

2024

APPENDIX 1

INDIGENOUS FUNDING FRAMEWORK



CONTENTS



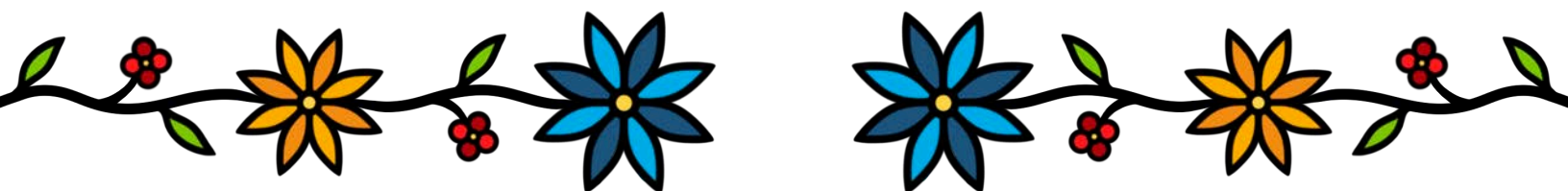
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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The City of Toronto acknowledges that we are on the traditional territory of many nations including the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Anishnabeg, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee, and the Wendat people and is now home to many diverse First Nations, Inuit, and Métis people.

We also acknowledge that Toronto is covered by Treaty 13 with the Mississaugas of the Credit.



HOW THIS JOURNEY STARTED



Social Development, Finance and Administration (SDFA), the Toronto Aboriginal Support Services Council (TASSC) and Indigenous organizations funded through the Community Service Partnerships program initiated this work in 2018, motivated by a joint mission that recognizes a persistent historical and contemporary reality: Indigenous organizations have long suffered from chronic underfunding and disproportionate resource allocation. Typical funding structures are inflexible and do not support self-determination, and relationships between funders and funded groups are often transactional, placing significant administrative burden on Indigenous organizations and diminishing the capacity of funders to truly connect meaningfully with the community and funded initiatives that exist.

Motivated to change this, an Advisory Committee was formed to guide this work. This committee has played a pivotal role in transforming City-wide policy, driving procedural changes, and in spearheading unprecedented funding developments.

The Indigenous Funding Framework is a living document that reflects this work and our commitment to equitable funding investments and processes that reflect the self-determined needs and supports identified by Indigenous organizations and communities.

TORONTO'S URBAN INDIGENOUS COMMUNITY

The urban Indigenous community bears the enduring weight of historical and contemporary injustices stemming from colonization and oppressive colonial policies, including the Indian Act, the traumatic legacy of residential schools, the harrowing chapter of the Sixties Scoop, and the ongoing exclusion of Indigenous people from full participation in the Canadian economy and society as a whole. These injustices have cast a long and persistent shadow, manifesting in disproportionately high rates of unemployment and a lower socio-economic status within the Indigenous population. The intergenerational impact of systemic discrimination, displacement and dispossession continues to shape the socio-economic landscape for Indigenous communities, emphasizing the urgent need for comprehensive and equitable initiatives to address these deeply rooted disparities.

Indigenous-led organizations have played a pivotal role in serving Indigenous residents through a variety of efforts that support strong cultural, language, ceremonial and identity reclamation, which all contribute to Indigenous sovereignty both inherent and legal.



POPULATION

TORONTO'S URBAN INDIGENOUS COMMUNITY

Past and recent Census data reflects a substantial undercounting of Indigenous people due to a long-standing and continued mistrust of colonial processes and institutions. Government data sources do not reflect the past or current realities of the demographic complexities of Indigenous people, including the vast majority (86%) who live off-reserve and in cities such as Toronto.

Our Health Counts (OHC) Toronto is an inclusive, community-driven health survey for Indigenous peoples in Toronto and "... aims to address the health information gap and ensure that urban Indigenous communities have ownership, access, control, and possession of data that impacts their health and wellbeing. (Smylie et al. (2011). OHC estimates that there are 80,000 – 100,000 Indigenous people of diverse and intersectional identities that call Toronto home. Further, Toronto continues to be a place where Indigenous people migrate to from across Turtle Island to settle and call this place home.

Accurately understanding this gap is critical to addressing the self-determined needs in Toronto's Indigenous communities.



POPULATION

TORONTO'S URBAN INDIGENOUS COMMUNITY

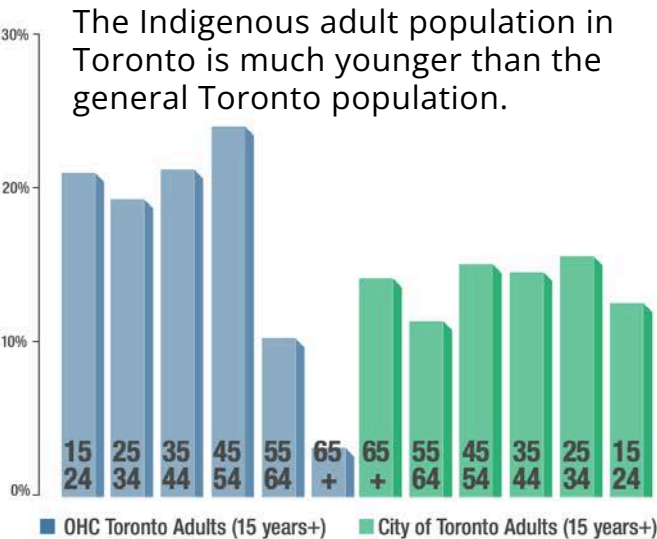
OUR HEALTH COUNTS – SURVEY FINDINGS

Source: Our Health Counts Toronto Report, Page 3

Population-level Data Collection

- Only 14% of Indigenous adults in Toronto completed the 2011 Census. To obtain a representative sample, 70% of households should have completed the Census.
- Only 16% completed the 2011 National Household Survey (NHS).
- OHC Toronto study findings indicate that there are **80,000 – 100,000** Indigenous adults in Toronto. This is 3-4 times more than estimated by Statistics Canada. (The 2011 NHS estimates that 15,650 Indigenous adults live in Toronto)

Identity Age



86% of Indigenous adults in Toronto identified as First Nations.

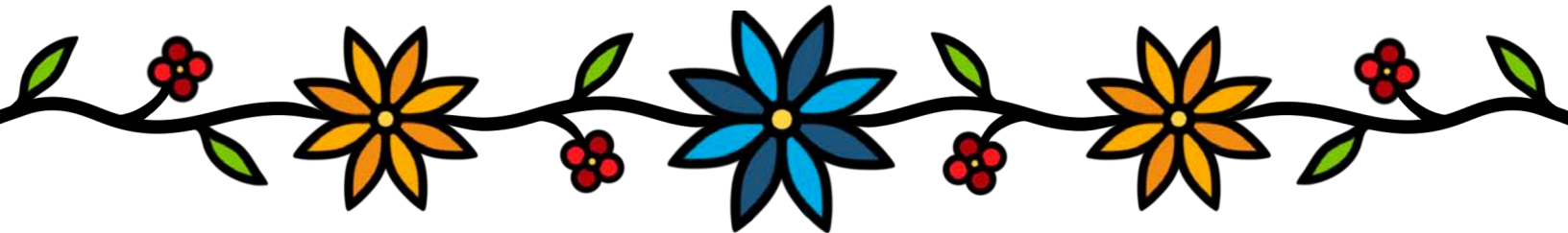
14% identified as Métis.

0.4% identified as Inuit.

81% of First Nations adults had federal “Indian Status”.

19% were non-status.

0.5% identified as First Nations and Métis.



POPULATION

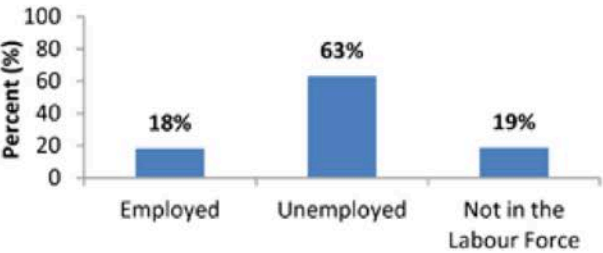
TORONTO'S URBAN INDIGENOUS COMMUNITY

OUR HEALTH COUNTS – SURVEY FINDINGS

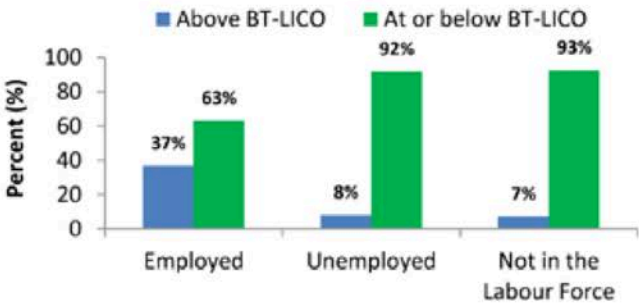
Source: Our Health Counts Toronto Report, Page 5-7

Employment

63% of Indigenous adults in Toronto were unemployed compared to 7% of adults (15 years+) in Ontario (LFS2016).

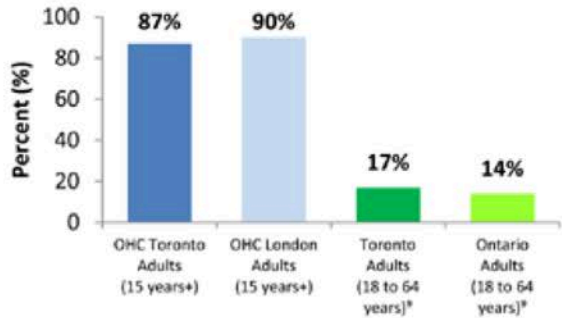


Almost 2 in 3 employed Indigenous adults lived at or below the before-tax low-income cutoff.



Poverty

87% of Indigenous adults in Toronto fell below the before tax Low-Income Cut-Off (LICO).



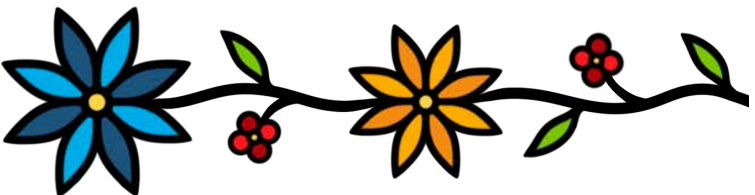
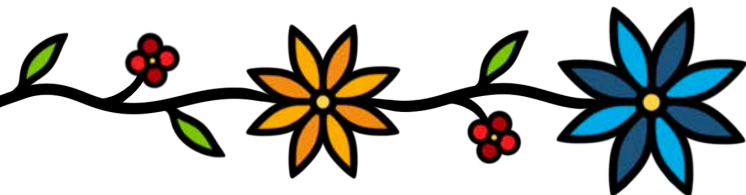
3 in 5 (61%) Indigenous adults in Toronto said their overall health/wellbeing had been affected by financial hardship in the past 12 months.

Over half of Indigenous adults in Toronto believed that their ability to engage in preventative health activities had been affected by financial hardship.

Leading sources of income for Indigenous adults were:

- Disability (Ontario Disability Support Program)
- Provincial/Municipal Social Assistance or Welfare
- Wages and Salaries from Employment

92% of Indigenous children live in households that fell below or at the before tax Low-Income Cut-Off (LICO).



TIMELINE

2018

Indigenous organizations and City staff begin working together to address the policies and processes that have resulted in chronic underfunding. A new relationship is forged that goes beyond data and reporting.

2019

Toronto Grants Policy is revised to recognize the unique status and considerations that must be extended to Indigenous organizations applying for City of Toronto grants.

2020

COVID-19 emergency begins and Indigenous organizations work together on joint funding requests and processes, piloting the “take what you need, leave what you don’t” approach.

2021

Pilot launched to disperse \$0.625M of funding in partnership with the Toronto Aboriginal Support Service Council, its members and friends.

2022

Toronto City Council adopts the Reconciliation Action Plan to guide actions to advance Truth, Justice and Reconciliation. Actions 6, 9 and 23 commit to eliminating structural barriers to funding, providing sustainable funding and resources, and shifting power to ensure Indigenous communities can self-determine how funding can support community-identified needs. Pilot expanded to \$1.25M of funding.

2023

TASSC-led engagements brought together 12 Indigenous leaders and 38 funders to inform the IFF. Organizations and funders also completed surveys to provide additional feedback and experiences. Pilot expanded to \$1.85M of funding.

2024

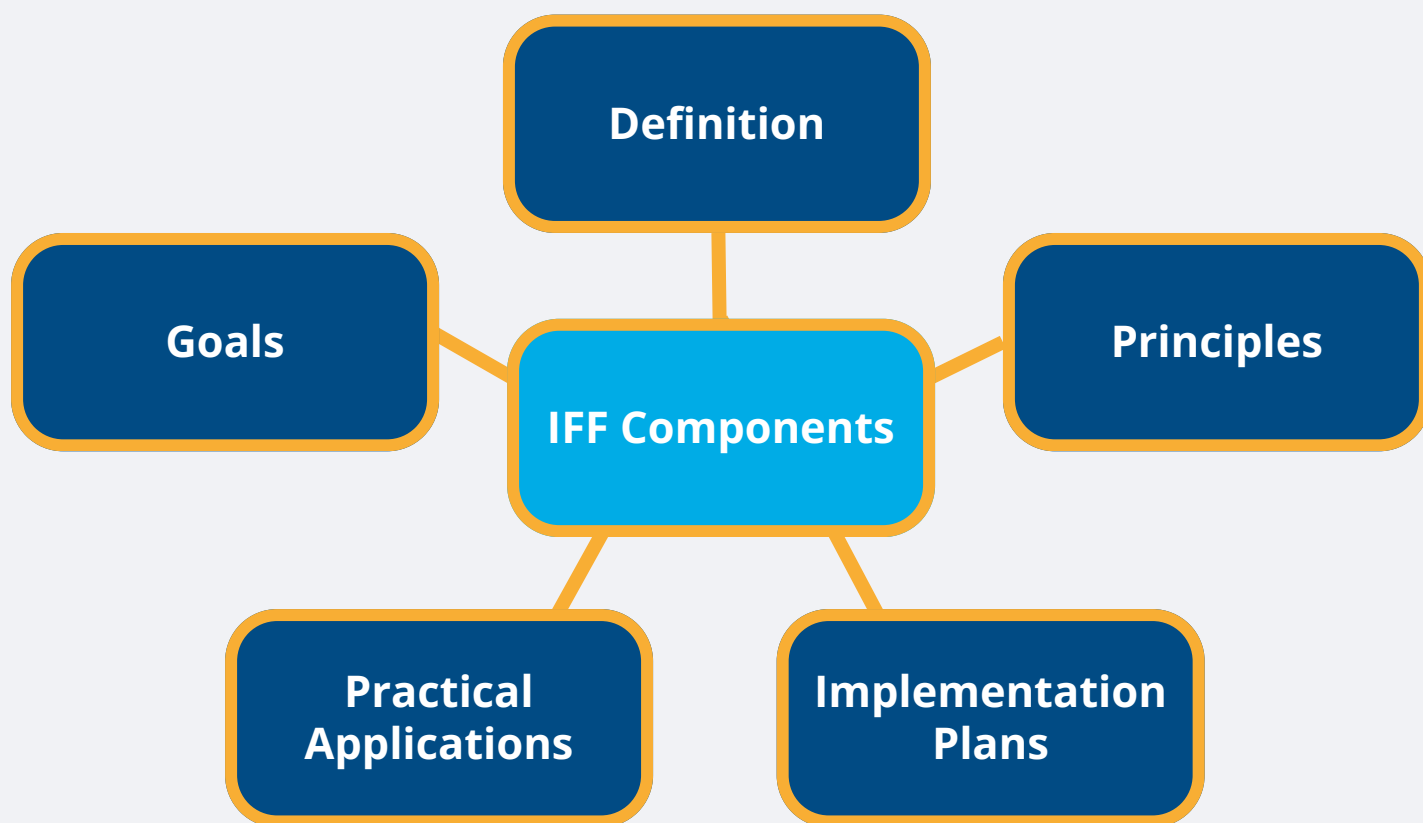
The Indigenous Funding Framework is endorsed by Indigenous not-for-profit organizations and Toronto City Council and pilot expanded to \$1.95M of funding. The Indigenous Affairs Office has contributed \$500,000 to the Indigenous Funding Framework since 2022.

2025

A celebratory feast will celebrate the Framework and our commitment to a new way forward.



INDIGENOUS FUNDING FRAMEWORK COMPONENTS



DEFINITION OF AN INDIGENOUS ORGANIZATION

COMMUNITY AND CULTURALLY CENTERED

- Committed to responding to community needs in a culturally relevant and grounded manner

LEADERSHIP

- Led by a majority of staff and board members who are verified First Nation, Inuit and Métis (FNIM) (e.g., 50% plus one at board and senior levels)

MANDATE

- Mandated to exclusively/primarily serve FNIM

APPROACH

- Governed by FNIM-centred approaches to service, program design, and delivery



RELATIONSHIPS

GUIDING PRINCIPLES

ENGAGE IN MEANINGFUL CONSULTATION

Establish a balanced approach to consultations, avoiding the pitfalls of over-consultation that can lead to fatigue and diminished engagement. Recognize the importance of quality over quantity in building purposeful and meaningful relationships with Indigenous organizations.

REGULAR AND CONSISTENT COMMUNICATION

Foster ongoing relationships with all partner organizations by adhering to a regular communication schedule. This commitment aims to prevent communication lapses, ensuring that important information is consistently shared, and feedback is sought in a timely manner.

CLEAR COMMUNICATION

Prioritize clear and effective communication to eliminate the possibility of missed information. Implement robust communication channels and strategies that facilitate open dialogue, understanding, and collaboration. This approach ensures that vital details are conveyed comprehensively, minimizing the risk of misunderstandings or conflicts.

"TASSC and the City of Toronto's process for self-determined funding shows an evident desire to work in collaboration and partnership with vulnerable sector agencies. We are grateful for the trust shown in our ability to best serve the community we have been serving for over 50 years. This agency-focused perspective is very much appreciated." - Anduhyaun Inc.



PRINCIPLES

RELATIONSHIPS

Build, nurture, and sustain meaningful relationships based on clear communication that facilitates collaboration, transparency and support.

COLLABORATION

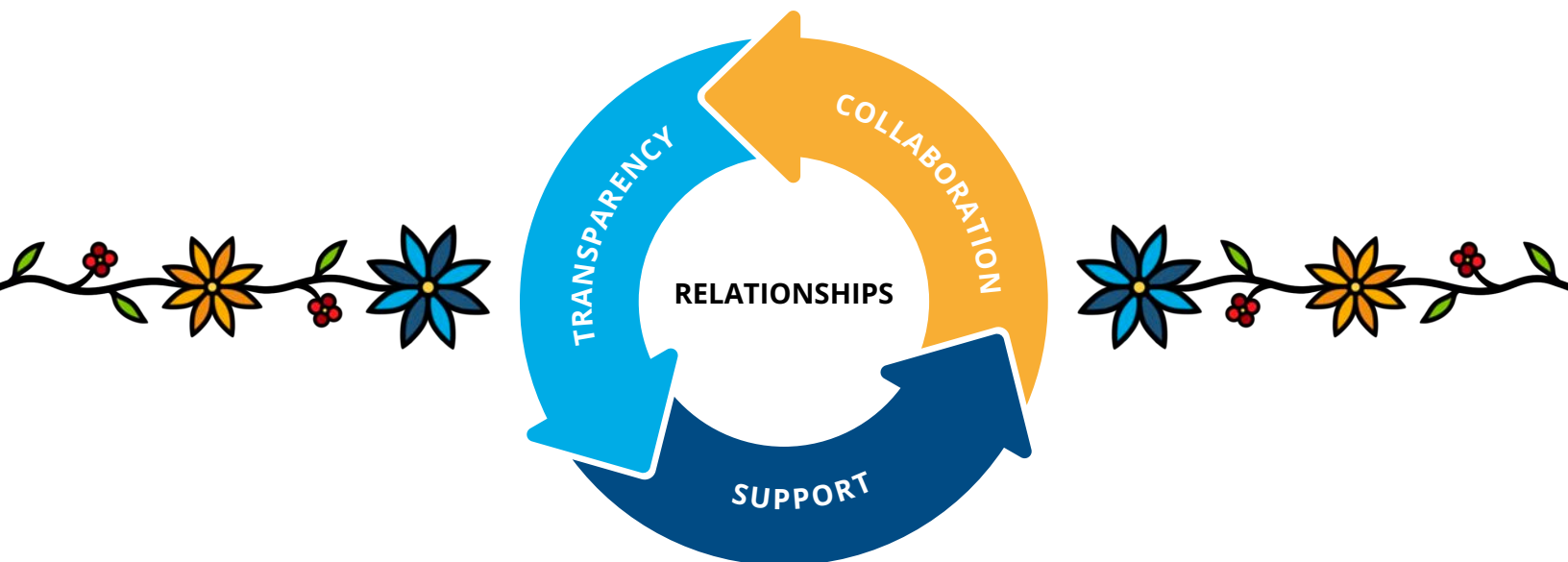
Foster a collaborative approach to resource management within the community. Encourage dialogue and cooperation among service providers to identify synergies, reduce duplication, and collectively address shared challenges.

TRANSPARENCY

Promote transparency in the allocation of funds to mitigate competition-related tensions. Establish clear criteria and communication channels for funding distribution to foster a sense of fairness and trust among service providers.

SUPPORT

Invest in capacity-building initiatives for service providers to enhance their ability to navigate diverse funding sources effectively. This could include training programs, workshops, or resources aimed at improving administrative efficiency.



GOALS

Increase funding to address chronic underfunding and disproportionate resource allocation.

An increase in sustainable funding will provide Indigenous organizations the opportunity to hire dedicated staff and provide invaluable supports for Indigenous communities.

Increase flexibility and honour Indigenous rights to **self-determination**.

Promote a model that empowers Indigenous leaders with the autonomy to self-determine the unique needs of community. Flexibility is essential to support the changing needs of community.

Embrace a **community-centric approach** that **prioritizes relationships**.

Develop application processes collaboratively with community organizations to ensure flexibility, remove barriers and increase transparency. Application and reporting mechanisms should prioritize the diverse needs and capacities of Indigenous organizations.

Create space for **cultural empowerment**.

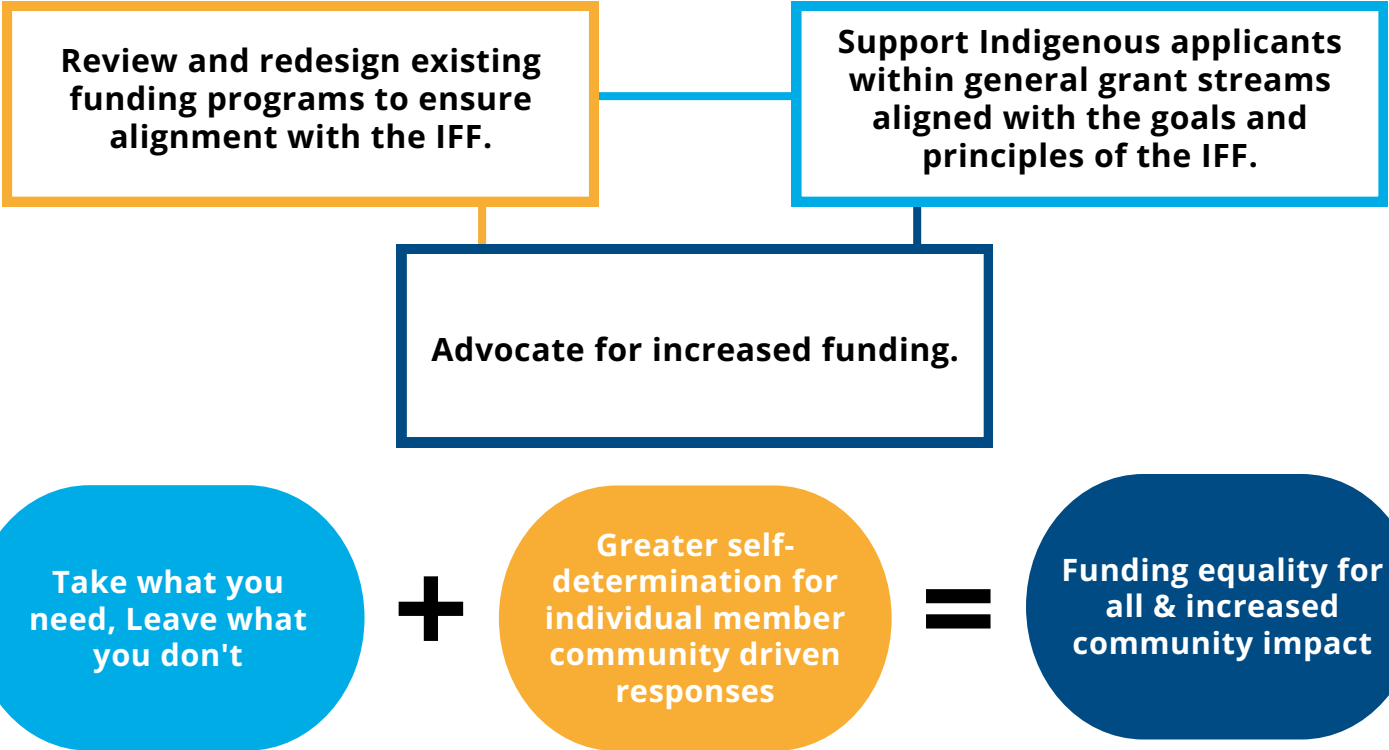
Recognize that the impact of culture cannot be reduced to numerical values. Prioritize creating spaces that honor and celebrate cultural knowledge carriers and Elders, fostering an environment of self-determination where cultural practices are respected and valued.

In a roundtable with Indigenous organizations, the words **relationship, flexibility and self-determination** were used the most by Indigenous community leaders.



PRACTICAL APPLICATIONS

Multiple pathways of transformation exist to ensure that Indigenous organizations and the urban Indigenous communities are empowered to self-determine priorities and approaches that enhance rather than compromise mutual accountabilities.



100% of Indigenous organizations agreed that funding should create financial flexibility for self-determination and cultural considerations.

“Culture is immeasurable, it cannot be calculated. Culture is a part of who we are as Indigenous people and therefore should be viewed as an outcome.” - Anonymous



IMPLEMENTATION PLAN

FOCUS AREA ONE
Framework Implementation in SDFA's Community Funding Unit
December 2024 - December 2025

Focus Area One will evaluate the current “take what you need, leave what you don’t” funding approach, impact, and processes in line with the goals and principles of the Framework. Leverage evaluation data to co-develop robust but culturally relevant reporting mechanisms.

FOCUS AREA TWO
Community Service Partnerships (CSP) Redesign
January to October 2025

Focus Area Two will focus on the Community Funding Unit's CSP redesign and will implement the Framework's goals and principles into the design of our largest and long-term funding stream for organizations across Toronto. Indigenous funding targets will be developed from research in partnership with the Social Policy, Analysis and Research team (SPAR) team. Tailored support will be customized through the redesign process to ensure Indigenous applicants are aware of the funds and are successful.

FOCUS AREA THREE
Streamline Community Funding Grants
October 2025 to December 2026

Focus Area Three will focus on an internal review of all community funding grants to ensure a reconciliation lens reflective of the Framework's goals and principles is applied to each grant program. Consultations will be done with Indigenous grassroots, collectives, and non-profits to ensure the design and application of CFU's grants is open to Indigenous communities and have processes in place to support Indigenous applicants. An outreach strategy for Indigenous communities will be developed.

ONGOING

- Develop and deliver engagement sessions about the Framework with colleagues in Social Development, Finance and Administration, other divisions and external funders to promote the Framework and share learnings.
- Advocate to City Council for increased funding.
- Work collaboratively with other City divisions to continue identifying and implementing improvements to granting processes.

CONTRIBUTIONS



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