

# **Service Delivery Change Requests for the ISET Program**

## **Proposed Assessment Process: First Nations Distinction**

**Last Updated November 1, 2018**

First Nations leadership has expressed interest in new agreements, or making changes to the current network of service providers, to create improved service delivery arrangements.

### **Preamble**

In support of the Government of Canada's ongoing commitment to a renewed nation-to-nation relationship with First Nations people and their right to self-determination, Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) is dedicated to considering all requests received from First Nations leadership to improve the service delivery network.

ESDC's mandate is to increase Indigenous participation in the Canadian labour market and support First Nations, Métis and Inuit people's access to sustainable, meaningful employment. The Indigenous Skills and Employment Training (ISET) Program aims to do this by closing the employment and earning gaps between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people and placing greater emphasis on training for higher-quality, better paying jobs.

ESDC, the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) and First Nations leadership are working together to implement the ISET Program. This partnership is the foundation of the fundamental change needed to ensure that First Nations clients receive, and have access to, the best possible supports and services.

### **Guiding Principles**

- Meeting the needs of clients is of primary importance, and will serve as the fundamental basis for service delivery changes.
- In support of self-determination, ESDC acknowledges that First Nations leadership is best positioned to identify the needs of ISET Program clients.
- Ongoing cooperation between ESDC, the AFN, and First Nation leadership is critical to the success of the ISET Program and providing clients with quality services.
- The process for making changes to the network must be transparent and objective.
- The nation-to-nation relationship between the Crown and First Nations will be respected.

- Changes to the service delivery network will be cost neutral. No additional funds are available to create new agreements, so their funding must come from the existing ISET Program budget.
- The creation of new agreements will be an option available to First Nations throughout the existence of the ISET Program. As such, the assessment process will be applied on an ongoing basis.

## **Process**

### Step 1 – Communication and Information Sharing

First Nations leadership interested in making changes to the service delivery structure will be provided with an information package that will include an outline of the assessment process, a blank copy of the ISET Program agreement, and other supporting materials to help prepare them. This package will be provided by the Indigenous Programs Directorate (IPD), which is a part of the Program Operations Branch of ESDC.

Service Canada (SC) will be available to answer inquiries and support First Nations leadership as they proceed through the change request process.

### Step 2 – Initiating a Change Request

To initiate a service delivery change, a request needs to be sent to IPD, or supported by, First Nations leadership. The request must be explicit, clear and provided by a person or governing body that speaks with authority on behalf of the First Nation to reflect that the community and/or targeted clients, either potential or actual, support the recommended change. The request will need to be provided in writing. Canada will in turn acknowledge receipt of the request in writing.

### Step 3 – A Transparent and Objective Process

Parties directly affected by a service delivery change request are to be notified. First Nations leadership requesting a change should, therefore, notify their existing service provider of their intent to obtain a new agreement or amend the service provider network. A copy of this notification needs to be provided to IPD. In the event of a possible dispute, it is recommended that the parties involved work together to resolve any issues before the agreement request proceeds to assessment, as this may address or negate the change request. Service Canada Regional Offices and IPD will help facilitate these discussions if requested.

## Step 4 – Impact Evaluation

The assessment process will include an impact evaluation to determine how a change request will affect the overall existing service delivery structure. This includes assessing the impact on funding arrangements because no additional funds are available to create new agreements. This means that funding must come from the existing network of service providers.

The viability of a change request will need to be reviewed by the affected parties to ensure a mutually agreed solution. It is possible that certain requests may not be able to proceed due to their adverse effect on client services. This is in alignment with placing the needs of clients first.

## Step 5 – Readiness Assessment for New Agreements

Only requests for new agreements proceed to Step 5.

In order for requestors to obtain an agreement in the ISET Program, they must first demonstrate their capacity to manage transfer payments. To assess this capacity, the following factors must be considered:

- Governance
- Planning
- Financial Management
- Delivering Results

A capacity assessment tool will be used to evaluate a requestor's competencies in these areas to determine if the necessary requirements are met.

## **Post Assessment Action Plan**

When an organization meets all the requirements outlined above and demonstrates that they have the capacity to manage their own agreement, they will become a new recipient in the ISET Program. If the assessment process finds that certain requirements could not be met, organizations pursuing new agreements can:

- Focus on building their capacity in targeted areas to improve and increase their overall ability to deliver and manage employment training programs. IPD and SC regional offices will support organizations to accomplish this.
- Negotiate with other organizations/communities to combine existing expertise and resources to form a new organization that has the demonstrated capacity to meet all the requirements outlined above and obtain a new agreement.
- Remain with their current service provider.
- Change service providers.

## **Self-Governance Considerations**

- It is understood that certain First Nation communities already exercise a level of self-governance and manage a number of grant and contribution agreements through other programs. These grant and contribution agreements may be presented as conclusive evidence of their capacity to manage a contribution agreement in the ISET Program. If these agreements align with the requirements of an ISET Program agreement, Step 5 of the ISET Program assessment process would be shortened. Steps 1-4 still apply.
- Many First Nations communities operate under their own by-laws and regulations. The assessment process will respect and accommodate these by-laws, but an assessment of the essential requirements to confirm an organization capacity to manage an ISET Program agreement will be completed to ensure due diligence on the part of ESDC.

## **Timelines**

New agreements can be operationalized at any time so long as requestors complete the assessment process outlined above and have the demonstrated capacity to manage their own contribution agreement.

Specifically when the ISET Program replaces the ASETS on April 1, 2019, longstanding requests will be assessed in a large batch, as the transition offers an ideal opportunity to address these accumulated requests simultaneously. However, April 1, 2019 is only the start date for operationalizing new recipient agreements in the ISET Program. Requests that are not ready to be operationalized by this date can be at a later date, just like requests for new agreements can be submitted at any point during the existence of the ISET Program.