

**ASSEMBLY OF FIRST NATIONS**  
**FIRST NATIONS LABOUR MARKET STRATEGY**  
**DRAFT FOR DISCUSSION – NOT FOR DISTRIBUTION**  
**ISSUE PAPER 11 - ESDC Specific Agreements**

**DESCRIPTION:**

Contribution agreements should continue to be negotiated and signed with ESDC but ESDC should recognize and respect the arms-length nature of the agreement and the autonomy of agreement holders and not require exclusivity, either explicitly or inadvertently so that FNLMAAs may enter into other agreements and partnerships consistent with their mandates.

**OPTIONS:**

1. Include a set of principles in the FNLMS policy recognizing FNLMAAs as partners with autonomous decision-making power within the area of their corporate mandate and encouraging FNLMAAs to engage with others, - funders, private sector, delivery agents, – to maximize impact at the community level, further community-based programming and decision making and client-centred approaches
2. Provide input to an ESDC review of program and operational policies to identify and remove those policies that block partnerships and FNLMAAs developing their mandate and pursuing their goals
3. Identify FNLMAAs as partners of choice for ESDC and OGDs representing autonomous First Nations decision-making and capacity to make change in the area of labour market programs and services and leveraging public investment in FNLMAAs (and avoiding duplication or undermining of these investments) (See IP 12, Parallel Aboriginal Programs)

**RATIONALE:**

There is considerable public investment in FNLMAAs and the capacity that they represent is a benefit for First Nations and Canada. They deserve to be treated as valued partners by ESDC and not with mistrust or as enemies. FNLMAAs can achieve goals that ESDC cannot achieve by itself because they are First Nation entities.

While respecting their capacity, FNLMAAs are positioned to partner with other funders, the private sector and other service providers to achieve change in their communities. Their capacity should not be constrained explicitly or inadvertently through ESDC policies. Furthermore, the investments in FNLMAAs should not be duplicated or undermined by fostering the creation of other entities and doing business with exclusive, program-centric organizations.

While it is normal that government programs be in vertical silos, addressing issues of concern to the Government, it is essential that community-based organizations be able to mix and match programs to develop holistic responses to issues which do not fit neat policy silos and which are inter-connected, - e.g. homelessness and employability, youth-at-risk with justice, substance abuse and employment readiness.

**CONSIDERATIONS:**

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Some government programs are extremely directive in their policies making the third party organizations an extension of the government department. ESDC's intent should be to foster independent, First Nations organizations with the capacity to effectively address First Nations employment issues. This approach will have greater impact through partnerships and getting programs to work together rather than in silos.

Placing boundaries around issues and the approved actions of FNLMA creates at best bureaucratic complexity and at worst, barriers to effective programming.

Other policies inadvertently restrict FNLMA independence of action. For example, constraints around communications have been so intrusive as to become an effective barrier to partnerships.

High level policy respecting independence and encouraging partnership will need to be matched by review of operating policies so that the policy intent is not frustrated by operational practices.

**RECOMMENDED OPTION:**

To pursue all the options

**DECISION:**

**DATE AND VERSION:**

Draft 2, November 23, 2016