Strategy for Indigenous Business (PSIB) is a program that supports Indigenous businesses through access to specific federal procurement bidding opportunities.
- The recommendations stemming from this evaluation will guide upcoming policy, planning, and delivery efforts. This includes recommendations to address barriers to entrepreneurship and enhance program access for harder-to-reach Indigenous Peoples; explore options for program expansion and transfer of the full IEBD program; and enhance data collection, monitoring, and transparency. Wherever possible, these efforts will be made in collaboration across program areas, with Indigenous partners and other relevant internal and external partners.
  - The AEP-ATC stream has become an important source of capital for Indigenous business development, and over its thirty-year history it has made significant contributions to the Canadian economy. However, at its current levels of funding it's struggling to support the ever-increasing loan demand of Indigenous businesses, as well as the deployment of the newly launched Indigenous Growth Fund. An increase in funding for the ATC stream is critical to ensure the continued availability to affordable equity capital for Indigenous businesses and entrepreneurs.
  - The AEP-ABO stream has broad terms and conditions, making it one of the more flexible programs to advance Indigenous economic development. However, the Program has limited funding and therefore focuses on supporting national-level projects to maximize the Program's impact. A significant increase in funding for the ABO stream would enable the successful implementation for many of the recommendations outlined in the Evaluation.
  - The Procurement Strategy for Indigenous Business (PSIB) is a program applied by all departments when conducting federal procurements. The program is in place to ensure that specific federal tenders are limited to bidding among businesses listed on the Indigenous Business Directory or Modern Treaty business lists. PSIB is a key element to increasing the representation of Indigenous businesses in federal procurement and plays a critical role in federal departments reaching the mandatory minimum 5% target.

## **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. The Action Plan presents three sets of measures: those that are the responsibility of AEP-

ABO, those that are the responsibility of PSIB, and those that are the responsibility of AEP-ATC.

## Action Plan Matrix

**Sector:** Lands and Economic Development Sector

**Program:** Indigenous Entrepreneurship and Business Development Program

**Program:** Aboriginal Entrepreneurship Program – Access to Business Opportunities

Recommendation 1	Actions	Responsible Manager (Title / Sector)	Planned Start and Completion Dates	Action Item Context/Rationale
<p>1) Indigenous Services Canada is recommended to engage First Nation, Métis and Inuit Partners to explore options to transfer the full IEBD program, including the Indigenous Business Directory and the ABO stream of funding. This includes a recommendation to:</p> <p>1A) Work with First Nations, Inuit, and Métis partners to fully transfer the Access to Capital program, including the design, delivery, eligibility, and reporting of results on a distinctions basis.</p>	<p>We <b>do</b> concur.</p> <p><b>Recommendation 1:</b> Starting in April 2024, in collaboration with other program areas (i.e., PSIB, ATC, etc.), AEP-ABO will engage with national Indigenous organizations (i.e., NWAC, Métis National Council, Congress of Aboriginal Peoples, etc.), as well as national Indigenous economic development organizations (i.e., NACCA, CCAB,CANDO, etc.) to co-develop the following: determine the activities/functions that should be transferred and identify any residual activities that will remain with ISC; a recommended approach to the service transfer (i.e., distinctions-based, etc.); identify potential delivery partner(s); and identify the additional funding and program enhancements required to enable the service transfer of the AEP-ABO.</p> <p><b>Sub-Recommendation:</b> 1A) N/A</p>	<p>Director General, Economic and Business Opportunities Branch</p>	<p><b>Start Date:</b> April 2024 <b>Completion:</b> 2027-2028</p>	<p><b>Status:</b>  <input type="checkbox"/> Fully Implemented  <input type="checkbox"/> Partially Implemented  <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Implementation did not Commence  <input type="checkbox"/> Obsolete</p> <p><b>Update/Rationale:</b> This action item is currently in the development and planning phase, with a scheduled implementation date set for April 2024. <b>As of: September 2023</b></p>
Recommendation 2	Actions	Responsible Manager (Title / Sector)	Planned Start and Completion Dates	Action Item Context/Rationale
	We <b>do</b> concur.			<b>Status:</b>



<p><b>2)</b> Engage First Nations, Inuit and Métis partners of all program streams to develop an approach to further reduce barriers to entrepreneurship, including by broadening program access for Indigenous Peoples who are harder to reach and/or face exacerbated barriers to the pursuit of entrepreneurship. This includes recommendations to:</p> <p><b>2A)</b> Engage First Nation, Inuit, and Métis partners of all program streams to consistently support pre- and post-care for Indigenous entrepreneurs;</p> <p><b>2B)</b> Explore and ensure that the federal procurement process is equally accessible to First Nation, Inuit, and Métis businesses; and</p> <p><b>2C)</b> Perform ongoing monitoring of the adjustments resulting from the modernization initiative to ensure that adjustments prove effective.</p>	<p><b>Recommendation 2:</b> Starting in April 2024, in collaboration with other program areas (i.e., PSIB, ATC, etc.), AEP-ABO will engage with national Indigenous organizations (i.e., NWAC, Métis National Council, Congress of Aboriginal Peoples, etc.), as well as national Indigenous economic development organizations (i.e., NACCA, CCAB, CANDO, etc.) to determine program enhancements that can be implemented immediately, and those that will require additional funding, to: broaden access to the AEP-ABO; and identify which barriers to entrepreneurship can be addressed through the AEP-ABO and accordingly determine effective approaches to reducing/eliminating these barriers.</p>	<p>Director General, Economic and Business Opportunities Branch</p>	<p><b>Start Date:</b> April 2024 <b>Completion:</b> 2027-2028</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Fully Implemented <input type="checkbox"/> Partially Implemented <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Implementation did not Commence <input type="checkbox"/> Obsolete</p> <p><b>Update/Rationale:</b> This action item is currently in the development and planning phase, with a scheduled implementation date set for April 2024. <b>As of: September 2023</b></p>
	<p style="text-align: center;">We <b>do</b> concur.</p> <p><b>Sub-Recommendation:</b> <b>2A)</b> Starting in April 2024, in collaboration with other program areas (i.e., PSIB, ATC, etc.), AEP-ABO will engage with previous funding recipients, national Indigenous organizations (i.e. NWAC, Métis National Council, Congress of Aboriginal Peoples, etc.), as well as national Indigenous economic development organizations (i.e., NACCA, CCAB, CANDO, etc.) to determine supports required in pre- and post-care for Indigenous entrepreneurs and determine which can be implemented immediately and those that require additional funding to implement.</p> <p><b>2B)</b> N/A</p> <p><b>2C)</b> N/A</p>	<p>Director General, Economic and Business Opportunities Branch</p>	<p><b>Start Date:</b> April 2024 <b>Completion:</b> 2027-2028</p>	<p><b>Status:</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Fully Implemented <input type="checkbox"/> Partially Implemented <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Implementation did not Commence <input type="checkbox"/> Obsolete</p> <p><b>Update/Rationale:</b> This action item is currently in the development and planning phase, with a scheduled implementation date set for April 2024. <b>As of: September 2023</b></p>
<b>Recommendation 3</b>	<b>Actions</b>	<b>Responsible Manager (Title / Sector)</b>	<b>Planned Start and Completion Dates</b>	<b>Action Item Context/Rationale</b>
<p><b>3)</b> Co-develop with First Nations, Inuit and Métis Peoples a new program logic model and performance measurement framework that contains broader outcome measurements supported by Indigenous</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">We <b>do</b> concur.</p> <p><b>Recommendation 3:</b> Starting in April 2024, in collaboration with other program areas (i.e., PSIB, ATC, etc.), AEP-ABO will engage with national Indigenous organizations (i.e., NWAC, Métis National Council, Congress of Aboriginal Peoples, etc.), as well</p>	<p>Director General, Economic and Business Opportunities Branch</p>	<p><b>Start Date:</b> April 2024 <b>Completion:</b> 2027-2028</p>	<p><b>Status:</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Fully Implemented <input type="checkbox"/> Partially Implemented <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Implementation did not Commence <input type="checkbox"/> Obsolete</p> <p><b>Update/Rationale:</b> The action item is currently in the development and planning phase,</p>

<p>partners. This includes a recommendation to:</p> <p><b>3A)</b> Collaborate with internal and external partners to expand and employ Gender-Based Analysis Plus to their data collection, and sustainable targeted approaches meeting the needs of diverse groups.</p>	<p>as national Indigenous economic development organizations (i.e., NACCA, CCAB,CANDO, etc.) to co-develop short, intermediate, and long-term outcomes that align with First Nations, Métis, an Inuit economic development priorities and incorporate these into a program logic model that can be used for planning and evaluation of the program (i.e., guide program activities, monitor progress, assess program effectiveness, etc.).</p> <p>We <b>do</b> concur.</p> <p><b>Sub-Recommendation:</b>  <b>3A)</b> Starting in April 2024, the AEP-ABO will engage with subject matter experts within ISC, as well as work in collaboration with other program areas (i.e., PSIB, ATC, etc.), AEP-ABO to engage with national Indigenous organizations (i.e., NWAC, Métis National Council, Congress of Aboriginal Peoples, etc.), as well as national Indigenous economic development organizations (i.e., NACCA, CCAB,CANDO, etc.) to review AEP-ABO's data collection structure and identify improvements required in order to employ GBA Plus to the Program's data collection and analysis approach.</p>			<p>with a scheduled implementation date set for April 2024.  <b>As of: September 2023</b></p>
<p><b>Recommendation 4</b></p>	<p><b>Actions</b></p>	<p><b>Responsible Manager (Title / Sector)</b></p>	<p><b>Planned Start and Completion Dates</b></p>	<p><b>Action Item Context/Rationale</b></p>
<p><b>4)</b> Explore options to increase the funding envelope under IEBD, allowing for greater reach, impact and transparency. This includes recommendations to:</p> <p><b>4A)</b> Work with ATC partners to explore long-term funding mechanisms that will better support the sustainability of IFIs and their ability to deliver developmental lending; and</p> <p><b>4B)</b> Work with First Nations, Inuit and Métis partners to explore targeted approaches and better leverage existing approaches to support IFIs/MCCs in retaining skilled employees.</p>	<p>We <b>do</b> concur.</p> <p><b>Recommendation 4:</b>  Based on the findings of the Program Evaluation, the AEP-ABO will take immediate steps to increase the transparency of the Program. Starting in April 2024, in collaboration with other program areas (i.e., PSIB, ATC, etc.), AEP-ABO will engage with national Indigenous organizations (i.e. NWAC, Métis National Council, Congress of Aboriginal Peoples, etc.), as well as national Indigenous economic development organizations (i.e., NACCA, CCAB,CANDO, etc.) to determine the additional funding required for the AEP-ABO stream that would enable greater reach and increase transparency.</p> <p><b>Sub-Recommendation:</b>  <b>4A)</b> N/A  <b>4B)</b> N/A</p>	<p>Director General, Economic and Business Opportunities Branch</p>	<p><b>Start Date:</b> May 2023  <b>Completion:</b> 2027-2028</p>	<p><b>Status:</b>  <input type="checkbox"/> Fully Implemented  <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Partially Implemented  <input type="checkbox"/> Implementation did not Commence  <input type="checkbox"/> Obsolete</p> <p><b>Update/Rationale:</b>  The AEP-ABO is currently updating the Program's Management Control Framework and, as part of that process, identifying areas to enable greater transparency and developing processes to implement those changes.  <b>As of: September 2023</b></p>

Recommendation 5	Actions	Responsible Manager (Title/Sector)	Planned Start and Completion Dates	Action Item Context/Rationale
5) Standardize the PSIB Coordinator role and provide ongoing centralized support to the PSIB Coordinator Network. This support may include ensuring Coordinators have sufficient onboarding, training, and capacity to perform the functions of this role, and that there is a consistent and transparent line of communication between ISC and the Network of Coordinators.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

**Sector:** Lands and Economic Development Sector

**Program:** Indigenous Entrepreneurship and Business Development Program

**Program Area:** Procurement Strategy for Indigenous Business

Recommendation 1	Actions	Responsible Manager (Title/Sector)	Planned Start and Completion Dates	Action Item Context/Rationale
<p>1) Indigenous Services Canada is recommended to engage First Nation, Métis and Inuit Partners to explore options to transfer the full IEBD program, including the Indigenous Business Director and the ABO stream of funding. This includes a recommendation to:</p> <p><b>1A)</b> Work with First Nations, Inuit and Métis partners to fully transfer the Access to Capital program, including the design, delivery, eligibility, and reporting of results on a distinctions basis.</p>	<p>We <b>do</b> concur.</p> <p><b>Recommendation 1:</b> Continue engagements with national and regional Indigenous economic development organizations, modern treaty land claim agreement holders and Indigenous businesses to help inform how the Indigenous Business Directory could be transferred to Indigenous partners and the level of funding required to enable the service transfer.</p> <p><b>Sub-Recommendation:</b> <b>1A)</b> N/A</p>	Director General, Economic and Business Opportunities Branch	<p><b>Start Date:</b> Fall 2023</p> <p><b>Completion:</b> Spring 2025 – Return to Cabinet with recommendations for Transformative Indigenous Procurement Strategy.</p>	<p><b>Status:</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Fully Implemented  <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Partially Implemented  <input type="checkbox"/> Implementation did not Commence  <input type="checkbox"/> Obsolete</p> <p><b>Update/Rationale:</b> Starting in 2019, Indigenous Services Canada conducted engagements with partners, which informed the changes to the Procurement Strategy to Indigenous Business that were announced in 2021. Moreover, as part of that announcement was the creation of Transformative Indigenous Procurement Strategy and commitment to continue engagement and consultations with Indigenous partners to co-develop a more transformative Indigenous procurement Strategy.</p> <p>Indigenous Services Canada is currently building relationships and beginning engagements and consultations this Fall 2023 which included Indigenous Services Canada discussions about addressing barriers and how they are addressed in a forthcoming strategy (due 2025); including the review of opportunities for service transfer of IBD to one or more Indigenous Partners.</p>

				Note: Engagement and consultation activities started in Winter 2022 and are expected to end in early Summer 2024. Co-development should start in 2024, with a proposed return to Cabinet with a transformed Indigenous procurement strategy in Spring 2025. Some partners maybe ready at different points of this timeline. <b>As of: September 2023</b>
Recommendation 2	Actions	Responsible Manager (Title/Sector)	Planned Start and Completion Dates	Action Item Context/Rationale
<p><b>2)</b> Engage First Nations, Inuit and Métis partners of all program streams to develop an approach to further reduce barriers to entrepreneurship, including by broadening program access for Indigenous Peoples who are harder to reach and/or face exacerbated barriers to the pursuit of entrepreneurship. This includes recommendations to:</p> <p><b>2A)</b> Engage First Nation, Inuit, and Métis partners of all program streams to consistently support pre- and post-care for Indigenous entrepreneurs;</p> <p><b>2B)</b> Explore and ensure that the federal procurement process is equally accessible to First Nation, Inuit, and Métis businesses; and</p> <p><b>2C)</b> Perform ongoing monitoring of the adjustments resulting from the modernization initiative to ensure that adjustments prove effective.</p>	We do concur.	Director General, Economic and Business Opportunities Branch	<b>Start Date:</b> Summer 2019 <b>Completion:</b> Summer 2024	<b>Status:</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Fully Implemented <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Partially Implemented <input type="checkbox"/> Implementation did not Commence <input type="checkbox"/> Obsolete
	<b>Recommendation 2:</b> Conduct engagement sessions with national and regional Indigenous economic development organizations, modern treaty holders, Indigenous businesses and other federal organizations.			<b>Sub-Recommendation:</b> <b>2A)</b> N/A
	We do concur.	<b>Sub-Recommendation:</b> <b>2B)</b> Work collaboratively with PSPC and TBS to reduce barriers for Indigenous entrepreneurs accessing federal procurement opportunities.	Director General, Economic and Business Opportunities Branch	<b>Start Date:</b> Summer 2023 <b>Completion:</b> Ongoing

				<p>In Summer 2023, the PSIB program was absorbed into the Transformative Indigenous Procurement Strategy Directorate (TIPS). Since inception, December 2021, TIPS has been collaboratively working with PSPC and TBS in the advancement of the TIPS Mandate which is shared with both PSPC and TBS. TIPS has been supporting PSPC PAC by partnering in the planning and administration of some business information sessions for Indigenous entrepreneurs accessing federal procurement opportunities (starting December 2022).</p> <p><b>As of: September 2023</b></p>
<p>We <b>do</b> concur.</p> <p><b>Sub-Recommendation: 2C)</b> Conduct engagement sessions with national and regional Indigenous economic development organizations, modern treaty rights-holders, Indigenous businesses, and other federal organizations to determine what is effective and useful information that will not only assist Indigenous businesses, but easily monitor Departmental performance against established initiatives.</p>		<p>Director General, Economic and Business Opportunities Branch</p>	<p><b>Start Date:</b> January 2024  <b>Completion:</b> Spring 2025 – Return to Cabinet with recommendations for Transformative Indigenous Procurement Strategy.</p>	<p><b>Status:</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Fully Implemented  <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Partially Implemented  <input type="checkbox"/> Implementation did not Commence  <input type="checkbox"/> Obsolete</p> <p><b>Update/Rationale:</b></p> <p>Starting in 2019, Indigenous Services Canada conducted engagements with partners, which informed the changes to the Procurement Strategy to Indigenous Business that were announced in 2021. Moreover, as part of that announcement was the creation of Transformative Indigenous Procurement Strategy and commitment to continue engagement and consultations with Indigenous partners to co-develop a more transformative Indigenous procurement Strategy. Additionally, TIPS is responsible for monitoring Departmental performance against the establishment a mandatory minimum target of 5% of the total value of contracts be awarded to Indigenous businesses for all Government Departments. September 2023 is when the first performance reports are to be submitted and ISC will release an annual report in Spring 2024.</p> <p>As part of the engagement and Consultation activities, TIPS will include discussions about improvements to the minimum target of 5% data as well as other data measures that can better showcase Government procurement data but also best demonstrate efficacy of initiatives. Indigenous Services Canada is working to build reporting to monitor implementation of other procurement initiatives like the 5%</p>

				as part of our engagement, we are consulting with Indigenous partners on data and reporting strategies, and will build on this learning to ensure any future programs or policies include regular performance measurement and a data strategy. <b>As of: September 2023.</b>
<b>Recommendation 3</b>	<b>Actions</b>	<b>Responsible Manager (Title / Sector)</b>	<b>Planned Start and Completion Dates</b>	<b>Action Item Context/Rationale</b>
<p><b>3)</b> Co-develop with First Nations, Inuit and Métis Peoples a new program logic model and performance measurement framework that contains broader outcome measurements supported by Indigenous partners. This includes a recommendation to:</p> <p><b>3A)</b> Collaborate with internal and external partners to expand and employ Gender-Based Analysis Plus to their data collection, and sustainable targeted approaches meeting the needs of diverse groups.</p>	<p>We <b>do</b> concur.</p> <p><b>Recommendation 3:</b> Conduct engagement sessions with national and regional Indigenous economic development organizations, modern treaty rights-holders, Indigenous businesses, and other federal organizations.</p>	<p>Director General, Economic and Business Opportunities Branch</p>	<p><b>Start Date:</b> 2022 and is ongoing <b>Completion:</b> Spring 2025 – Return to Cabinet with recommendations for Transformative Indigenous Procurement Strategy.</p>	<p><b>Status:</b>  <input type="checkbox"/> Fully Implemented  <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Partially Implemented  <input type="checkbox"/> Implementation did not Commence  <input type="checkbox"/> Obsolete</p> <p><b>Update/Rationale:</b>  Indigenous Services Canada is currently building relationships and beginning engagements and consultations this Fall 2023 which included Indigenous Services Canada discussions about addressing barriers that can be addressed and how they are addressed in a forthcoming strategy (due 2025); as part of ongoing procurement transformation we expect to build co-development tables in 2024-25 with Indigenous partners.</p> <p>Discussions in the validating and co-development phase may include new program logic model and performance measurement framework that contains broader outcome measurements supported by Indigenous partners, if those partners are supportive of using logic models and related program measurement tools as part of co-development discussions <b>As of: September 2023</b></p>
	<p>We <b>do</b> concur.</p> <p><b>Sub-Recommendation:</b>  <b>3A)</b> Engage with national and regional economic development organizations that specifically represent intersectional identities to inform the development of capacity building tools, data and gap analysis, and the forthcoming transformative Indigenous procurement strategy.</p>	<p>Director General, Economic and Business Opportunities Branch</p>	<p><b>Start Date:</b> 2022 and is ongoing <b>Completion:</b> Spring 2025 – Return to Cabinet with recommendations for Transformative Indigenous Procurement Strategy</p>	<p><b>Status:</b>  <input type="checkbox"/> Fully Implemented  <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Partially Implemented  <input type="checkbox"/> Implementation did not Commence  <input type="checkbox"/> Obsolete</p> <p><b>Update/Rationale:</b>  As TIPS continues to engage and consult with Indigenous partners to co-develop a transformative Indigenous procurement strategy, a GBA+ lens will continue to be applied to take into account differences affecting access to procurement for Indigenous women, men, and 2SLGBTQI+. <b>As of: October 2023</b></p>
<b>Recommendation 4</b>	<b>Actions</b>	<b>Responsible Manager (Title / Sector)</b>	<b>Planned Start and Completion Dates</b>	<b>Action Item Context/Rationale</b>

<p>4) Explore options to increase the funding envelope under IEED, allowing for greater reach, impact and transparency. This includes recommendations to:</p> <p><b>4A)</b> Work with ATC partners to explore long-term funding mechanisms that will better support the sustainability of IFIs and their ability to deliver developmental lending; and</p> <p><b>4B)</b> Work with First Nations, Inuit and Métis partners to explore targeted approaches and better leverage existing approaches to support IFIs/MCCs in retaining skilled employees.</p>	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A
Recommendation 5	Actions	Responsible Manager (Title/Sector)	Planned Start and Completion Dates	Action Item Context/Rationale
<p>5) Standardize the PSIB Coordinator role and provide ongoing centralized support to the PSIB Coordinator Network. This support may include ensuring Coordinators have sufficient onboarding, training, and capacity to perform the functions of this role, and that there is a consistent and transparent line of communication between ISC and the Network of Coordinators.</p>	<p>We <b>do</b> concur.</p> <p>The Procurement Strategy for Indigenous Business has been developing a GCpedia site, since September 2022 to share information, is updating the Terms of Reference for the Network, and delivering a learning series to better equip PSIB Coordinators in performing their role.</p>	<p>Director General, Economic and Business Opportunities Branch</p>	<p><b>Start Date:</b> Since 2019 and is ongoing</p> <p><b>Completion:</b> April 2025. TIPS will review strategic options for the coordinators network; return to Cabinet 2025, if applicable, could recommend new options.</p>	<p><b>Status:</b></p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Fully Implemented</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Partially Implemented</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Implementation did not Commence</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> Obsolete</p> <p><b>Update/Rationale:</b></p> <p>The Transformative Indigenous Procurement Strategy/Procurement Strategy for Indigenous Business team hold quarterly Procurement Strategy for Indigenous Business Coordinator Network Meetings. In addition, several Planning Workshops have been held that address some of the recommendations. For example, there are workshops on onboarding, reporting, training. In addition, the Transformative Indigenous Procurement Strategy Directorate has begun updating the Coordinators list and will be establishing a more regular meeting schedule in Fall 2023. Indigenous Services Canada will better leverage the network, e.g., broadening its focus to include more Indigenous procurement issues, sharing more tools and best practices, and providing opportunities for suppliers to engage directly with the Network.</p> <p><b>As of: September 2023</b></p>



**Sector:** Lands and Economic Development Sector  
**Program:** Indigenous Entrepreneurship and Business Development Program  
**Program Area:** Aboriginal Entrepreneurship Program - Access to Capital

Recommendation 1	Actions	Responsible Manager (Title / Sector)	Planned Start and Completion Dates	Action Item Context/Rationale
<p><b>1)</b> Engage First Nation, Métis and Inuit Partners to explore options to transfer the full IEBD program, including the Indigenous Business Directory and the ABO stream of funding. This includes a recommendation to:</p> <p><b>1A)</b> Work with First Nations, Inuit, and Métis partners to fully transfer the Access to Capital program, including the design, delivery, eligibility, and reporting of results on a distinctions basis.</p>	<p><b>Recommendation 1:</b> N/A</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>N/A</p>	<p>N/A</p>
	<p>We <b>do</b> concur.</p> <p><b>Sub-Recommendation:</b>  <b>1A)</b> We will continue to work with Métis Capital Corporations to build their capacity so that they can deliver and we can transfer the remaining ATC sub-components. We will also continue to work together with Inuit partners to explore an Inuit-specific portion of the program.</p>	<p>Director General, Economic Policy Development Branch</p>	<p><b>Start Date:</b> October 2022  <b>Completion:</b> October 2025</p>	<p><b>Status:</b>  <input type="checkbox"/> Fully Implemented  <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Partially Implemented  <input type="checkbox"/> Implementation did not Commence  <input type="checkbox"/> Obsolete</p> <p><b>Update/Rationale:</b> The ATC stream is moving towards a distinctions-based delivery model. In 2019-2020, the program was partially transferred to Métis Capital Corporations to administer their own Métis-specific portion for two out of the five sub-components: Aboriginal Business Financing Program, and Aboriginal Developmental Lending Allocation. Work is underway with Inuit partners to explore an Inuit-specific portion of the program. This program is now delivered by a network of 54 Indigenous Financial Institutions and five Métis Capital Corporations across the country.  <b>As of: October 2023</b></p>
Recommendation 2	Actions	Responsible Manager (Title / Sector)	Planned Start and Completion Dates	Action Item Context/Rationale
<p><b>2)</b> Engage First Nations, Inuit and Métis partners of all program streams to develop an approach to further reduce barriers to entrepreneurship, including by broadening program access for Indigenous Peoples who are harder to reach and/or face exacerbated barriers to the pursuit of entrepreneurship. This includes recommendations to:</p> <p><b>2A)</b> Engage First Nation, Inuit, and Métis partners of all program streams to consistently support pre- and post-care for Indigenous entrepreneurs;</p> <p><b>2B)</b> Explore and ensuring that the federal</p>	<p>We <b>do</b> concur.</p>	<p>Director General, Economic Policy Development Branch</p>	<p><b>Start Date:</b> April 2021  <b>Completion:</b> October 2025</p>	<p><b>Status:</b>  <input type="checkbox"/> Fully Implemented  <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Partially Implemented  <input type="checkbox"/> Implementation did not Commence  <input type="checkbox"/> Obsolete</p> <p><b>Update/Rationale:</b> For several years, ISC has been working together with partners to provide targeted funding for women's programming. Announced in Budget 2021, the \$22 million Indigenous Women's Entrepreneurship (IWE) program funded by ISC provides Indigenous women with supports such as financial literacy training and workshops, and a micro-loan program. However, as the IWE program is sunsetting in 2023-24, ISC is actively exploring options for how to modernize the ATC funding to better-serve women and youth initiatives  <b>As of: October 2023</b></p>
	<p>We <b>do</b> concur.</p>			



<p>procurement process is equally accessible to First Nation, Inuit, and Métis businesses; and</p> <p><b>2C)</b> Perform ongoing monitoring of the adjustments resulting from the modernization initiative to ensure that adjustments prove effective.</p>	<p><b>Sub-Recommendations:</b>  <b>2A)</b> We will work with our partners on ways to support businesses across all stages of development, such as by exploring ways to include a dedicated pre- and post-care stream as part of the ATC program modernization.</p> <p><b>2B)</b> N/A</p> <p><b>2C)</b> N/A</p>	<p>Director General, Economic Policy Development Branch</p>	<p><b>Start Date:</b> March 2023  <b>Completion:</b> October 2025</p>	<p><input type="checkbox"/> Fully Implemented  <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Partially Implemented  <input type="checkbox"/> Implementation did not Commence  <input type="checkbox"/> Obsolete</p> <p><b>Update/Rationale:</b> ISC is currently working with partners to modernize the AEP-ATC stream to better meet the needs of Indigenous entrepreneurs. This includes enhancements to address the increasing demands for essential equity, and to introduce new sub-components that would fund pre- and post-care supports.  <b>As of: October 2023</b></p>
<p><b>Recommendation 3</b></p>	<p><b>Actions</b></p>	<p><b>Responsible Manager (Title / Sector)</b></p>	<p><b>Planned Start and Completion Dates</b></p>	<p><b>Action Item Context/Rationale</b></p>
<p><b>3)</b> Co-develop with First Nations, Inuit and Métis Peoples a new program logic model and performance measurement framework that contains broader outcome measurements supported by Indigenous partners. This includes a recommendation to:</p> <p><b>3A)</b> Collaborate with internal and external partners to expand and employ Gender-Based Analysis Plus to their data collection, and sustainable targeted approaches meeting the needs of diverse groups.</p>	<p>We <b>do</b> concur.</p> <p><b>Recommendation 3:</b> We will work with our Indigenous partners (NACCA, MCCs) to co-develop an updated logic model.</p> <p>We <b>do</b> concur.</p> <p><b>Sub-Recommendation:</b>  <b>3A)</b> We will continue to work with our partners (National Aboriginal Capital Corporations Association, Metis Capital Corporations) to expand intersectional data collection and to support an approach for Inuit entrepreneurs.</p>	<p>Director General, Economic Policy Development Branch</p> <p>Director General, Economic Policy Development Branch</p>	<p><b>Start Date:</b> January 2024  <b>Completion:</b> March 2025</p> <p><b>Start Date:</b> October 2020  <b>Completion:</b> 2027</p>	<p><b>Status:</b>  <input type="checkbox"/> Fully Implemented  <input type="checkbox"/> Partially Implemented  <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Implementation did not Commence  <input type="checkbox"/> Obsolete</p> <p><b>Update/Rationale:</b> We've been working with our partners, and they've proposed a new logic model based on the ATC modernization goals.  <b>As of: October 2023</b></p> <p><b>Status:</b>  <input type="checkbox"/> Fully Implemented  <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Partially Implemented  <input type="checkbox"/> Implementation did not Commence  <input type="checkbox"/> Obsolete</p> <p><b>Update/Rationale:</b> We will work with our partners to expand GBA Plus, as some of our partners are already using GBA Plus (i.e., MCCs, some IFIs through the IWE).  <b>As of: October 2023</b></p>
<p><b>Recommendation 4</b></p>	<p><b>Actions</b></p>	<p><b>Responsible Manager (Title / Sector)</b></p>	<p><b>Planned Start and Completion Dates</b></p>	<p><b>Action Item Context/Rationale</b></p>
<p><b>4)</b> Explore options to increase the funding envelope under IEBD, allowing for greater reach, impact and transparency. This includes recommendations to:</p> <p><b>4A)</b> Work with ATC partners to explore long-term funding mechanisms that will better support the sustainability of IFIs and their ability to deliver</p>	<p>We <b>do</b> concur.</p> <p><b>Recommendation 4:</b> ISC can work through the fiscal framework on behalf of partners (NACCA, MCCs) to identify funding opportunities.</p>	<p>Director General, Economic Policy Development Branch</p>	<p><b>Start Date:</b> October 2021  <b>Completion:</b> October 2025</p>	<p><b>Status:</b>  <input type="checkbox"/> Fully Implemented  <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Partially Implemented  <input type="checkbox"/> Implementation did not Commence  <input type="checkbox"/> Obsolete</p> <p><b>Update/Rationale:</b> ISC is currently working with partners to modernize the AEP-ATC stream to better meet the needs of Indigenous entrepreneurs. This includes enhancements to address the increasing demands for essential equity, and to introduce new sub-components that would to broaden program</p>

developmental lending; and  <b>4B)</b> Work with First Nations, Inuit and Métis partners to explore targeted approaches and better leverage existing approaches to support IFIs/MCCs in retaining skilled employees.				access for Indigenous Peoples who are harder to reach, such as women and youth. <b>As of: October 2023</b>
	We <b>do</b> concur.	Director General, Economic Policy Development Branch	<b>Start Date:</b> October 2022 <b>Completion:</b> October 2025	<b>Status:</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Fully Implemented <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Partially Implemented <input type="checkbox"/> Implementation did not Commence <input type="checkbox"/> Obsolete  <b>Update/Rationale:</b> ISC has been working internally to facilitate a transition to a 10-year contribution agreement with NACCA, which would offer increased flexibility for NACCA to successfully plan and adapt to changes related to the AEP-ATC, and give partners the stability and long-term capacity they need to reduce administrative burden and streamline application processes. <b>As of: October 2023</b>
	<b>Sub-Recommendation:</b> <b>4A)</b> We will work with our partners to explore approaches for sufficient and predictable funding.			
	We <b>do</b> concur.	Director General, Economic Policy Development Branch	<b>Start Date:</b> October 2022 <b>Completion:</b> October 2025	<b>Status:</b> <input type="checkbox"/> Fully Implemented <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Partially Implemented <input type="checkbox"/> Implementation did not Commence <input type="checkbox"/> Obsolete  <b>Update/Rationale:</b> The ATC stream includes a sub-program (Aboriginal Capacity Development Program) that already addresses capacity building, where eligible costs include products and services, consultants, and training costs. As well, ISC is working internally to facilitate a transition to a 10-year contribution agreement with NACCA, which would give partners the stability and help build longer-term capacity. <b>As of: October 2023</b>
<b>Recommendation 5</b>	<b>Actions</b>	<b>Responsible Manager (Title/Sector)</b>	<b>Planned Start and Completion Dates</b>	<b>Action Item Context/Rationale</b>
5) Standardize the PSIB Coordinator role and provide ongoing centralized support to the PSIB Coordinator Network. This support may include ensuring Coordinators have sufficient onboarding, training, and capacity to perform the functions of this role, and that there is a consistent and transparent line of communication between ISC and the Network of Coordinators.	N/A	N/A	N/A	N/A

# 1. Introduction

The overall purpose of the evaluation was to examine the Indigenous Entrepreneurship and Business Development Program over the span of 2015-16 to 2020-21. The evaluation examined relevancy, effectiveness, efficiency, and programs' responsiveness to business needs during the COVID-19 pandemic. Given the transfer of the Access to Capital program to Indigenous-led organizations, the evaluation also focused on the service transfer process and resulting impacts. The evaluation findings and resulting recommendations are intended to inform ISC and Indigenous partners on improvements to support future programming decisions.

## 2. Program description

### 2.1 Background

The Indigenous Entrepreneurship and Business Development (IEBD) program is a core program under the Lands and Economic Development sector at Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) and is designed to support business and economic development efforts of Indigenous entrepreneurs and communities. IEBD is comprised of three program areas that support Indigenous entrepreneurs and business owners in Canada:

**Aboriginal Entrepreneurship Program – Access to Capital (ATC)** provides funding to establish, expand and diversify the network of Indigenous Financial Institutions (IFIs) and Métis Capital Corporations (MCCs) providing developmental capital to Indigenous entrepreneurs, thereby enhancing access to capital for Indigenous entrepreneurs across Canada. The ATC program is comprised of five complementary sub-programs:

1. **Aboriginal Business Financing Program** which provides equity financing for Indigenous entrepreneurs to obtain commercial loans and to keep the cost of capital affordable, ultimately to increase the number of Indigenous businesses in Canada. IFIs offer non-repayable contributions to eligible Indigenous entrepreneurs up to a maximum of \$99,999 and to community-owned Indigenous businesses up to \$250,000 which can be used toward eligible expenses related to business start-up and expansion.
2. **Aboriginal Capacity Development Program** which funds ongoing training to support IFIs and MCCs in their continuous efforts to maintain and build capacity and effectiveness as developmental lenders including through product support training, professional development, and business support.
3. **Aboriginal Developmental Lending Allocation Program** which provides a subsidy to IFIs and MCCs that supports them in recovering some of the delivery, administration, and repayment costs associated with the deployment of developmental lending.
4. **Enhanced Access Program** which is a small loan fund that helps IFIs and MCCs serve Indigenous entrepreneurs and communities who normally do not have access to the network of Indigenous-owned and controlled financial institutions for various reasons, including geographical remoteness.

**5. Interest Rate Buy-Down Program** which provides an interest rate subsidy to qualified IFIs and MCCs with a low liquidity ratio to offset the interest costs associated with accessing capital from other financial institutions for additional developmental lending.

**Access to Business Opportunities (ABO)** provides funding to Indigenous organizations, businesses or individuals to improve access to business opportunities and to enhance the capacity of Indigenous businesses. The program provides national level funding to promote a culture of entrepreneurship for activities including:

- institutional development (e.g., training and development and business supports to business development organization);
- business advisory services and training;
- commercial ventures including business innovation and growth;
- market development; and
- business development and advocacy activities.

Whereas ATC provides funding to the National Aboriginal Capital Corporations Association (NACCA) and the MCCs for their operations in support of Indigenous entrepreneurs, ABO funds broad-scale initiatives to support entrepreneurial activity.

**Procurement Strategy for Indigenous Business (PSIB)** seeks to increase federal contracting opportunities and to support Indigenous businesses in gaining access to the federal procurement process, including through enrolment in the Indigenous Business Directory. 90 PSIB coordinators support the strategy across federal departments and agencies, each of which have a target of 5% of all contracts being released to Indigenous businesses.

The IEBD program intends to meet the following outcomes:

Departmental Outcome	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Indigenous communities advance their business development and economic growth</li> </ul>
Ultimate Outcome	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creation and/or expansion of Indigenous businesses</li> </ul>
Intermediate Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A sustainable network of Indigenous-owned and controlled financial institutions in Canada;</li> <li>• Indigenous businesses win procurement contracts.</li> </ul>
Immediate Outcomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• IFIs and MCCs have the capacity to deliver business capital and support services;</li> <li>• Indigenous businesses are competing for federal PSIB set-asides;</li> <li>• Public and private procurement, business strategies, and partnerships are implemented.</li> </ul>

\*Refer to Appendix A for the detailed logic model and budget.

## 3. Evaluation methodology

### 3.1 Scope and evaluation issues

The evaluation covered the thematic areas of relevance, effectiveness, and efficiency over the five-year period from 2015-16 to 2020-21. Given the transfer of the ATC stream to Indigenous-led organizations, additional focus was placed on understanding the service transfer process and impact.

The evaluation used a Gender-Based Analysis Plus lens throughout all evaluation phases and processes. Gender-Based Analysis Plus is an analytical process that provides a rigorous method for the assessment of systemic inequalities, as well as a means to assess how diverse groups of women, men, and gender diverse people may experience policies, programs and initiatives. The “plus” acknowledges that Gender-Based Analysis Plus is not just about differences between biological (sexes) and socio-cultural (genders), it considers many other identity factors such as race, ethnicity, religion, age, and mental or physical disability, and how the interaction between these factors influences the way we might experience government policies and initiatives, which is a commitment of the Government of Canada.<sup>1</sup> Using Gender-Based Analysis Plus involves taking a gender- and diversity-sensitive approach to our work.

This evaluation strove to integrate a GBA+ approach in a variety of ways. Wherever feasible program and survey data were disaggregated across gender, age, location and distinction group. Interview and discussion circles included lines of inquiry that intended to further understand impacts across various identity factors, including impacts for youth, women, individuals in the 2SLGBTQI+ community, and individuals living with disabilities. Where gaps in program data existed, additional secondary data were sought to understand impacts across identity (for instance, in the document review).

The evaluation also used a distinctions-based approach with the intent for the evaluation to reflect the unique interests, priorities and circumstances of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis entrepreneurs. Upon their request, a consultant served as an interface between the evaluation team and the MCCs to support their ability to fully participate.

A Technical Advisory Committee was established to advise on the design of the evaluation and ensure it used culturally relevant and appropriate approaches. The work of the Committee included guiding the evaluation so that it was ethical, methodologically rigorous, and respectful of Indigenous Peoples and communities; ensuring that it addressed the needs of key program partners; helping to identify stakeholders to be engaged in the evaluation; providing feedback on evaluation findings; and supporting the dissemination of results. The Technical Advisory Committee included representatives from the NACCA, IFIs, MCCs, and Inuit Tapiriit Kanatami. For these meetings, a balance was made in the selection of First Nation, Métis, and Inuit Elders, who were invited to support each meeting with an opening and closing prayer and were encouraged to participate in the meeting itself.

---

<sup>1</sup>Government of Canada. (2022). [What is Gender-based Analysis Plus?](#)

The evaluation approach was consultative, inclusive, and collaborative - tailoring methods to provide the most simple and straightforward engagement requirements and valued insight. The approach to the evaluation was refined based on feedback from the Technical Advisory Committee. The evaluation was guided by ethical principles that express the value of human dignity, including:

- Respect for Persons;
- Concern for Welfare;
- Collaborative;
- Self-Determination; and
- Understanding of Distinct Contexts<sup>2</sup>.

These ethical principles were practiced during the key informant interviews and through the dialogue circles in which all persons' ideas and experiences were respected, welfare of all participants was protected, and facilitators ensured a distinction-based approach. For example, the evaluation team conducted interviews confidentially and began with verbal consent from the participant, including whether they agreed to have their interview recorded. The written notes from the interview consultations were shared with the interviewees to review and approve. Any information provided was used by the evaluation team to learn more about how to evolve the programs in the future. Interviewees were informed that all interview notes, transcriptions, and recordings are subject to access to information and privacy requests by the Canadian public as per the *Access to Information Act* and *Privacy Act*<sup>3</sup>.

The evaluation was centred on Indigenous worldviews, such as the *Seven Grandfather Teachings* of the Anishinaabe People (love, respect, honesty, courage, wisdom, humility, and truth) and Two-Eyed Seeing (an approach drawing on the strengths of both Indigenous and Western ways of knowing, for the benefit of all), which were implemented through every phase of the evaluation. The teachings were implemented by following Indigenous protocols such as inviting Elders to open and close the meetings of the Technical Advisory Committee and ensuring representation of First Nations, Inuit, and Métis in this governance structure. The evaluation team implemented Two-Eyed Seeing through the interview questions, ensuring they at once responded to the western-centric evaluation needs while also tapping into Indigenous culture and spirituality. For example, in the interviews, specific questions were asked regarding how programs are aligned with Indigenous cultural and spiritual values and aspirations.

### 3.2 Design and methods

During the methodological development phase, consultations were undertaken with program representatives and partners to discuss the proposed data collection approach and instruments in detail. This approach permitted the meetings of the full advisory committee to focus more holistically on key topics within the methodology. The evaluation was based on a review of secondary and primary data collected from various engagements ( $N = 493$ ). A

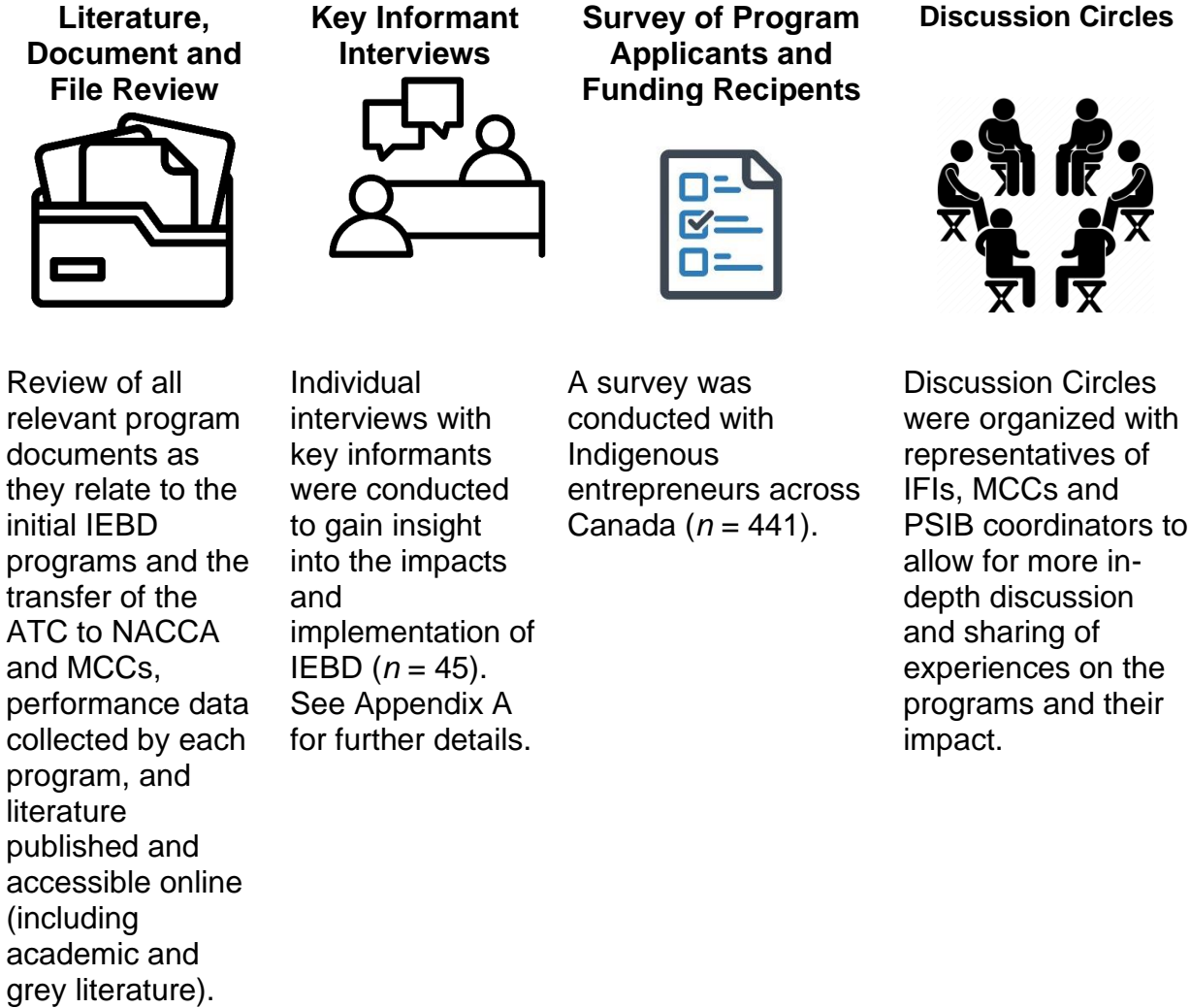
---

<sup>2</sup> Government of Canada: Tri-Council (2022). [Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans](#).

<sup>3</sup> Department of Justice Canada. (1985). [Access to Information Act](#), RSC, 1985, c A-1; [Privacy Act](#), RSC, 1985 c P-21.

summary of each method employed follows; additional details on the evaluation questions and methods can be found in Annexes B and C, respectively.

Figure 1: *Evaluation Lines of Evidence*



In this evaluation report, the following terms are used to describe the number of participants who shared their comments or findings highlighted:

- Overwhelming Majority:** over 75% of the respondent group
- Majority:** more than 50% up to 75% of the respondent group
- Some:** between 25 to 50% of the respondent group
- Few:** under 25% of the respondent group



### 3.3 Limitations

The evaluation encountered a few limitations to data collection. There was limited access to performance data related to the impact of the program beyond the individual borrower. However, the team attempted to understand the broader impacts of the program, including the impact that entrepreneurship is having at the community- and family-level (e.g., the multiplier effect), through interviews, Discussion Circles and a survey. Also, few scholarly articles discuss Indigenous entrepreneurship and business approaches in Canada and around the world, and the periodic surveys that do take place have small sample sizes.<sup>4</sup>

The evaluation team encountered challenges in reaching representative respondents to inform the evaluation, particularly through the survey. When the survey was first launched in September 2022, the responses received were primarily from Métis entrepreneurs and there was not proportional representation of First Nation and Inuit entrepreneurs to provide a full lens on Indigenous perspectives related to starting and sustaining Indigenous businesses. As a result, the survey was relaunched in November 2022 to enhance outreach to First Nation and Inuit entrepreneurs who have accessed the ATC program and, ultimately, to increase the response rate. This relaunch succeeded in expanding the reach and led to a higher number and broader base of participants, but Inuit entrepreneurs continued to be under-represented in the response. The outreach supports provided by NACCA, IFIs and MCCs encouraged a strong response; however, the response rate may have been affected by the approach to survey recruitment and collection as only online methods were used. This may have particularly posed an issue for entrepreneurs living in Northern, rural, or remote areas with limited broadband connection. Additionally, it is possible that not all IFIs/MCCs shared the invite to participate with their client base.

The evaluation team encountered challenges in gathering data and information to assess how the accessible the programs are to individuals across identity characteristics, and particularly those who are most marginalized. NACCA has introduced programs that are targeted to women and youth; however, it is more challenging to understand, for example, how two-spirited, Elders, those with disabilities and/or those from rural communities are accessing IEBD programs. This was largely attributed to the fact that most of the IFIs and MCCs provide character-based lending based on both their knowledge of the borrower, and the viability of the proposed business. In these cases, decisions are made based on business viability as opposed to how the applicant identifies. Additionally, the PSIB and ABO streams of the program collected limited data to support the assessment of access or impacts across any sub-groups of the population.

---

<sup>4</sup> NACCA. (2017). [Aboriginal Entrepreneurship in Canada](#).



## 4.0 Key Findings

### 4.1 Key Findings: Relevance

#### Summary of Findings

The IEBD program remains relevant to both the priorities of the federal government of Indigenous Peoples, particularly following the transfer of the program from ISC to Indigenous-led organizations.

---

*“Reconciliation with Indigenous Peoples remains a core priority for this Government, and it will continue to move forward as a partner on the journey of reconciliation”.*  
*Source: Speech from the Throne, 2019*

---

**Finding 1: The programs align with economic reconciliation and self-determination, which supports the wellbeing of Indigenous Peoples, and in turn, supports families and communities. The transfer of the delivery of the ATC program to Indigenous-led organizations is aligned with both Indigenous and federal priorities and is viewed positively by the Indigenous Peoples who were consulted.**

The evaluation found strong evidence that the IEBD program continues to align with federal priorities and mandates. The Government of Canada’s commitment to economic reconciliation has been emphasized in budget announcements over the scoping years, including the investment of \$25 million in Budget 2016 to support economic development of the Métis Nation and the announcement in 2019 of \$50 million to enhance the funding of MCCs to support small and medium-sized enterprises through the ATC program.<sup>5</sup> Additional investments announced in Budget 2021 to grow the Aboriginal Entrepreneurship Program illustrate alignment with this commitment by directly supporting wealth generation through access to capital and business opportunities.<sup>6</sup> The program is also aligned with upholding the rights of Indigenous Peoples as stated in the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act*, Article 21: “Indigenous Peoples have the right, without discrimination, to the improvement of their economic and social conditions...”<sup>7</sup>. The responsibility of ISC specifically in advancing economic reconciliation is stated in the recent *United Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act Action Plan for 2023-2028*, including by addressing impacts of colonization and inequitable policies.<sup>8</sup> For example, the Act recognizes the need to repeal the *Indian Act* in order for Canada’s laws to fulfil the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples*; such a repeal is expected to inherently reduce barriers to entrepreneurship faced by Indigenous entrepreneurs (i.e., access to capital) and advance economic reconciliation.<sup>9</sup>

---

<sup>5</sup> Government of Canada. (2019). [Federal Budget 2019](#).

<sup>6</sup> Government of Canada. (2021). [A Recovery Plan for Jobs, Growth, and Resilience](#). Part 3 - A Resilient and Inclusive Recovery | Budget 2021.

<sup>7</sup> Department of Justice Canada. (2021). [United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act](#). Article 21.

<sup>8</sup> Department of Justice Canada. (2023). [United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act Action Plan](#).

<sup>9</sup> *Ibid.*

The federal commitment to economic reconciliation is aligned with the Truth and Reconciliation Commission Call to Action 92 on Business and Reconciliation,<sup>10</sup> and Call for Justice 4.2 of the National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls related to self-determination in economic social development<sup>11</sup>. The IEBD program supports these Calls by advancing self-determination through the transfer of the ATC program to NACCA and MCCs; providing funding and programs that support the development of an Indigenous-led financial sector; and helping to remove barriers to business start-up including access to capital and long-term sustainability. The transfer of ATC to NACCA and MCCs directly supports the mandate of Indigenous Services Canada to empower Indigenous Peoples to independently deliver services. The transfer of services is also in direct alignment with the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act*, Article 3: “Indigenous Peoples have the right to self-determination. By virtue of that right they freely determine their political status and freely pursue their economic, social and cultural development”<sup>12</sup>.

---

*“...there is no way government can ensure this alignment [with Indigenous priorities]; that’s up to us to follow the cultural practices within our areas. We don’t invest in efforts that don’t align with cultural and spiritual values, and we are the only ones who can assess that.”*  
Source: IFI Discussion Circle

---

The transfer of delivery of the ATC program to NACCA and the MCCs has improved the cultural relevance of the program and supported Indigenous entrepreneurs, families, and communities. Most Indigenous entrepreneurs who participated in the evaluation survey (87%) indicated a higher level of trust in IFIs/MCCs than mainstream banking systems. When asked how the IFIs and/or MCCs are aligned with their cultural and spiritual values and aspirations, survey respondents described that they *share a common vision and goal* and that IFIs/MCCs *care for the wellbeing of Indigenous Peoples and support self-determined success*. Representatives of IFIs and MCCs shared similar points, including that business supports are most relevant when they are delivered by Indigenous organizations.

## 4.2 Key Findings: Service Transfer

### Summary of Findings

The transfer of the ATC stream from ISC to NACCA and to the MCCs went well and is widely supported by Indigenous partners. Indigenous entrepreneurs feel a stronger and more personal relationship with IFIs/MCCs than mainstream lending institutions. However, since the transfer of the ATC program was limited to provision of contributions, further work is required to fully transfer the suite of IEBD programs. Also, the siloed approach to funding across IEBD streams creates additional challenges for entrepreneurs, particularly surrounding navigating various supports and requirements.

---

<sup>10</sup> Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. (2015). [Calls to Action](#).

<sup>11</sup> National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls. (2019). [Reclaiming Power and Place](#).

<sup>12</sup> United Nations. (2007). [United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#), Article 3.

**Finding 2: The transfer of the ATC stream from ISC to NACCA and to the MCCs went well and the relationships between the Indigenous partner organizations, and between Indigenous entrepreneurs and IFIs/MCCs, are positive.**

In 2015, responsibility for the ATC program was transferred from Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada to NACCA. A NACCA representative indicated that the transfer was originally identified as part of the Department's Deficit Reduction Action Plan, aimed at reducing expenditures of the federal government. Interviewees indicated that the planning process went well, and was guided by a joint planning committee and working group to oversee the transfer. The joint planning committee outlined direction on how the program would be set up once transferred to NACCA. Some representatives of IFIs noted that distribution of funds is quicker under NACCA than the previous model, and that IFIs are able to more efficiently and effectively deliver the service under the transferred model. Many representatives of IFIs described a strong and trusting relationship with NACCA, featuring greater transparency of the program than with ISC. To support a distinctions-based approach to service delivery, in 2019 select MCCs were transferred *a portion* of the ATC program to administer two program sub-components: the Aboriginal Business Financing Program and Aboriginal Developmental Lending Assistance. The majority of MCCs interviewed and one ATC staff member indicated that transfer to MCCs has fostered a stronger Métis business climate resulting from a greater ability to support the unique and under-served needs of Métis entrepreneurs. At the time of evaluation, Inuit organizations had yet to be transferred control of any aspects of the ATC program. Although Inuit entrepreneurs are eligible to receive funding delivered through IFIs, it is anticipated that ISC will continue to advance program transfer and self-determination by engaging Inuit to ensure that any challenges associated with access and eligibility are addressed as per the *Inuit Nunangat Policy*.<sup>13</sup>

The majority of representatives from NACCA, IFIs and MCCs underscored the importance of having the delivery of some of the IEBD programs in the hands of Indigenous-led organizations. Representatives of NACCA, IFIs, and MCCs noted that the transfer of services has allowed for improved and more flexible service delivery, fewer administrative costs, and a stronger Indigenous business climate. Similarly, 86% percent of survey participants indicated a preference to work with the IFIs and MCCs in the future as opposed to mainstream banking; agreement with this statement was highest for youth (94%). In total, 94% of respondents indicated they would access support from an IFI again, with 91% of women agreeing with this statement compared to 98% of men; a slightly higher percentage of Métis (96%) participants agreed with this statement compared to First Nation participants (93%). Survey respondents agreed they are being adequately served by IFIs/MCCs (81%), though the proportion of participants in agreement was somewhat lower for men than women (79%, 84% respectively). When asked what makes the lending relationship with IFIs/MCCs different from that of a mainstream bank,

---

*"In the future, the programs need to be Indigenous led - NACCA and others, - they are the ones who should be developing and designing the next suite of programs according to what they know and what they need with greater flexibility- it has to be developed by them."*  
Source: ATC Staff

---

<sup>13</sup> Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada. (2022). [Inuit Nunangat Policy](#).

survey respondents most frequently described a more personal relationship, and that they are working with Indigenous Peoples who understand their reality.

A few ATC staff and a NACCA representative indicated a need for more guidelines and ability to hold IFIs and MCCs accountable for complying with program requirements. In addition, a few ATC staff and IFIs noted that whereas one IFI might deny a loan to an applicant, another IFI will approve a loan to the same applicant. This lack of consistency across the program was identified as a challenge that needs to be addressed, as there is no existing framework in place to ensure consistent implementation of the program. Key areas where problems were reported include levels of reporting and the consistent application of eligibility requirements.

---

*“It is about agreements and funding. 10-year agreements have more flexibility and how funding is used and ability to move money and in relation to reporting.”*  
*Source: NACCA representative*

---

**Finding 3: The transfer of the ATC program is limited to contributions and does not include foundational aspects such as program design, expected outcomes, and performance monitoring. Further work is required to fully transfer control of the ATC program and the remaining IEBD streams to Indigenous-led organizations.**

Although the transfer of the ATC program has had significant positive impacts on advancing self-determination and cultural relevance of the program, representatives of NACCA, MCCs and IFIs indicated that the transfer was limited to the delivery of contributions, as opposed to control over the program design, administration, expected outcomes, and reporting frameworks. For example, NACCA contracted Goss Gilroy Inc. in 2020 to conduct a comprehensive review of the program internally from the perspective of IFIs, which included the development of a new logic model, indicators, and outcomes. However, the reporting requirements from the government did not adapt to reflect this work. Further, the lack of control or co-development of measurement frameworks has led to burdensome requirements and timelines for MCCs, IFIs, and NACCA. Representatives of these organizations view the reporting requirements as burdensome and question the relevance of some of the indicators. NACCA and MCCs have not been transferred control over key aspects in the Terms and Conditions of the program, such as recipient and initiative eligibility, which could benefit from flexibility and/or the discretion of the Indigenous partners. One representative of an MCC reflected that although the transfer has benefited the nation-to-nation relationship, at present, the ATC program is the “same program, operating the same way”; the primary change is that the funding agreement is directly with ISC. Some representatives of MCCs also reflected on receiving less funding following the distinctions-based transfer. One MCC expressed that the reduction in funding ultimately limited their sustainability as a lender, as “there was no way we could take the Aboriginal Developmental Lending Assistance 13% at the expense of the recipients”. Instead, they allocated the Aboriginal Developmental Lending Assistance

---

*“Government still controls the rules of engagement. NACCA has a strong voice in how the funds are delivered through the IFIs – this is good but not the same as transferring the whole program to a First Nation Authority. A lot more can be done.”*  
*Source: IFI Interview*

---

component of funding into Aboriginal Business Financing Program to meet needs of recipients, despite the impact on their organization by taking on the fulsome cost of developmental lending.

NACCA and the MCCs have short-term funding agreements with ISC, which creates challenges in administering funds and achieving impacts as IFIs and MCCs lack certainty as to if or when funds will be available to them in the next fiscal year. Representatives of NACCA shared frustrations with the timeliness of funding roll-out related to these short-term funding agreements, and would benefit from predictable, long-term funding. ATC staff, NACCA representatives and a few IFI and MCC representatives noted that the flexibility of funding is essential to allow NACCA and IFIs/MCCs to move money between sub-program allocations and across fiscal years. Representatives of NACCA and the IFIs identified the need to develop 10-year block funding agreements with a sliding scale that can allow flexibilities in response to changes due to inflation or needs. These changes would align with the Department's statute and mandate to transfer federal programs and services to Indigenous-led organizations. A fulsome transfer would also align with Article 23 of the *United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* which specifically affirms the right of Indigenous Peoples to be actively involved in the development of priorities and strategies for exercising their right to development (e.g., health, housing, and other economic and social programmes) and to administer these programmes through their own institutions.<sup>14</sup> At the time of evaluation, ISC has not developed a distinctions-based transfer to Inuit organization(s), which is recommended, and will require collaboration from the Canadian Northern Economic Development Agency who delivers similar programming in the North.

The majority of those consulted from NACCA, IFIs, and MCCs and some ISC staff shared a strong desire for a fulsome transfer of all program elements, including the Indigenous Business Directory and PSIB. For the Indigenous partners, the full transfer would represent real steps towards reconciliation as opposed to being a funding delivery arm of government. In looking to the future, one PSIB interviewee noted that they are exploring a procurement hub platform that would be Indigenous-led, which is intended to be far easier for Indigenous businesses to navigate the system. Indigenous partners recognize a challenge in PSIB in the absence of Indigenous partners in policy development and oversight.

### 4.3 Key Findings: Effectiveness

#### Summary of Findings

The IEBD program helps remove barriers to Indigenous Peoples seeking business capital and supports and is meeting the intended outcomes of sustaining the network of Indigenous lending institutions, creating and expanding Indigenous businesses, and creating or maintaining jobs through lending. In addition, the program has impacts at the individual-, family-, and community-levels.

However, additional barriers hinder Indigenous entrepreneurship and business growth beyond current program scope. There is an ongoing need for targeted investments in pre- and post-

---

<sup>14</sup> United Nations. (2007). [United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples](#). Article 23.



care. The anticipated growth in the Indigenous population is expected to increase the demand for entrepreneurial supports for Indigenous Peoples in Canada. Although efforts have been made to improve the inclusivity and reach of programs across distinctions, gender and age groups, more work is needed to reach and monitor equity in access. Limited data were available under PSIB and ABO to effectively assess broader diversity impacts. The current logic model and inconsistent program data do not reflect outcomes relevant to Indigenous entrepreneurs nor do they allow for the assessment of impacts of the programs. An updated performance measurement framework is required that reflects outcomes relevant to Indigenous entrepreneurs and key program partners.

---

*“Often First Nations, Métis and Inuit are precluded so they have been neglected by financial institutions. The program helps to remove significant systemic barrier because of the context of First Nations and Métis peoples and the Indian Act.”*  
*Source: IFI Discussion Circle*

---

**Finding 4: ATC has helped to create a network of sustainable Indigenous-led lending institutions; however, IFIs and MCCs continue to face challenges with retaining skilled employees in a competitive market.**

There is agreement among the majority of interviewees that the program has helped to enhance the capacity of the IFIs and MCCs and has helped to create and expand the network of Indigenous-led lending institutions in Canada. This has resulted in Indigenous entrepreneurs and businesses having more choice of lenders who are more sensitive to their needs and with a better understanding of their culture. The programs are creating a sustainable and resilient network of Indigenous lenders, with the goal of shifting from the “lender of last resort” to the “lender of choice”.

---

*“We need to invest in more staff training to deliver services. We are competing with traditional financial institutions for staffing. Often we are not bringing in folks with business lending experience and we are too small to invest in staff training.”*  
*Source: MCC Interview*

---

NACCA recognizes that the IFIs have a range of different capacities, focuses and priorities; NACCA and IFI representatives identified the importance of finding ways to support the differing capacity requirements of the IFIs and MCCs. While some IFIs wish to continue focusing on developmental lending, others seek to grow their range of services into new sectors and products, larger loans and ventures, and social financing. Most IFIs in the discussion circles also noted that ATC is only one part of their lending portfolio. Some IFIs and MCCs noted that the commitment by government to zero-interest loans can undermine the IFIs’ ability to cover their operational expenses. The IFI discussion circles also identified challenges with accessing Aboriginal Developmental Lending Assistance. Participants in two IFI discussion circles agreed that access to Aboriginal Developmental Lending Assistance was on the decline – particularly after the separation of the MCCs outside of NACCA, and for some IFIs, Aboriginal Developmental Lending Assistance is a critical support to their long-term sustainability. Annual reports published by NACCA suggest that Aboriginal Developmental Lending Assistance has been consistently accessed by 19 IFIs annually since 2018-19 aside

---

*“The network of AFIs is a leading global practice, it is second to none.”*  
*Source: IFI Discussion Circle*

---

from a dip to 17 in 2020-21, and the dollar value of Aboriginal Developmental Lending Assistance funds paid to IFIs increased.<sup>15</sup>

IFIs may access the Aboriginal Capacity Development Program through the Access to Capital stream of funding that was transferred to NACCA, which offers generic products and services designed to enhance the capacity of IFIs to engage in developmental lending.<sup>16</sup> Eligible costs include, but are not limited to, strategic planning, International Organization for Standardization Certification, Post-Secondary Degree/Diploma Programs, board training, skills training and workshops. However, a number of IFIs in the discussion circles noted challenges in having sufficient funding to attract and retain top talent, noting many were competing against mainstream banks for talent. Additionally, since funding was announced to support the Indigenous Growth Fund and Indigenous Women’s Entrepreneurship program, the demands on IFI staff have significantly increased. Whereas the Indigenous Women’s Entrepreneurship program included funding for Business Support Officers, the ATC program does not include contributions for staffing. These programs have expanded the number of entrepreneurs that IFIs and MCCs can support; however, growth in staffing resources and Aboriginal Developmental Lending Assistance is required to meet this potential. The sustainability of the IFI network will be contingent on the retention of skilled employees.

---

*“We deal with a population that is ignored, that has little experience and lower social outcomes, and very few people want to lend money to this type of clientele.”*  
Source: IFI Discussion Circle.

---

**Finding 5: The IEBD programs are having a positive impact on Indigenous entrepreneurs, which in-turn, is perceived to positively impact Indigenous individuals, families, and communities. Barriers to entrepreneurial success faced by Indigenous Peoples are beyond what is addressed in the current suite of programs.**

Indigenous Peoples face ongoing barriers to entrepreneurial success. Indigenous entrepreneurs have consistently identified access to financing as a key limitation to entrepreneurship, and a priority to advancing sustainable businesses. Given that many Indigenous businesses operate as sole proprietorships, access to financing is often hindered due to the perception of sole proprietorships as “high risk” by mainstream lenders.<sup>17</sup> The *Indian Act* hinders entrepreneurship in numerous ways, including through the exemption of taxation of personal property on reserve<sup>18</sup>, and by preventing ownership of personal property on-reserve which, in turn, limits the ability to use property as collateral to access capital<sup>19</sup>. In fact, 76% of Indigenous entrepreneurs who participated in a survey for this evaluation listed access to capital as an ongoing barrier to their entrepreneurial activity. Youth and women were in strongest agreement that access to capital was a barrier to entrepreneurship (88% and 81% respectively). Youth were described by some IFIs and MCCs as experiencing unique barriers

---

<sup>15</sup> Given the transfer of funds to MCCs in 2019, the evaluation team was unable to examine the distribution of Aboriginal Developmental Lending Allocation Program funds within NACCA prior to 2019-20.

<sup>16</sup> NACCA. (2018). [Aboriginal Entrepreneurship Program – Policy Manual](#).

<sup>17</sup> Bobiwash, H. (2020). [Indigenous Women Entrepreneurs in Canada: Summary of National Survey Findings](#).

<sup>18</sup> Minister of Justice. (1985). [Indian Act](#). Section 87.

<sup>19</sup> Minister of Justice. (1985). [Indian Act](#). Section 89.

in accessing capital given that they are early in their careers and typically do not have significant funds, property, or assets to mortgage. One MCC representative indicated that they were able to provide a larger proportion of non-repayable funds to youth based on need; however, targeted services for youth are required.

The ATC program helps to remove barriers to Indigenous Peoples who want access to business capital. Approvals are based on personal characteristics determined through an alternative assessment known as *character-based lending*, and the program offers entrepreneurs the opportunity to establish or improve their credit history. The majority of IFIs, MCCs, and ISC staff agree that the ATC program provides more choices and access to funding that is helping to remove barriers created and maintained by the *Indian Act*. While Métis Peoples do not face the same equity restrictions under the *Indian Act*, representatives of MCCs noted that they have traditionally been disenfranchised and often overlooked in Canada and have struggled to accumulate capital and equity.

The financial supports provided through the ATC program have enabled entrepreneurs to start, maintain and/or expand their businesses, while creating and maintaining jobs and wealth for Indigenous Peoples and communities. When asked to describe how IFI/MCC lending helped borrowers, 36% of survey respondents indicated it helped them stay open; 26% indicated it helped replenish supplies and 25% indicated it helped them expand their business. Administrative data from NACCA illustrate that 27,951 full-time equivalent jobs were created or maintained between 2015 to 2021 as a result of new loans provided each year, for an average of more than 4,650 jobs created or maintained annually. Data available from the MCCs indicate that more than 1000 jobs were created or maintained in the two years since the program was transferred to the MCCs (2019-2021).

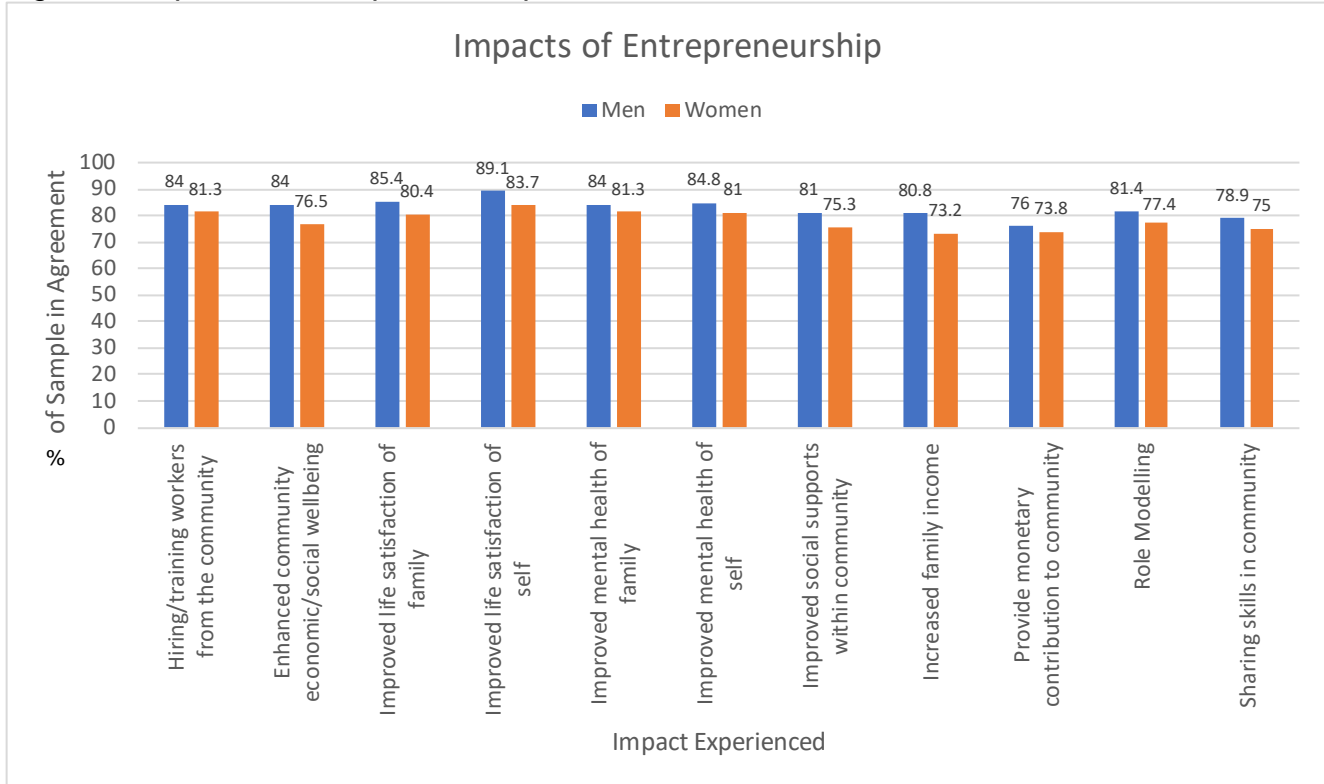
Representatives of IFIs and MCCs also discussed a number of social improvements at the individual-, family-, and community-levels arising from business development, such as the positive role models Indigenous entrepreneurs play in their communities. While links between program funding and impacts on children and families have not been consistently measured, representatives of IFIs, MCCs, and the federal ATC staff shared anecdotal perceptions of how the programs impact communities, including that with economic power, Indigenous entrepreneurs are better able to take care of themselves, families, and communities. In one discussion circle with IFI staff, participants reflected that the success of an individual entrepreneur supports the wellbeing and self-sufficiency of their family, and brings more resources to drive the economic health of the community, which in-turn supports the overall health and happiness of the community. The success of communities in Newfoundland was provided as an example in this discussion.

Entrepreneurs who participated in the evaluation survey reported experiencing various impacts of their entrepreneurial activity, including: improved life satisfaction of self (87%) and family (83%) and improved mental health of self (83%) and family (82%; see Figure 2). A significantly greater proportion of Métis participants (88%) agreed that their entrepreneurial activity has increased their ability to hire/train workers from the community compared to First Nations respondents (75%). A representative of NACCA indicated that 50% of lending by IFIs is for First Nations on reserve and this money primarily stays within the communities. In addition, a



few NACCA, IFI and MCC representatives indicate that the ability to access funding through Indigenous lenders removes the stigma often felt by Indigenous entrepreneurs when they seek funding through the traditional banking system.

Figure 2: *Impacts of Entrepreneurship*



Source: Survey of Indigenous entrepreneurs. Sample sizes for each impact vary, given that participation for each item was voluntary. The sample size of men ranged from 75 to 110 with an average of 95 responses per impact. The sample size of women ranged from 64 to 105 with an average of 90 responses per impact.

Despite the positive impacts of entrepreneurial activity that have been experienced, Indigenous entrepreneurs who participated in the evaluation survey identified numerous barriers that they face in pursuing entrepreneurial activity beyond access to capital, including balancing family and business responsibilities and the lack of options for microloans (see Figure 3). Initiatives funded by the Access to Business Opportunities program address some of these barriers to entrepreneurship, including building business acumen among Indigenous entrepreneurs and building the understanding of the business landscape. Some examples of ABO funding distribution and impacts include:

- The annual Young Entrepreneurs Symposium, an annual event intended to build skills among young entrepreneurs and provide a space for networking.
- Funds for eight Indigenous women to attend the Values-Based Entrepreneurship Workshop hosted by Indigenous Fashion Week.
- The 2<sup>nd</sup> annual National Aboriginal Trust Officers Association Indigenous Women’s Summit, which had 150 registrants.
- The Native Women’s Association of Canada completed a feasibility study which determined that the best model for the Indigenous Women’s Maker Space Pilot was an

Elder-led drop-in crafting program enhanced by the other employment and entrepreneurship programs; this study informed development of future programming and larger scaling of the Native Women's Association of Canada's work.

However, the extent to which these initiatives advance entrepreneurship is unknown given the national scope of these funded initiatives.

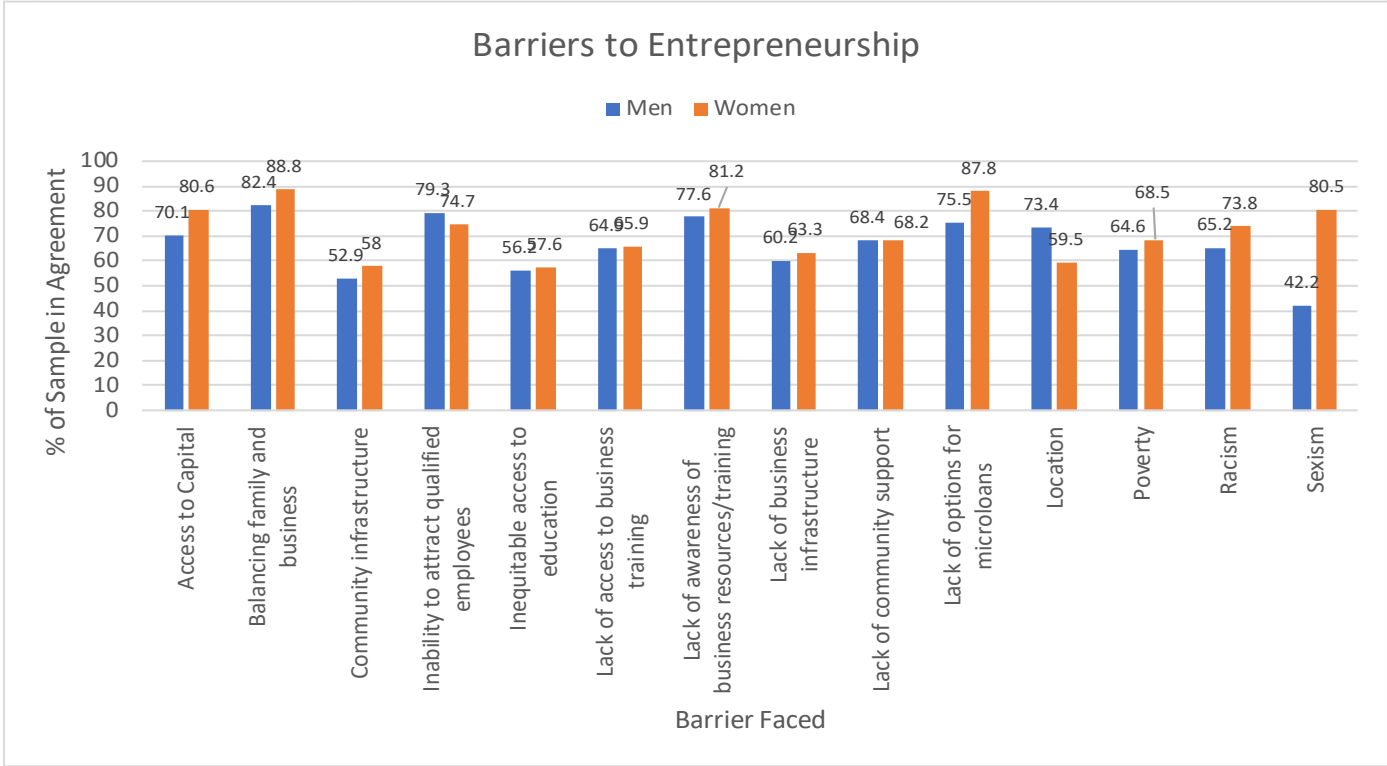
Certain sub-groups of the Indigenous population face even further exacerbated barriers to entrepreneurship beyond access to capital. First Nation women entrepreneurs have identified barriers including: balancing familial responsibilities, lack of financial resources to invest in business due to lower average income and increased reliance on government transfers, sexism, and lack of knowledge and business training in financial literacy, business planning, regulations and management.<sup>20</sup> Of the entrepreneurs who participated in the evaluation survey, women were more likely than men to have experienced each of the listed barriers to entrepreneurship, while being less likely to have experienced the positive impacts of entrepreneurship. A significantly greater proportion of women (88%) agreed that the lack of options for microloans was a barrier to their entrepreneurial activity than men (76%), and a significantly greater proportion of women (81%) agreed that sexism was a barrier to entrepreneurial activity than men (42%). Although outside the scope of this evaluation, the evaluation team heard from NACCA and MCCs that funding initiatives specifically targeting Indigenous women are oversubscribed, and have seen numerous benefits for women, families, and communities. In alignment with the federal *United Nations Declaration Action Plan 2023-28*<sup>21</sup>, further work to address these barriers to entrepreneurship experienced by Indigenous women is a responsibility of ISC to advance self-determination and economic reconciliation.

---

<sup>20</sup> Waterstone Strategies Ltd. (2016). Access to economic development, business and infrastructure financing in First Nation and Inuit Nations.

<sup>21</sup> Department of Justice Canada. (2023). [United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act Action Plan](#).

Figure 3: *Barriers to Indigenous Entrepreneurship*



Source: Survey of Indigenous entrepreneurs. Sample sizes for each barrier vary, given that participation for each item was voluntary. The sample size of men ranged from 64 to 107 with an average of 94 responses per barrier. The sample size of women ranged from 69 to 101 with an average of 86 responses per barrier.

In addition, the ongoing impacts of colonization including lower education and income levels, inadequate social and health services, and higher rates of poverty on-reserve and in urban areas further limit the ability of Indigenous Peoples to build equity to invest into business opportunities.<sup>22</sup> Many Indigenous communities lack the infrastructure (i.e., adequate housing; business space; limited access to transportation, utilities, and Internet networks) to support business activities.<sup>23</sup> The infrastructure gap is further exacerbated by the proportion of financing tools (e.g., fees, public-private partnerships, short-term borrowing) that are tied to regulatory frameworks that do not exist on reserve.<sup>24</sup> These broader issues will continue to impact the success of Indigenous entrepreneurs and are not addressed by the current suite of programs.

Today, Indigenous Peoples represent the fastest growing segment of the population and have the potential to be a driving force of Canada’s economy.<sup>25</sup> According to the Royal Bank of Canada, the number of Indigenous business owners is growing at five times the rate of non-Indigenous self-employed Canadians, and Indigenous women are starting businesses at twice

<sup>22</sup> The Conference Board of Canada. (2020). [Indigenous Entrepreneurship in Northern and Remote Canada](#).  
<sup>23</sup> National Aboriginal Economic Development Board. (2017). [Recommendations Report On Improving Access To Capital For Indigenous Peoples In Canada](#).  
<sup>24</sup> Ibid.  
<sup>25</sup> Statistics Canada. (2022). [Indigenous population continues to grow and is much younger than the non-Indigenous population, although the pace of growth has slowed](#).

the rate of non-Indigenous women.<sup>26</sup> Studies have projected a tremendous economic opportunity with growth projections of a \$100 billion Indigenous economy by 2025; however, the percentage of Indigenous Peoples opening businesses remains below their relative composition in the workforce.<sup>27</sup> Achievement of the \$100 billion Indigenous economy will require continued investments and supports that can respond to the ongoing barriers to entrepreneurship and evolving needs of Indigenous populations, including and beyond access to capital.

**Finding 6: There is an ongoing need for targeted investments in pre- and post-care, as well as supporting Indigenous entrepreneurs in navigating the services available.**

The evaluation found overwhelming agreement that Indigenous entrepreneurs need ongoing support to advance across the stages of business development (e.g., from a business idea to a proposal, to securing a loan, to establishing a business, to sustaining a business). Pre-care supports may include: challenging the business concept for viability and sustainability; guidance in writing the business proposal including basics in finance and business projections; and support in securing a loan from an IFI, MCC or a mainstream bank. While the majority of the IFIs and MCCs interviewed indicated they try to provide these types of support, they noted they have neither the resources nor the staff to meet the needs of their clients. Trainings for entrepreneurs are offered by various organizations, often focusing on how to write a business plan. However, training content is often varied and disparate without properly setting-up a budding entrepreneur for success to obtain funding from an IFI or MCC.

When asked about additional business supports that they would benefit from, respondents to the evaluation survey most commonly identified needs surrounding: financial support, business skills, training programs, and mentorship. Representatives of IFIs and MCCs shared that women and youth are often their clients who seek out mentorship and networking opportunities, but that additional factors (e.g., childcare) may need to be considered when providing training. Some representatives of IFIs and MCCs suggested that ABO funds could be used to support them in providing business supports; however, these funds are typically delivered to National Indigenous Organizations (e.g., Native Women’s Association of Canada, Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada) in order to have a broader scope of impact across the country with the small amount of funding available. Programmatic data housed within ISC indicates that between 2015-16 and 2019-20, \$25.5 million was provided to a mix of national, regional and local Indigenous organizations and communities through the ABO program<sup>28</sup>. Numerous projects funded by ABO during the years evaluated included stated program objectives in networking and mentorship to nurture knowledge sharing among entrepreneurs. While the ABO stream of

---

*“We struggled with those at the lower end of the continuum. There is a need to support those who face greatest barriers e.g., northern, remote - lack of space and internet make it difficult to move business concept into business case for funding. We also need to help those up to the upper end of scaling up.”*  
Source: ATC Staff

---

<sup>26</sup> Amato, D. (2020). [Indigenous Entrepreneurship in Canada: The Impact and the Opportunity](#).

<sup>27</sup> Ibid.

<sup>28</sup> ISC. (2021). Business Opportunities Tracking Sheet 2014-15 to 2020-21 – Internal Excel spreadsheet. GCDOCS 91395326.

the program intends to support organizations in addressing additional barriers to Indigenous entrepreneurship outside of financial capital, it is unclear the extent to which these initiatives advance entrepreneurship or filled the need for pre-care noted by evaluation participants. Interviewees from ABO described an anecdotal perception that the funded initiatives were meeting program outcomes (i.e., growing the capacity of Indigenous entrepreneurs); however, the requirements of final reports for funded projects do not systematically collect data to assess the fulsome impact of ABO funding. Therefore, assessments of impact are limited. Both IFIs and MCCs identified that they lack access to funding and supports for Indigenous businesses to grow.<sup>29</sup> The majority of IFIs and MCCs consulted indicated that they are challenged to provide post-care supports to their clients, which might include training in business finances and accounting, ongoing mentoring and guidance/support to grow the business.

Participants also identified challenges in navigating the services available to them and processes for accessing these services. In discussions with PSIB staff, a key challenge expressed in accessing government contracts is knowing how to navigate the federal procurement system and knowing where to start. As found in the evaluation survey, only 6% of respondents indicated being familiar with PSIB and 13% were aware of the Indigenous Business Directory; 7% had registered on IBD and only 0.4% had received a PSIB contract. Indigenous entrepreneurs who completed the survey most commonly reported “need training on process” and “unaware of PSIB” as barriers to participating in government procurement processes.

The disparate service offerings and difficult qualification processes serve as an additional barrier to Indigenous entrepreneurs. For example, this evaluation highlights two services that entrepreneurs can directly access to build their business (ATC, PSIB); however, regional development agencies, other federal agencies and private organizations offer additional options, which complicates the ability to understand and navigate the system of services available. An Indigenous Business Navigator position has now launched at ISC, which may support in mitigating this challenge. The navigator can be accessed by Indigenous businesses and owners, organizations, or communities to request support in finding and accessing the programs and services to meet their needs.

**Finding 7: Efforts have been made to improve the inclusivity and reach of programs across distinctions, gender and age groups; however, more work is needed to reach equity in access. Limited data were available under PSIB and ABO to effectively assess broader diversity impacts.**

---

<sup>29</sup> Note: in 2019, the federal government, along with the Business Development Bank of Canada, with commitments from Export Development Canada, and Farm Credit Canada, introduced the Indigenous Growth Fund (IGF). The IGF provides loans, through IFIs and MCCs, to Indigenous entrepreneurs who require capital to start or expand their businesses. The IGF is out of scope of this evaluation.

The evaluation found that there continues to be Indigenous populations underserved by the program. Very few representatives of IFIs/MCCs identified diversity and inclusion goals under the program beyond NACCA's programs targeting women and youth, which were only recently launched. Indigenous women experience additional social barriers that further exacerbate challenges to pursuing business ventures, including disproportionate responsibilities in the home and in providing childcare which limits their ability to work full time in their business.<sup>30</sup> Given the disproportionate amount of time women spend on unpaid domestic work and childcare compared to men<sup>31</sup>, there is evidence that entrepreneurship is advantageous to Indigenous women due to the flexibility awarded in running a business, such as the ability to make one's own schedule and accommodate caregiving responsibilities.<sup>32</sup> However, borrower profiles from NACCA and MCCs illustrate that men continue to make up the majority of the borrowers under the ATC program. NACCA has recently launched an Indigenous Women's Entrepreneurship program to provide support to Indigenous women pursuing entrepreneurial activity and address this need; MCC representatives expressed a desire for funding for a similar program to address the needs of Métis women and noted it would help strengthen the Nation-to-Nation relationship.

Borrower profiles under ATC also illustrated that youth (under 35) have made up a very small percentage of loan recipients since 2015 across the IFIs and MCCs. In two discussion circles, participants strongly recommended more integrated supports and resources dedicated to developing business knowledge and skills in youth. In addition, one MCC interviewee noted being able to provide a larger percentage of non-repayable funding to youth. NACCA recently partnered with Futurpreneur Canada to develop new programming targeted to youth, in addition to the ATC program.

---

*“Access to micro lending under the Indigenous Women Entrepreneur Program is particularly important to Indigenous women. They often are the caregivers but are still interested in starting their own business. They often have small income streams but their work tends to focus on and leads to investments in communities. Their work is often geared to the care sector – geared around wellness. This gets me excited – participating in something that is deeper in application and resolve – bringing a caring perspective into the marketplace.”*

*Source: MCC Representative*

---

Some entrepreneurs continue to be unable to access the ATC program, due to eligibility requirements. ATC staff and interviews with Métis entrepreneurs indicated that Métis entrepreneurs continue to be underserved and/or overlooked by the AEP programs, despite the distinctions-based transfer to MCCs and eligibility requirements stating that the program serves all Métis people. ATC staff confirmed that there are some Métis people who have faced challenges in accessing this program due to definitions of heritage or identity, and approval requirements related to geographical location and registration with a Métis organization. PSIB staff echoed barriers based on eligibility requirements, particularly for Métis entrepreneurs. Additionally, the expectation of full-time involvement of the applicant with the proposed

---

<sup>30</sup> Women Entrepreneurship Knowledge Hub. (2020). [Breaking Barriers: A Decade of Indigenous Women's Entrepreneurship in Canada](#).

<sup>31</sup> Zossou, C. (2021). [Sharing household tasks: Teaming up during the COVID-19 pandemic](#).

<sup>32</sup> Diochon, M. (2014). A baseline study of entrepreneurship among first nation women in the Atlantic region. *Journal of Small Business & Entrepreneurship*, 27(1), 89-112.



business in the terms and conditions for ATC excludes important entrepreneurs, such as women operating side-hustle businesses.

Despite the growing proportion of Indigenous entrepreneurs in today's economy, in 2018 less than 2% of Indigenous businesses had majority Inuit-ownership.<sup>33</sup> For Inuit Peoples living in the North, the ATC-equivalent program is accessed through CanNor rather than through NACCA and IFIs. A few IFIs desire a closer working relationship with CanNor to best meet the clients' needs rather than being in competition with each other. Interviews with a few ATC and IFIs suggest that IFIs need to be located in areas closer to Inuit clients. Inuit do not have a representative organization who works directly with ISC to deliver the ATC program, which would be beneficial in advancing self-determination across distinctions and ensuring that the program meets the needs of Inuit entrepreneurs.

---

*"We do not track across GBA+ or distinctions-based – and the procurement officers and buyers can't take this on, we already have Indigenous procurement, green procurement, accessibility – we don't have the capacity for this, there aren't resources to support it."*  
Source: PSIB Coordinators Focus Group

---

Although Budget 2019 announced an investment of \$1.5 million over 5 years to support administrative data collection and reporting practices with respect to Gender-Based Analysis Plus, PSIB does not currently collect data related to identity characteristics of companies awarded federal contracts nor is recent program data available. Therefore, the evaluation was unable to assess the equitability of program access and impacts for all Indigenous Peoples. Similarly, ABO does not hold

distinctions-based data, but can determine the general scope of projects that might address specific needs across identity characteristics. For example, a portion of ABO's 2019-20 funding supported the National Aboriginal Trust Officers Association's 2<sup>nd</sup> Annual Indigenous Women's Summit, and in 2018, ABO supported Pauktuutit Inuit Women of Canada in a project titled *Connecting Urban Inuit Women with the Inuit Women in Business Network*.

**Finding 8: Further reform to PSIB is required to prepare and encourage Indigenous entrepreneurs to participate in government procurement and to ensure the federal government meets its 5% target. The process to modernize Indigenous procurement has not taken a distinctions-based approach to meet the needs for First Nation, Inuit, and Métis Peoples.**

---

*"There is a need for Indigenous Peoples to actively participate in economic activity to level out the playing field and ensure that the businesses are free and able to compete for federal contracts."*  
Source: NACCA Interview

---

Despite existing for over 20 years, involvement with PSIB and registration on the Indigenous Business Directory continue to have limited uptake. In 2018, there were over 37,000 Indigenous-owned businesses in Canada providing goods and services in all sectors of the economy, but under 2000 were actively registered on the

---

<sup>33</sup> Gueye, B., Lafrance-Cooke, A. and Oyarzun, J. (2023). [Identifying Indigenous Business Owners and Indigenous-Owned Businesses](#).

Indigenous Business Directory in April 2023<sup>34</sup>. The annual dollar value of contracts awarded to PSIB-certified businesses increased each year between 2015 to 2018, from \$93.5 million (0.47% of federal expenditures) to \$170.6 million (1.03% of federal expenditures); however, the 5% target remains unmet.<sup>35</sup> Among Indigenous entrepreneurs who completed the evaluation survey, participation in PSIB was very low (2%), and no participants who had competed for a federal contract were women. Additionally, only 13% of the survey respondents were aware of the Indigenous Business Directory, and of those, only 50% had registered. However, a lack of knowledge of PSIB or its processes is only one barrier Indigenous entrepreneurs face in procuring with the government. Systemic racism and tokenism towards Indigenous Peoples affect their ability to contract with all levels of government; for example, there are assumptions that Indigenous businesses are high-risk, lack capacity, and provide a lower of quality of work.<sup>36</sup> Stereotyping and discriminatory narratives regarding Indigenous businesses also cause some Indigenous business owners to opt not to self-identify as Indigenous.

In 2017, ISC launched the Indigenous Procurement Modernization Initiative which included extensive online and in-person consultations<sup>37</sup>. The review conducted as part of the PSIB modernization efforts in 2018 found:

- The volume, scope and depth of federal procurement opportunities available to Indigenous businesses is low; the majority of set-asides are concentrated from a handful of departments;
- The federal procurement process is difficult to navigate, and the outreach and training strategies do not meet the needs of Indigenous businesses at various stages of development;
- The bidding process is arduous and time-consuming with no guarantee that there will be a return on time invested, and causes some businesses to opt not to contract with the federal government;
- Eligibility criteria for registering in the Indigenous Business Directory was a barrier;
- An up-to-date comprehensive Indigenous Business Directory housed outside of government is required;
- Enhanced performance reporting is needed to drive results; and
- The decentralized approach to federal procurement limits government-wide implementation.

In 2021, ISC announced changes to make PSIB more responsive to Indigenous entrepreneurs and businesses as a result of the modernization initiative, including reducing the minimum number of Indigenous employees required for a business to qualify on PSIB. Engagements with Indigenous participants in modernization discussions provided numerous recommendations to improve participation in federal procurement, including: unbundling large

---

<sup>34</sup> Mills, M. and Gibbons, C. (2022). [Failure to launch? The Federal Procurement Strategy for Indigenous Business struggles to get off the ground, 25 years after its inception.](#)

<sup>35</sup> These figures do not capture other elements of federal procurement, including low value contracts or sub-contracting.

<sup>36</sup> Barbertock, S. (2023). [Indigenous Procurement as a Catalyst for Community Building.](#) Queen's University: doctoral thesis.

<sup>37</sup> Given the recency of the modernization initiative, the evaluation was not able to assess its impact because it had not been fully implemented.



procurement contracts; requiring subcontracting opportunities on large projects; matchmaking services to encourage partnerships and joint ventures; providing Procurement Readiness training; and requiring Indigenous Benefit Plans in all major procurement processes at the conception stage. Progress on the aforementioned recommendations was unclear at the time of evaluation. Further engagements with Indigenous Partners should be ongoing beyond developing modernization policy.

As a result of a 2019 Directive<sup>38</sup>, it is now a mandatory Treasury Board policy requirement that Inuit firms receive preferential treatment for government contracts in the Nunavut Settlement Area. The Directive arose in part from Article 24 of the Nunavut Land Claims Agreement and illustrates the Government of Canada's commitment to establish procurement policies that respect Inuit firms for all Government contracts and leases in the Nunavut Settlement Area.<sup>39</sup> While Article 24 and the 2019 Directive differ from the 5% mandate regarding PSIB, some lessons learned could apply to PSIB Modernization, particularly given that the 2019 Directive was a collaborative initiative with an external partner. At minimum, the existence of the 2019 Directive illustrates that the pan-Indigenous approach to federal procurement does not work when products and/or services occur specifically in First Nation communities, Inuit communities, and/or Métis settlement areas.<sup>40</sup> In fact, some participants of PSIB modernization engagements argued that a distinctions-based approach to procurement is required given the vast differences faced by First Nation, Inuit, and Métis entrepreneurs, including differences based on geography, self-government, and culture.<sup>41</sup> A distinctions-based approach to PSIB modernization also reflects Justice Canada's *Principles Respecting the Government of Canada's Relationship with Indigenous Peoples*, which are rooted in the rights that are recognized and affirmed in Canada's Constitution, as well as the federal commitment to reconciliation.<sup>42</sup> Further, as has been argued by the Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business, federal Indigenous procurement policies should acknowledge that all of Canada rests on traditional Indigenous territories and thus all major procurement projects in Canada, regardless of location, should include Indigenous participation.<sup>43</sup>

More recent data on PSIB, particularly following the modernization efforts and implementation of the 5% requirements for federal set-aside spending for Indigenous procurement were not available at the time of evaluation, indicating that the program is unable to collect and report on PSIB progress and impact in a timely way. In addition, it is not possible to know how many contracts *should* have been set aside through the PSIB. There are numerous procurement options that count towards PSIB that are underused, but could greatly increase Indigenous participation in the system and progress towards the 5%, including sub-contracting, non-competitive processes, and sole-source contracts. PSIB coordinators recommend the program

---

<sup>38</sup> Government of Canada. (2019). [Directive on Government Contracts, Including Real Property Leases in the Nunavut Settlement Area.](#)

<sup>39</sup> Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada. (2019). [Government of Canada facilitates participation of Inuit firms in contract bidding in the Nunavut Settlement Area.](#)

<sup>40</sup> Barberstock, S.L. (2023). [Indigenous procurement as a catalyst for community building.](#)

<sup>41</sup> Barberstock, S.L. (2023). [Indigenous procurement as a catalyst for community building.](#)

<sup>42</sup> Justice Canada. (2021). [Principles respecting the Government of Canada's relationship with Indigenous Peoples.](#)

<sup>43</sup> Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business. (2021). [Reaching 5% and beyond: a roadmap to increase federal procurement from Indigenous businesses in Canada.](#)

undertake more audits to ensure compliance with the 5% Indigenous procurement target, regularly report on departmental performance and provide an annual briefing to the Minister on the progress towards the 5% Indigenous procurement target. Importantly, the target of 5% was set based on the calculation in the 2016 Census that nearly 5% of the Canadian population is Indigenous; however, as the Indigenous population continues to grow the 5% goal should serve as a minimal starting point rather than a final goal. A new appendix to the *Directive on Management of Procurement* took effect on April 1, 2022, and illustrates mandatory procedures to advance the 5%, which is to be met or exceeded by all federal departments no later than the end of fiscal year 2024-25.<sup>44</sup> It is anticipated that the requirements of the new Directive, which includes detailed reporting requirements, will address the recommendation from Procurement Coordinators to enhance performance monitoring towards the 5% target on a more timely basis than was found in the scoping years covered by this evaluation.

The PSIB coordinator role across departments is not staffed consistently, is a voluntary addition to the employee's substantive job requirements, and is accompanied by limited onboarding and training. Responsibilities range from reporting to coordinating, communications, and outreach. The role is typically taken on by staff below Director-level; the focus group with PSIB Coordinators noted that, given their level in the organization, they have little clout or ability to influence real change in the department/agency. The Canada School of Public Service and the Treasury Board Secretariat are looking to create more cultural awareness training for procurement staff, and PSIB staff indicated they are in the process of developing training workshops for the coordinators; however, PSIB Coordinators recommended that the Coordinator role be more formalized, better integrated and supported by additional resources. The cultural competency training should become mandatory for all procurement officers and PSIB Coordinators to maintain consistency.

---

*"We are trying to balance our primary role with the PSIB Coordinator responsibilities. It has been a difficult relationship. We don't necessarily know who the other procurement officers are, so when we can't get help from ISC, and then we can't even help each other, we are at a loss... The coordinators are often the only folks in their respective Departments with any information on Indigenous procurement – so if they switch jobs that talent and knowledge is totally lost."*  
Source: PSIB Coordinator

---

**Finding 9: The current logic model does not reflect outcomes relevant to Indigenous entrepreneurs. Inconsistent program data limit the ability to assess the broader impacts of the programs.**

The Performance Information Profile for IEBD includes all three program streams, and represents the data that programs agreed to collect on program performance. Program staff consulted agree that the Performance Information Profile needs to be updated with a balanced focus on ATC with more relevant key performance indicators. The IEBD Performance Information Profile is primarily focused on PSIB, IFI capacity and output measures such as the number of businesses created and percentage of non-government funding in Indigenous

---

<sup>44</sup> Treasury Board Secretariat of Canada. (2021). [Directive on the Management of Procurement](#). Appendix E: Mandatory Procedures for Contracts Awarded to Indigenous Businesses.

communities. These measures are not inclusive of equity measures nor highly relevant to what the Indigenous lenders or Indigenous entrepreneurs see as the potential impact of these programs or of their entrepreneurial activity more broadly. For example, while it is generally agreed that the program has been successful at providing Indigenous businesses and entrepreneurs with access to affordable loans, a few ABO and ATC staff indicated that program data does not measure or look at what those loans have achieved. Additionally, when asked how they define entrepreneurial success, Indigenous entrepreneurs who completed the evaluation survey most commonly listed: being profitable with the potential to grow; autonomy and independence in work that I am passionate about; able to support family and community; and achieving work-life balance. Of importance is moving beyond output measures to measurement of how culturally-relevant these programs are, and the broader socio-economic impact that program funding is having on Indigenous businesses, business owners, their families, and their communities. Few data sources exist in Canada to profile Indigenous entrepreneurship, and many of the periodic measures that do exist have limited sample sizes, focus on self-employment, and do not survey on-reserve business including community-owned social and economic enterprises. As such, it is critical that the performance framework employed within the program is reliable, consistent, and a fulsome assessment of Indigenous entrepreneurship and its impacts.

Representatives of both ATC and ABO suggest that the program has a primary focus on measuring economic outputs, such as default rate and number of businesses created, whereas Indigenous businesses have social *and* economic objectives. Two IFI discussion circles noted the challenges they encountered in measuring success from their investments in Indigenous business and indicated a desire for improved data. Although NACCA has developed their own performance measurement framework with outcomes more relevant to their community, the funding agreement with ISC requires adherence to the federal performance framework. It was further noted across sub-programs that the program is not collecting information on how it is helping to reduce barriers for women, youth, or those living in northern/remote communities. Program staff and representatives from NACCA and IFIs identified a lack of data in numerous areas of importance, including:

- profile of the type of borrowers beyond gender and region (i.e., including the 2SLGBTQI+ community, people with disabilities)
- ability to generate income and wealth
- social impact indicators (e.g., impact on the community, family and persons such as investments back into the community, land- and cultural-based healing, ceremonies, crafts and art)
- differential impact of microlending for women and Métis entrepreneurs
- demand for and utilization of pre- and post-care supports
- job creation
- vacant positions in lending organizations
- number of Indigenous businesses in operations over time

---

*“We need to put the words to it, we need to document it, we need to have the data – who are we reaching and where are the gaps... and this should inform future engagements on how best to meet these needs.”*

*Source: PSIB Staff*

---

- amount of capital utilized in the business landscape
- actual vs budget spending
- other sources of funding leveraged by the IFIs and MCCs including provincial and private sector lenders

Across program streams, enhancements to the program’s performance monitoring will ultimately require resources to create and manage such reporting frameworks and analyses. PSIB coordinators indicated they have limited capacity across the network to track diversity-related data. A few PSIB staff recommended the development of a comprehensive performance measurement framework that tracks not only the number and dollar value of PSIB contracts, but also the value of indirect benefits. These interviewees indicated that this would require better and sustained information sharing between federal departments/agencies and Indigenous partners. The recent PSIB modernization efforts include the implementation of new reporting requirements.

---

*“Where does the program fit in today’s world? Moving forward, doing the same old when the ecosystem has changed massively is not a good way to go. We need to get a sense of where [this program] fits in, doing a gap of analysis of the needs that need to be filled. It needs to be different regionally. There should not be 15 different programs coming out of different regional development agencies. Improving the government system to one window would be super helpful.”*

*Source: ATC Staff*

---

## 4.4 Key Findings: Efficiency

### Summary of Findings:

The Indigenous lending system does not have sufficient funding under the program to meet the current and future levels of demand. The lending system moved quickly to respond to the needs of Indigenous entrepreneurs and businesses amidst the COVID-19 pandemic.

**Finding 10: Investments in the IEBD program have not evolved with inflation nor the growing population of Indigenous Peoples and Indigenous businesses, and are not expected to be sufficient to meet the needs of the growing Indigenous population.**

Reports from NACCA and the MCCs illustrate the increasing size and sophistication of the Indigenous business market, which has led to a corresponding increase in the size and volume of loan applications. The majority of government representatives and Indigenous lenders interviewed indicated that the Indigenous lending system supported through the IEBD Program does not have sufficient funding to meet the current level of demand for business loans and capital by Indigenous entrepreneurs and businesses. Not only do MCCs and IFIs commit 100% of funds well before the end of the fiscal year, but they also have received increasing demands for larger loans. Numerous representatives of IFIs and MCCs reflected that they expect to run out of funds well before the end of fiscal, and therefore have to exercise more discretion in distributing funds. Growth in the Manitoba Métis Federation’s citizenry throughout the Red River Métis Homeland has significantly increased the level of demand for loans and business supports. Demand is also expected to increase as the Indigenous population continues to grow. For example, based on a five-year average of historical demand, four

MCCs calculated a collective need for \$7.39 million solely in Aboriginal Business Financing Program equity capital in 2024-25.<sup>45</sup>

Growing challenges with the level of ATC funding were communicated, as it has not been adjusted for inflation or the evolving needs of Indigenous businesses since the program was established. In fact, the level of investment for the program has substantially decreased since creation of the program despite the growing population of Indigenous Peoples and Indigenous businesses, as well as increases in inflation, the cost of living, and the cost of doing business. The lack of funding to meet demand was also noted by ATC and ABO partners as limiting outreach to enhance access. Participants shared that marketing of the program is minimal given that funding is already oversubscribed. The current funding structure also does not adequately address the consistent need for pre- and post-care among entrepreneurs, as described earlier in this report.

Use of the Interest Rate Buy-Down Program that was transferred to NACCA has grown in recent years, indicating that IFIs increasingly have to make use of such lines of credit to meet the demand for capital in their regions. NACCA noted that some IFIs have established lines of credit with other financial institutions as well. Funding for the Aboriginal Developmental Lending Allocation and the Aboriginal Capacity Development Program have not increased over time and with inflation, which impacts the ability of IFIs and MCCs to distribute developmental lending as intended. Additionally, some representatives of IFIs and MCCs reflected challenges with eligibility requirements for activities under these two initiatives. Some participants noted further challenges with funding amounts following the distinctions-based transfer to MCCs, as currently only two of the five sub-components of the ATC program have been transferred to the MCCs: Aboriginal Business Financing Program and Aboriginal Developmental Lending Allocation. Additionally, not all IFIs access funding under all five programs.

A few IFI discussion circles focused on a lending gap in the range of \$2 to 10 million. A 2018 Waterstone Strategies report found that a large number of small Indigenous businesses in the early stages of development have access to business supports, while mid-size businesses receive less support as they grow. The report indicates that this leads to a broken business life-cycle development – giving less attention and support to growing the mid-size business base – partially due to a lack of access to government-supported capital (such as financial enablers, credit enhancement and risk mitigation supports, guarantees, and tax credits).<sup>46</sup> As Indigenous businesses move into the next stage of the business lifecycle, unique needs arise including larger amounts of capital and bonding. However, the ATC program is not adequately structured to support scaling up business magnitude. The newly launched Indigenous Growth Fund may address

---

*“We need more money on the support side. The program needs to increase funding. During Covid there was a significant uptake. We didn’t anticipate this, but it has gotten the word out and has introduced IFIs to new Indigenous businesses.”*  
Source: IFI Discussion Circle

---

<sup>45</sup> All five MCCs holding agreements with ISC for ATC have calculated projections of funding needs to inform program modernization.

<sup>46</sup> National Aboriginal Economic Development Board. (2017). [Recommendations Report On Improving Access To Capital For Indigenous Peoples In Canada](#).



this challenge; however, there is a risk in the Indigenous Growth Fund increasing the burden on IFIs and furthering the oversubscription of funding programs for entrepreneurs. With the trajectory of the Indigenous Growth Fund since its inception, IFIs that access the Aboriginal Business Financing Program and Aboriginal Developmental Lending Allocation Program are set to almost triple annual lending by 2026.

Funding provided under the ABO program was viewed as insufficient by internal and external interviewees. Although the Terms and Conditions are broad, allowing for a wide scope of funded projects, the constrained funding envelope limits ABO's funding ability and impact. ABO representatives indicated that, due to its small budget, they typically fund the same National Indigenous Organizations each year in an attempt to have the greatest impact for each funding dollar. Program staff highlighted a reluctance to communicate the program widely, or to conduct a comprehensive call-out for funding proposals as it is already difficult to decide how to distribute such limited funds. Instead, the program solicits proposals from known national organizations to keep demand low, and approvals were typically on a first-come, first-served basis. The evaluation found support for expanding ABO's funding envelope to meet the intended program outcomes and to have broader impacts. Additionally, an increase in funding would allow for a more transparent and competitive process for funding, which could increase and/or diversify the impact of program funds.

**Finding 11: The system moved quickly to respond to the needs of Indigenous entrepreneurs and businesses. The large funding envelope that was allotted to support businesses through COVID-19 had a significant impact on the reach of the program.**

Small and medium-sized Indigenous businesses across the country experienced tremendous volatility during the COVID-19 pandemic. The evaluation found positive evidence of the government's ability to respond to the needs of Indigenous entrepreneurs and businesses amidst the pandemic. The Government of Canada launched the COVID Indigenous Business Initiative to support Indigenous businesses, which included interest-free loans and non-repayable contributions for entrepreneurs, as well as funds to support the operations of IFIs, MCCs, and NACCA. Importantly, the emergency COVID funding flowed through the same Terms and Conditions as the ATC and ABO sub-programs<sup>47</sup>; however, this funding was not part of the transferred program to NACCA and MCCs. Nevertheless, the strength of the network of Indigenous lenders was highlighted by the COVID-19 response.

For example, NACCA contracted with 37 IFIs to roll out the Emergency Loan Program, providing \$140 million in COVID-19 relief funding to businesses.<sup>48</sup> For NACCA, IFIs, and MCCs, the ability of the network to mobilize so quickly and distribute funding to Indigenous businesses in need demonstrated the resiliency of the network. Interview consultations revealed that by working with NACCA, IFIs, and MCCs, the government was able to establish emergency loan programs within five weeks and shortened the time to release funding to 21 days by moving to electronic payments. In addition, NACCA, the IFIs and ATC program staff were able to advise central agencies that some of the loans should be forgivable. Close to half

---

<sup>47</sup> Indigenous Services Canada. (2023). [Contributions to support land management and economic development: terms and conditions.](#)

<sup>48</sup> NACCA. (2021). [Supporting Indigenous Entrepreneurs to Survive and Thrive: 2020-21 Annual Report.](#)

(46.5%) of the Indigenous entrepreneurs who responded to the survey question about accessing support from an IFI or MCC reported accessing emergency loans during COVID-19. A smaller portion of women who participated in the survey responded accessing emergency loans, despite women-owned businesses, on average, facing greater impacts from the COVID-19 pandemic. Women who responded to the evaluation survey were more likely than men to identify application requirements as a barrier to accessing support from IFIs and MCCs.

NACCA representatives noted that at the time COVID-19 hit, the MCCs weren't fully devolved. During the transfer, IEBD program staff were able to better understand the volume of work and demand by each MCC as well as collect more data related to the sectors and business characteristics that faced the greatest impacts of the pandemic. In this instance, COVID-19 led to greater data sharing and understanding of the lending landscape. Representatives of NACCA and the IFIs/MCCs agreed that COVID-19 and the economic relief packages that were made available to Indigenous businesses helped to raise the profile of the IFIs and MCCs, which has led to a corresponding increase in demand for capital and business supports.

In response to COVID-19, the federal government organized a Director General-level committee on tourism. While focused more broadly on the sector, the Indigenous tourism subsector was a part of the discussions, leading to a significant percentage of ABO funding being allotted to this subsector. A few ABO staff and a number of the representatives of IFIs questioned the disproportionate focus on tourism as opposed to other non-traditional but emerging sectors.

## 5. Conclusions

In summary, the evaluation of the Indigenous Entrepreneurship and Business Development program resulted in 11 key findings spanning lines of inquiry related to relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, and service transfer. These key findings include:

### **Relevance**

*Finding 1:* The programs align with economic reconciliation and self-determination, which supports the wellbeing of Indigenous Peoples, and in turn, supports families and communities. The transfer of the delivery of the ATC program to Indigenous-led organizations is aligned with both Indigenous and federal priorities and is viewed positively by the Indigenous Peoples who were consulted.

### **Service Transfer**

*Finding 2:* The transfer of the ATC stream from ISC to NACCA and to the MCCs went well and the relationships between the Indigenous partner organizations, and between Indigenous entrepreneurs and IFIs/MCCs, are positive.

*Finding 3:* The transfer of the ATC program is limited to only grants and contributions and does not include foundational aspects such as program design, expected outcomes, and performance monitoring. Further work is required to fully transfer control of the ATC program and the remaining IEBD streams to Indigenous-led organizations.



## **Effectiveness**

*Finding 4:* ATC has helped to create a network of sustainable Indigenous-led lending institutions; however, IFIs and MCCs continue to face challenges with retaining skilled employees in a competitive market.

*Finding 5:* The IEBD programs are having a positive impact on Indigenous entrepreneurs, which in-turn, is perceived to positively impact Indigenous individuals, families, and communities. Barriers to entrepreneurial success faced by Indigenous Peoples are beyond what is addressed in the current suite of programs.

*Finding 6:* There is an ongoing need for targeted investments in pre- and post-care, as well as supporting Indigenous entrepreneurs in navigating the services available.

*Finding 7:* Efforts have been made to improve the inclusivity and reach of programs across distinctions, gender and age groups; however, more work is needed to reach equity in access. Limited data were available under PSIB and ABO to effectively assess broader diversity impacts.

*Finding 8:* Further reform to PSIB is required to prepare and encourage Indigenous entrepreneurs to participate in government procurement and to ensure the federal government meets its 5% target. The process to modernize Indigenous procurement has not taken a distinctions-based approach to meet the needs for First Nation, Inuit, and Métis Peoples.

*Finding 9:* The current logic model does not reflect outcomes relevant to Indigenous entrepreneurs. Inconsistent program data limit the ability to assess the broader impacts of the programs.

## **Efficiency**

*Finding 10:* Investments in the IEBD program have not evolved with inflation nor the growing population of Indigenous Peoples and Indigenous businesses and are not expected to be sufficient to meet the needs of the growing Indigenous population.

*Finding 11:* The system moved quickly to respond to the needs of Indigenous entrepreneurs and businesses. The large funding envelope that was allotted to support businesses through COVID-19 had a significant impact on the reach of the program.

These findings demonstrate that in many ways the IEBD suite of programs is relevant, effective and efficient. The programs remain relevant to federal priorities and are aligned in positive ways with the goals and interests of Indigenous Peoples, and demonstrable progress has been made towards service transfer. The programs have had positive effects at the individual and community level and rapidly respond to needs of entrepreneurs and businesses. A particularly impactful and significant example of this was support through the COVID-19 pandemic, notably including a larger funding envelope.

There remain, however, several areas in which the programs could be improved. Barriers and limitations exist regarding full service transfer and retaining skilled employees, in addition to ease of program access, particularly for distinctions, gender and age groups. The program logic model fails to capture outcomes relevant to Indigenous entrepreneurs, and a dearth of relevant data makes it difficult to fully assess outcomes. Targeted investments in certain areas such as pre- and post-care, in addition to an increased funding envelope, continue to be significant needs of entrepreneurs, business owners, and program staff.

In response to these findings, several recommendations are provided in the following section, relating to service transfer, achieving and measuring program outcomes, and financial and human resources.

## 6. Recommendations

### 6.1 Service Transfer

1. ISC is recommended to engage First Nation, Inuit and Métis Partners to explore options to transfer the full IEBD program, including the Indigenous Business Directory and the ABO stream of funding.
  - a. It is recommended that ISC work with First Nation, Inuit, and Métis Partners to fully transfer the ATC program, including the design, delivery, eligibility, and reporting of results on a distinctions-basis.








### 6.2 Achieving and Measuring Program Outcomes

2. ISC is recommended to engage First Nations, Inuit and Métis Partners of all program streams to develop an approach to further reduce barriers to entrepreneurship, including by broadening program access for Indigenous Peoples who are harder to reach, and/or face exacerbated barriers to the pursuit of entrepreneurship.
  - a. ISC is recommended to engage First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Partners of all program streams to consistently support pre- and post-care for Indigenous entrepreneurs.
  - b. ISC is recommended to explore and employ distinctions-based strategies to procurement modernization to ensure that the federal procurement process is equally accessible to First Nations, Inuit, and Métis businesses.
  - c. ISC is recommended to perform ongoing monitoring of the adjustments resulting from the modernization initiative to ensure that adjustments prove effective.
3. It is recommended that ISC co-develop with First Nations, Inuit and Métis Peoples a new program logic model and performance measurement framework that contains broader outcome measurements supported by Indigenous Partners.
  - a. It is recommended that ISC collaborate with internal and external partners to expand and employ Gender-Based Analysis Plus to their data collection, analysis, and sustainable targeted approaches meeting the needs of diverse groups.

## 6.3 Financial and Human Resources

4. It is recommended that ISC explore options to increase the funding envelope under IEBD, allowing for greater reach, impact, and transparency.
  - a. It is recommended that ISC work with ATC partners to explore long-term funding mechanisms that will better support the sustainability of IFIs and their ability to deliver developmental lending.
  - b. ISC is recommended to work with First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Partners to explore targeted approaches and better leverage existing approaches to support IFIs/MCCs in retaining skilled employees.
5. It is recommended that ISC standardize the PSIB Coordinator role and provide ongoing centralized support to the PSIB Coordinator Network. This support may include ensuring Coordinators have sufficient onboarding, training, and capacity to perform the functions of this role, and there is a consistent and transparent line of communication between ISC and the Network of Coordinators.

# Appendix A: IEBD Logic Model and Budget

<b>Ultimate Outcome</b>	Creation and/or Expansion of Indigenous businesses					
						
<b>Intermediate Outcomes</b>	A sustainable network of Aboriginal Financial Institutions			Indigenous businesses win procurement contracts		
 						
<b>Immediate Outcomes</b>	Aboriginal Financial Institutions have the capacity to deliver business capital and support services		Indigenous businesses are competing for federal Procurement Strategy for Aboriginal Businesses set-asides		Public and private procurement/ business strategies and partnerships are implemented	
 						
<b>Outputs</b>	Contribution agreements	Capital pools for Indigenous business development are established and expanded	Operational support, training and awareness sessions, promotional materials development	Public and/or private agreements and strategies are developed	Businesses registered in the Aboriginal business directory	
 						
<b>Activities</b>	Provide funding support	Develop cooperation agreements with key stakeholders and partners	Promotion, advocacy, and training	Identify procurement opportunities and business capacity		
<b>Input &amp; FTEs</b>	\$46.3 M/year (average over 5 years)					
<b>Target Population</b>	First Nation, Inuit and Métis business owners and entrepreneurs					

The following tables provide actual program spending and staffing associated with the IEBD program. Information was provided by ISC Financial Management Advisory Services and the LED Business Management Unit. Spending related to the PSIB is included under ABO.

**ATC**

<b>Access to Capital</b>	<b>2015-16</b>	<b>2016-17</b>	<b>2017-18</b>	<b>2018-19</b>	<b>2019-20</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Vote 1 - Non-Salary</b>	80,948	44,310	40,770	479,009	528,911	1,173,947
<b>Vote 1 – Salary</b>	1,929,232	1,351,460	1,343,364	1,032,363	1,110,944	6,767,362
<b>Vote 10 - Grants and Contributions</b>	33,437,070	39,127,070	39,170,000	39,036,000	40,255,000	191,025,140
<b>Statutory – EBP</b>	292,863	196,027	189,202	154,676	136,666	969,434
<b>FTEs</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>7</b>	<b>48</b>
<b>Total Program Spending</b>	<b>\$35,740,112</b>	<b>\$40,718,867</b>	<b>\$40,743,336</b>	<b>\$40,702,048</b>	<b>\$42,031,521</b>	<b>\$199,935,883</b>

**ABO + PSIB**

<b>Business Opportunities</b>	<b>2015-16</b>	<b>2016-17</b>	<b>2017-18</b>	<b>2018-19</b>	<b>2019-20</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Vote 1 - Non-Salary</b>	523,521	375,190	405,206	36,962	8,443	1,349,324
<b>Vote 1 – Salary</b>	1,445,055	1,344,470	1,382,091	1,180,724	1,518,911	6,871,250
<b>Vote 10 - Grants and Contributions</b>	1,807,250	6,327,352	6,747,981	5,644,909	4,990,000	25,517,492
<b>Statutory – EBP</b>	219,336	203,246	189,328	195,452	190,181	997,543
<b>FTEs</b>	<b>17</b>	<b>18</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>82</b>
<b>Total Program Spending</b>	<b>\$3,995,162</b>	<b>\$8,250,259</b>	<b>\$8,724,606</b>	<b>\$7,058,048</b>	<b>\$6,707,535</b>	<b>\$34,735,609</b>

**Total IEBD**

<b>Total IEBD</b>	<b>2015-16</b>	<b>2016-17</b>	<b>2017-18</b>	<b>2018-19</b>	<b>2019-20</b>	<b>Total</b>
<b>Vote 1 - Non-Salary</b>	\$604,469	\$419,500	\$445,976	\$515,971	\$537,354	\$2,523,271
<b>Vote 1 - Salary</b>	\$3,374,286	\$2,695,929	\$2,725,455	\$2,213,087	\$2,629,855	\$13,638,612
<b>Vote 10 - Grants and Contributions</b>	\$35,244,320	\$45,454,422	\$45,917,981	\$44,680,909	\$45,245,000	\$216,542,632
<b>Statutory - EBP</b>	\$512,198	\$399,274	\$378,530	\$350,128	\$326,847	\$1,966,978
<b>FTEs</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>27</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>130</b>
<b>Total Program Spending</b>	<b>\$39,735,274</b>	<b>\$48,969,125</b>	<b>\$49,467,942</b>	<b>\$47,760,096</b>	<b>\$48,739,056</b>	<b>\$234,671,492</b>

## Appendix B: Evaluation Questions

### Relevance

1. Do the programs address the needs and priorities of Indigenous businesses and entrepreneurs, including First Nation, Métis, Inuit, Indigenous women and youth entrepreneurs.
2. Are the programs consistent with federal priorities and mandate?
3. Do the programs support the well-being of individuals, families and children, and communities?
4. To what extent do the programs advance ISC's mandate to advance self-determination and the transfer of care and control of ISC-funded programs to Indigenous partners?
5. Do the initiatives align with or contribute to federal and/or First Nation, Métis and Inuit priorities on gender equity?

### Effectiveness

6. To what extent have the programs contributed to:
  - a. The creation or expansion of Indigenous businesses;
  - b. A sustainable network of Aboriginal Financial Institutions who have the capacity to deliver business capital and support services;
  - c. Indigenous businesses compete for and win procurement contracts; and
  - d. The implementation of public and private procurement and business strategies and partnerships?
7. Have there been any unexpected outcomes (positive or negative), lessons learned or best practices?
8. How effective and productive are the relationships between program partners?
9. How effective and efficient was the transfer of capital programs to program partners?
10. What are the consistent successes that have been generated by the program's support?
11. Do the programs provide equitable access to all Indigenous businesses and entrepreneurs across all regions? If no, what are the barriers and how could they be addressed?

### Program and Process Efficiency

12. Can program outcomes be achieved with the current suite of initiatives and/or resources available?
13. Are the current funding models the most efficient way to achieve project outcomes?
14. Are there practices or innovations that could make program delivery more efficient?
15. To what extent does available data allow for the assessment of program performance?
16. How could the programs be improved to foster inclusivity using an intersectional lens ?

### Early Impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic

17. How has the COVID-19 pandemic affected IEBD programs (i.e. effects on planned activities)?
18. How has federal emergency COVID-19 funding been utilized within IEBD programs?

# Appendix C: Detailed Participant Information

## Interview Consultations

Interviews were undertaken with ISC program staff and representatives of NACCA and the MCCs, as follows:

- ISC Staff interviews (n=21):
  - ATC (n= 7)
  - ABO (n= 6)
  - PSIB (n= 8)
- Interviews with representatives of NACCA/MCCs/IFIs (n= 13)

## Discussion Circles

The Discussion and Sharing Circles targeted small group engagements and were meant to be a positive way of understanding and honouring the stories and experiences of participants, communities and organizations – focusing on strengths, requirements, as well as social and structural issues underpinning the conditions for Indigenous Peoples as they relate to Indigenous led businesses and entrepreneurship.

Discussion Circles were organized to allow for more in-depth discussion and sharing of experiences on the programs and their impact. The following Discussion Circles were conducted:

- Representatives of IFIs and MCCs = 5 sessions (14 people total)
- PSIB Coordinators = 1 session (7 people)

## Survey of Program Users

Indigenous entrepreneurs involved with the program since 2015 were invited to complete an online survey regarding a) entrepreneurial activity; b) existing and necessary supports for entrepreneurs; and c) experience with programs and services for entrepreneurs funded by ISC. Outreach emails were sent by IFIs and MCCs to their respective contact lists to garner participation. In total, the survey had 441 respondents. A detailed breakdown on the respondent profile follows:

Indigenous Identity		Gender Identity		Years Company has been Operational	
<b>First Nation</b>	141 (32.0%)	Man	216 (49.0%)	Less than 1	28 (6.7%)
<b>Métis</b>	262 (59.4%)	Woman	192 (43.5%)	1-3 years	101 (24.3%)
<b>Inuit</b>	6 (1.4%)	Non-Binary	2 (0.5%)	4-6 years	97 (23.4%)
<b>Prefer not to say</b>	4 (0.9%)	Two-Sprit*	6 (1.4%)	7-9 years	41 (9.9%)
<b>Options do not describe me</b>	6 (1.4%)	Prefer not to say	5 (1.1%)	10+ years	148 (35.7%)
<b>More than one Indigenous identity</b>	4 (0.9%)	Options do not describe me	1 (0.2%)		



Province of Business Operation**		Ownership of Company		Age of Participant	
<b>British Columbia</b>	115 (26.1%)	Owned by Men	177 (40.1%)	35 and under	67 (16.2%)
<b>Alberta</b>	78 (17.7%)	Owned by Women	181 (41.0%)	36 to 64	327 (79.0%)
<b>Saskatchewan</b>	120 (27.2%)	Owned by Non-Binary Individual(s)	2 (0.5%)	65+	20 (4.8%)
<b>Manitoba</b>	61 (13.8%)	Owned by Two-Spirit Individual(s)	5 (1.1%)		
<b>Ontario</b>	24 (5.4%)	Co-Owned	63 (14.3%)		
<b>Quebec</b>	2 (0.5%)	Other	9 (2.0%)		
<b>Atlantic</b>	23 (5.2%)				
<b>Territories</b>	9 (2.0%)				
<b>Nunavut</b>	3 (0.7%)				
<b>Multiple Provinces of Operation</b>	16 (3.9%)				

\*The participants who identified as Two-Spirit also identified with another gender listed. These participants are reflected in both the calculation for Two-Spirit identity, and the calculations for Man/Woman/Non-Binary above if they provided responses to each.

\*\*Since participants were able to select all responses that apply, percentages below add up to more than 100%. A new variable code was created to reflect businesses operating in more than one province.