

National First Nations Early Learning and Child Care (ELCC) Policy Framework

Mandated 2016-2018 AFN Chiefs in Assembly - Adopted by Canada September 2018

1. Preamble

First Nations have an inherent and sacred responsibility for their children and families.

We have entered a new political climate—one which brings unprecedented opportunity for transformative, systemic change for First Nations peoples. These opportunities are situated in a broad social political climate of reconciliation, healing, and relationship-building between the Government of Canada and First Nations peoples. This climate has been over two decades in the making, with the release of the final report of Royal Commission on Aboriginal Peoples (RCAP) celebrating its 20th anniversary in 2016, the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples in 2007 and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) launched in 2008 released its final report in 2015, including 94 Calls to Action aimed at reconciliation.

Many of the TRC Calls to Action focus on the well-being of Indigenous children, recognizing their importance to the health and healing of Indigenous communities. The TRC called on the Government of Canada to reduce the numbers of Indigenous children in care, to eliminate discrepancies in educational funding and to develop culturally appropriate curricula, and to close the gaps in maternal and child health between Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples. The creation of a First Nations-specific system of early learning and child care (ELCC) is one step toward addressing TRC Calls to Action and toward realizing First Nations inherent responsibilities within the framework of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.¹

In realizing First Nations inherent rights to self-determination and governance, a national First Nations ELCC framework builds upon the work and achievements of the last two decades by enhancing, expanding, and supporting innovation within existing programs. Equally important is supporting communities or regions where there are no programs and services, or where they are severely underfunded. This includes children who are primarily cared for at home, either on or off reserve, and families who might not otherwise receive the supports they need to thrive. This First Nations ELCC framework should be seen as a transformative and systemic way forward, one that ensures ELCC policies, programs, and services are working towards ensuring that all First Nations children and families receive the supports they need, where, when and how they need them. The framework can and should support a diverse suite of programs and services that comprise a First Nations ELCC system. This system will provide choices for families and communities and ensure the optimal health and well-being of First Nations children and families, as the foundation of culturally-strong communities and First Nations governance and self-determination.

This framework should be seen not as prescriptive. Informed by regional First Nations ELCC engagements and the lessons of twenty years of experience with Indigenous ELCC, it instead provides a vision, principles, and strategic actions that will come together to create a comprehensive national First Nations

¹ In committing to the TRC Calls to Action, Canada commits to full adoption and implementation of the UN Declaration on the rights of Indigenous Peoples (TRC calls to action 43 & 44). The UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples requires the development of Indigenous capacities in the free pursuit of self-determination (Article 3), of Indigenous autonomy and self-government (Article 4) where ELCC is a distinct Indigenous social and cultural institution (Article 5).

ELCC system, one implemented and coordinated by regions and communities. Strategic actions are offered as a series of well-informed considerations for development and implementation of the system.

The goal of this framework is to provide a way forward together in the creation of structures that will best support First Nations families, as well as the autonomy and self-determination of First Nations. It is founded on recognition of inherent rights and title in developing and emerging contexts of First Nations governance. It will therefore necessitate cross-sectoral coordination and partnership—for example with health and education sectors—to best realize the direction of First Nations leadership and respond to the needs and hopes of First Nations communities for their children.

A First Nations ELCC framework must begin and end with children and their families, in the languages and cultures passed down through the generations, and through authorities governed by First Nations themselves for their own peoples, and for their own futures. It is important to critically and historically reflect on programs and services that are created for young Indigenous children especially those that are interfacing with or attending formalized programs.

We believe that ...

- Children are a gift to us from the Creator
- Parents, families and communities have a sacred and shared responsibility to care for their children
- Children are considered the highest priority of parents, of family and of community
- Children embody the past, live the present and promise the future
- Each child is born with a gift(s) to be realized and nurtured
- First Nations children and families have been, and continue to be, impacted by colonization

2. Scope

Includes programs and services designed for First Nations children and their families, birth to 6 years of age; while the emphasis is on the early years, regions will have the flexibility to determine when children are ready to transition to formal schooling.

This policy framework focuses first on federally funded authorities, systems, programs and services providing direct ELCC² supports, but it anticipates facilitating new regional partnerships among First Nations and with provincial and territorial governments and other stakeholders—where appropriate and desired by First Nations.

² Early Learning and Child Care is meant to be an encompassing term that covers the span of a young child's life from birth until they enter into a formal education system. There is great variability in attributing age to this part of the lifespan, however 0-6 years is quite common in most parts of the country. These age differences are evident in programs such as the First Nations Inuit Child Care Initiative where the scope of the program is for children 0-12 years of age while the focus of many Head Start programs is children aged 3-5 years. And in some First Nations regions a specific age is not stated but rather describes a developmental readiness, for example, "at such time as the child is ready to enter the formal education system". Early learning in this case refers to all the learning the child undertakes from the time they are born and or may also indicate programs and services that have learning as readiness for school focus. Child care identifies a type care where the care of children by a care provider—either outside of the home or in the home—takes place while the primary caregiver or parent(s) are away from home for education or employment. Day care or child care centres usually provide care in a group setting, and are staffed by early childhood educators. This form of care is philosophically oriented to developmentally and culturally appropriate practice that focuses on the growth and development of the whole child in-context and is not bound by a formal curriculum beyond the stages of children's growth and development.

3. Vision

Healthy, happy, First Nations children and their families are supported by a regionally-driven early learning and child care systems—rooted in Indigenous languages and cultures, and governed by First Nations.

4. Mission

To establish a First Nations specific early learning and child care system of programs, services, and supports controlled by First Nations through ongoing community engagement, collaborations, partnerships, and coordinated approaches to planning, implementation, and governance.

5. Guiding Principles and Goals

5.1 Indigenous knowledges, languages and cultures

Early learning and child care programs, services and supports are anchored in distinct First Nations knowledges. Languages and cultures and expressions of First Nations knowledge systems are inextricably linked to children’s individual and collective identity formation. It is imperative that the loss of First Nations language and cultural ways is address and the opportunity for language and cultural enhancements are considered with equal importance.

Goals

- Programs and services reflect First Nations cultures, values, traditions, protocols and practices
- Capacity and funding for language programs is adequately resourced

5.2 First Nations governance

First Nations have direct influence in decision-making at all levels of policy development and governance with respect to early learning and child care and other related programs and services that support the well-being of children and their families.

Goals

- Transfer of authority for ELCC to First Nations is achieved
- Increased capacity for First Nations to develop, implement, evaluate and support ELCC systems, programs and services at all levels (local, regional and national) is realized
- Accountability measures are developed by First Nations at all levels of ELCC service delivery
- Evaluation framework is designed and implemented by First Nations

5.3 Quality programs and services

Early learning and child care programs, services and supports are diverse and of high quality. They emulate the distinct languages and cultures in which they are situated and are evident children’s learning and physical environments, education and remuneration of early childhood educators, inclusion of Elders, and family and community engagement.

Goals

- There is sufficient, appropriate and sustainable funding to support quality programs and services
- Enhanced quality of ELCC programs, services and supports is achieved
- Funding for language programming is fully resourced
- Human resources strategies are developed and implemented and focused on valuing ECE staff, their

education and remuneration

5.4 Inclusive, accessible and flexible

Early learning and child care programs and services are available and are of high quality and affordable for all First Nations children and families. At the programmatic level, early learning and child care programs and services are flexible and responsive to the unique and diverse needs of First Nations children and their families. Children and families with diverse and exceptional needs are well supported.

Goals

- Increased availability and participation in ELCC programs, services and supports by First Nations children and families
- Access to high quality service will be enhanced and gaps in services addressed
- Funding is flexible and responsive to regional needs and community diversity
- Improved availability of supports for children with diverse and exceptional needs

5.5 Transparent and accountable

Programs and services will be transparent and accountable to the children, families, and communities they serve. Funders, external agencies, stakeholders, and ELCC programs and services will share information in transparent and ethical ways using OCAP principles. Accountability at all levels is reciprocal; partners work together collaboratively and transparently to achieve shared goals.

Goals

- Reciprocal accountability measures and processes are in place
- Capacity for First Nations evaluation processes, methods and supports is in place

5.6 Collaborations and partnerships

Collaborations support the establishment of a coordinated, integrated First Nations early learning and child care system of programs, services and supports. National and regional partnerships create opportunities to address the needs of First Nations children and their families in comprehensive, holistic, effective and efficient ways.

Goals

- National and regional linkages between relevant federal departments and First Nations exists as a part of the First Nations ELCC system
- Inter-ministerial ELCC program and service coordination congruent with regional First Nations efforts is effective and responsive to regional direction
- Collaborative relationships with other similar and related programs and services are in place, recognizing and supporting the integrity of families and communities over that of programs and services

5.7 Capacity development

The success of a First Nations ELCC system is dependent on First Nations capacities at national, regional and community levels. Capacity development support at all levels is essential to the establishment and implementation of an effective and legitimate First Nations ELCC framework.

Goals

- National First Nations support structures are established and operationalized

- Regional coordinating structures are created and operational
- Community capacity, including planning engagement and staff development is ongoing

6. Implementation: Strategic Actions

The previous sections of this ELCC framework present a vision, mission, guiding principles, and goals that articulate the outcomes of the overall framework. This section offers strategic actions aimed at realizing the framework goals. These strategic actions identify considerations and ways for moving toward a holistic, comprehensive First Nations system of ELCC programs and services while ensuring the necessary openness and flexibility to enable regions to meet the specific ELCC needs and aspirations of their Nations' children and families. These actions are also situated in broader contexts of First Nations rights and responsibilities.

First Nations' collective vision for First Nations children and families is to have their own distinct yet coordinated system of early learning and child care which ensures culturally appropriate, high quality child and family focused programs and services. Implementation strategies must be developed in a manner consistent with First Nations rights and agreements:

- First Nations inherent right and title is recognized, respected and operationalized
- The care and education of children is both an inherent right and sacred responsibility
- New approaches such as the development of a First Nations ELCC Agreement(s):
 - are without prejudice to First Nations interests
 - do not impact on Aboriginal Title and Rights or the treaty rights of First Nations
 - are without prejudice to any self-government agreements, land claims or court proceedings
 - do not impact on the fiduciary duty of the Crown, nor impact on existing federal funding agreements with individual First Nations unless First Nations want the agreements to change
 - enact the spirit and contents of the UN Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the Principles and Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada

6.1 Governance and ELCC Service Delivery

Regional ELCC Coordination Structures

To ensure First Nations authority over early learning and child care programs, services and supports nationally, regionally and locally, this framework proposes the creation of regional ELCC coordination structures. These will be determined and mandated by each region's First Nations leadership. They will focus on regional coordination and support for programs, services, leadership, community engagement, quality support, partnerships and accountability.

The governance of the structures rests with each region's First Nations leadership. In some regions there are structures in place that may take on regional framework implementation, while in other regions new structures will have to be created. Establishment and/or mandating of these structures should include engaging First Nations leadership, institutional partners, professional practitioners and community representation.

Funding for these structures and activities will come from federal sources associated with but separate from program and service funding, ideally linked to progress on new fiscal arrangements among the First Nations and the federal government—as well as with provincial and territorial governments. Because First

Nations ELCC is currently supported by multiple levels of government, provincial and territorial governments may also become key partners in ELCC governance transformation, where appropriate and desired.

Through the framework, regional First Nations ELCC governance will have expression nationally. The National First Nations ELCC Experts Working Group of the Assembly of First Nations in partnership with the federal government will support regional structures in the implementation of the First Nations ELCC framework.

Strategic Actions

The following table identifies strategic actions that lead toward implementation of governance and service delivery models that support a First Nations ELCC system. They are meant as a resource for systems and capacity development in this area of framework implementation, and will be enriched, enhanced and further developed from regional experience of implementation. Strategic actions may also be used for regional implementation work plan development and evaluation.

GOVERNANCE AND ELCC SERVICE DELIVERY			
STRATEGIC ACTIONS	Short Term Actions	Medium Term Actions	Long Term Actions
Structural	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage with First Nations communities to identify their ELCC needs and aspirations for their children and subsequent ELCC programs and services Who: First Nations Establish a bilateral or tripartite table in each region to oversee the coordination of First Nations ELCC structures to support programs, services and related activities Who: First Nations and federal and provincial governments Develop ELCC inter-sectoral agreements and partnerships that will enable national, regional and local coordination of ELCC Who: First Nations and federal and provincial government ministries as appropriate and desired. Explore specific First Nations national collaborative models Who: First Nations Develop an action plan for the integrated coordination of federally funded early childhood programs and services – and for the implementation of First Nations authority in First Nations ELCC Who: First Nations and Federal government 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Facilitate transitional arrangements to reconcile national, provincial, & territorial legislative authority toward First Nations governance in ELCC Who: First Nations and provincial/territorial ministries and regulating bodies Create accredited First Nations controlled, culturally appropriate early childhood education and training programs and accreditation processes Who: First Nations Develop partnerships with provincial governments (to be determined by First Nations) for transforming and implementing current early childhood standards and regulations as an element of First Nations governance Who: First Nations and provincial Governments Consult and collaborate (where appropriate) with provincial early childhood institutions and accreditation bodies a first step in the establishment of First Nations early childhood training strategy and accreditation Who: First Nations, training institutions and provincial accrediting bodies 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement enabling structures and agreements to support First Nations governance of a range of ELCC programs and services Who: First Nations Implement a national overarching multi-partite ELCC coordinating structure Who: First Nations, federal and provincial governments Implement First Nations early learning and child care Standards and Regulations Who: First Nations
System	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish a Regional First Nations ELCC Coordination structure in each of the regions 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Implement First Nations regional and community ELCC system infrastructure

	<p>Who: First Nations and federal and provincial governments (as directed by regional First Nations leadership)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create First Nations-specific policies, procedures and guidelines for First Nations governance of First Nations ELCC programs and services <p>Who: Regional First Nations ELCC structures and Federal government</p>		<p>Who: First Nations</p>
Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure inclusion of parents, families and elders in the design, direction and implementation of community based ELCC programs and services <p>Who: First Nations communities with Regional First Nations ELCC Coordination structure support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure programs, services and supports are governed to meet the needs of the children regardless of ability, responds to the needs of the families, and are flexible and responsive to the changing circumstances of children families and communities <p>Who: First Nations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop linkages between ELCC programs in the communities and where relevant within the region <p>Who: First Nations communities with Regional First Nations ELCC Coordination structure support</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinate federally funded programs with the ELCC system of programs and services <p>Who: First Nations with Regional First Nations ELCC Coordination structure support</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operationalization of a range of First Nations ELCC programs, services and supports <p>Who: First Nations communities with Regional First Nations ELCC Coordination structure support</p>

6.2 Quality Programs and Services

First Nations ELCC programs contribute to the strengthening of communities insofar as they support lifelong development and learning of cultural identity and belonging to family, community and peers during the critical period of early childhood.³ As well, it has been shown that high quality ELCC programs and services can help ensure improved health and well-being for children, particularly those who experience poverty and disadvantage.⁴ Children who attend high quality ELCC programs are more likely to develop the personal, social, and intellectual dispositions necessary to thrive in their education and broader life experiences. Quality ELCC programs foster development of self-confidence, mental health, and social skills that can help children sustain relationships and resolve conflicts, foster an interest in learning and academic success, develop successful parenting skills, and be less prone to becoming involved in criminal activities—ultimately leading to better life.⁵

Strategic Actions

The strategic actions in the table below lead toward implementing a First Nations ELCC system of high quality community based system of programs and services. The structural and systemic actions identified are intended to enable and support the establishment and operation of high quality child and family programming in First Nations communities. They are meant as a resource for systems and capacity development in this area of framework implementation, and will be enriched, enhanced and further developed from regional experience of implementation. Strategic actions may also be used for regional implementation work plan development and evaluation.

³ BCACCS, 2014; Public Policy Forum, 2015.

⁴ Niles et al., 2007.

⁵ Ball, 2005; BCACCS, 2014; Findlay & Kohen, 2010; Preston et al., 2012; Public Policy Forum, 2015.

QUALITY PROGRAMS AND SERVICES			
STRATEGIC ACTIONS	Short Term Actions	Medium Term Actions	Long Term Actions
Structures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure early childhood structures and systems are flexible enough to respond as a commitment to culturally safe Quality in ELCC Who: First Nations • Create national and regional structures to support the coordination of First Nations ELCC programs and services Who: First Nations, federal and provincial governments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop funding formulas that ensure the quality of ELCC programs and services for families Who: First Nations and federal funding agencies • Develop a national statement of First Nations Quality Early Learning and Child Care Who: First Nations with Regional First Nations ELCC Coordination structures support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation of a coordinated high quality ELCC programs and services Who: First Nations • Operationalization of First Nations Early Childhood education and training by First Nations Who: First Nations in partnerships with First Nations controlled and directed post-secondary institutions
Systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish and or support regional structures for the quality of programs and services and continuing community engagement for community, policy and program development Who: First Nations/ Regional First Nations ELCC Coordination structures • Develop funding allocation formulas that maximize resources to community including inflation escalators Who: First Nations and federal government 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop interim arrangements with provinces and territories for the transition of legislative authority over early childhood programs and services for First Nations children Who: First Nations and Provincial/territorial governments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement, support and evaluate First Nations program standards and regulations, support and share innovation and promising practice Who: First Nations and Regional First Nations ELCC Coordination structures
Programs	<p>Language and culture</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure programs reflect the cultures and languages of the children's families and communities Who: First Nations with ELCC coordination structure support • Hire Early Childhood Educators who have cultural knowledge and local language skills Who: First Nations communities • Support early childhood educators to connect with community language speakers and cultural organizations Who: First Nations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employ Elders and local knowledge keepers Who: First Nations communities • Enhance and create culturally and linguistically appropriate early childhood program resources Who: Regional First Nations ELCC Coordination structures and First Nations communities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish nation-specific early childhood programming and curriculum Who: First Nations • Implementation of full language immersion early childhood programs and services Who: First Nations
	<p>Standards and regulations</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engage, reflect and respect the cultures and backgrounds of First Nations children and their families Who: First Nations • Consider First Nations knowledge systems as the foundation for early childhood programs and services Who: First Nations • Ensure children's developmental needs, child staff ratios, staff training and knowledge requirements, and physical environments are considered Who: First Nations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop First Nations specific Standards and Regulations Who: First Nations with ELCC coordination structure support • Establish a regional nation-based structure and processes for First Nations' regulation and monitoring of early childhood program standards Who: First Nations and Provincial/territorial governments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement First Nations regulatory authority over early learning and child care programs and services including monitoring and support Who: First Nations with ELCC coordination structure support
	<p>Early Childhood Educators</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure early childhood educators are certified and have culturally appropriate training that has the knowledge, skills and abilities for 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop accreditation and licensing processes for First Nations Early Childhood Educators Who: First Nations with ELCC 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implementation of accredited First Nations early learning and child care training/education programs Who: First Nations

	<p>working with young First Nations children Who: First Nations communities with the support of Regional First Nations ELCC Coordination structures</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhance and create community-based personnel policies that would identify items such as: scope of practice, qualifications and experience, professional development, salary scales, benefits packages, sick leaves and compassion days Who: First Nations communities Develop recruitment, retention succession planning processes and strategies Who: First Nations communities 	<p>coordination structure support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Engage with early childhood training institutions to ensure First Nations content within the curriculum and pedagogies being taught and developed Who: First Nations with ELCC coordination structure support Explore the development of a First Nations early childhood training programs including accreditation processes Who: First Nations with Regional First Nations ELCC Coordination structures 	
	<p>Environments</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure children are in a safe, secure and healthy and culturally appropriate physical and learning environment Who: First Nations Allocate funding for enhancing and creating children’s physical environments Who: First Nations Ensure opportunities for children to learn, grow and develop to their optimum capacity Who: First Nations 		
	<p>Children’s Programming/Curriculum</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure that children’s programming is developmentally appropriate Who: First Nations Early Childhood Educators Guarantee that children’s needs are met regardless of ability or diverse need Who: First Nations Early Childhood Educators with Regional First Nations ELCC Coordination structure support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop processes for assessing children’s well-being that are anchored in local community knowledge systems and include developmentally appropriate practices Who: First Nations with ELCC coordination structure support 	
	<p>Parent and family Involvement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Undertake community engagement from the onset of First Nations early learning and child care discussions ensuring that children, families and community members’ voices guide the process Who: First Nations Undertake community education campaign to raise awareness of the importance of the early years and the programs and services available to them at the community level Who: First Nations Develop (where necessary) and coordinate with existing parent support programs based on parental needs Who: First Nations communities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhance and create parent/community boards to oversee local early childhood programs and services Who: First Nations with Regional First Nations ELCC Coordination structure support Create parent and family resources targeting parents who do not send their children to formal early childhood programs or services Who: First Nations early childhood programs and services 	
	<p>Administration</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Responds to the needs of the children, families and communities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Enhance and develop evaluation processes and strategies for 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish a national Indigenous early learning and child care roundtable that would provide

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Administrative processes are community focused reflecting the values and ways of the local Indigenous knowledge systems Administrative agreements make available maximum funding (e.g. administrative costs at the regional level not to exceed 10%; local service and projects at the community level would be contained in the core operating budgets) for program and service delivery Who: First Nations Create regional ELCC coordination structures that would include resource persons available to First Nations communities Who: First Nations with government capacity funding support 	<p>community early childhood programs and services Who: First Nations with Regional First Nations ELCC Coordination structure support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a community based management structure with the capacity to oversee management and reporting of expenditures Who: First Nations communities with Regional First Nations ELCC Coordination structure support Establish reporting structures including financial reporting based on accepted accounting practice, standards and methods Who: First Nations 	<p>oversight for: coordination of program and service delivery, implementation of First Nations Standards and Regulations, ensuring transparency and accountability at all levels of the system, provision of resources and support to regions and First Nations communities, providing liaising and advocacy support to First Nations Who: First Nations</p>
	<p>Funding</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure adequate and equitable funding for community based programs and services with attention to equity Who: First Nations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop a contingency fund for hiring staff and supporting programs with resources for language and culture along with other research interests Who: First Nations 	

6.3 Funding Approaches and Allocations

Early learning and child care programs, services and supports for First Nations children and families are funded in varying degrees and levels across the country by both the federal and provincial governments. This framework argues for a “fund the system” approach, which considers ELCC as an integrated system with interconnected parts based on community needs and priorities. First Nations will determine funding allocations at the national and regional levels, and will be involved in all funding decisions where First Nations ELCC is concerned.

The focus of this framework is to ensure universal and equitable distribution of resources available to First Nations ELCC programs, services and supports and to provide regions with a framework for recognizing existing internal authorities, partnerships and allocations, and to develop new authorities, partnerships and allocations. Because First Nations cultures, communities and nations must be supported as integral, all existing funding authorities for First Nations ELCC will coordinate as necessary, in the direction of First Nations leadership.

Specific considerations for First Nations ELCC national funding allocation:

- The number and diversity of First Nations cultures and languages and the need to revive and protect them
- Large, growing and youthful First Nations population
- Existing social and health inequities and disparities
- Children and families with diverse and exceptional needs
- Additional barriers faced by rural, remote, isolated, and northern communities

A more fulsome discussion of national funding considerations and strategies is provided in Appendix A to the National First Nations ELCC Engagement Roll-Up Report accompanying this framework.

Specific considerations for First Nations ELCC regional funding allocation:

- Responds to regional gaps, priorities and needs

- Addresses social infrastructure and facilities in communities
- Provides for capacity development, including training, education, research, engagement and policy and systems development requirements
- Provides for start-up and developmental needs including professional and community capacity, staffing, technical infrastructure and planning and development support
- Takes into account budget 2016-17 ELCC investments in facility and capital improvements
- Allows for communities and programs to meet the lack of access to early intervention and other special supports for children and families
- Considers the barriers (transportation, infrastructure and access to training) and associated high cost of ELCC service delivery in northern, remote and isolated communities

A quality First Nations ELCC system requires increased public investment, effective governance and collaborative planning with governments and First Nations as well as community stakeholders in health, education and social services. Transition to an integrated and well-funded system will require new funding models and mechanisms to be co-determined by First Nations and the government of Canada based on good public policy and evidence about the true cost of quality service provision as well as required capacity development funding and supports.

Strategic Actions

Strategic actions for funding approaches are meant as a resource for systems and capacity development in this area of framework implementation, and will be enriched, enhanced and further developed from regional experience of implementation. Strategic actions may also be used for regional implementation work plan development and evaluation.

FUNDING APPROACHES			
STRATEGIC ACTIONS	Short Term Actions	Medium Term Actions	Long Term Actions
Structural	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop fair and equitable ELCC funding model based on real costs of a quality ELCC system for First Nations children and families Who: First Nations and federal government • Enhance operational funding for programs and services and/or create new ELCC programs and services where service gaps or no services exist Who: First Nations and federal government • Ensure there is adequate funding <u>separate from program funding</u> to establish national and regional First Nations ELCC coordinating infrastructures Who: Federal government 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement First Nations-government ELCC funding mechanisms and processes Who: First Nations and federal government • Consolidate authorities for First Nations ELCC funding among First Nations as they determine Who: First Nations with Regional First Nations ELCC Coordination Centre support, First Nations and federal government 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Implement First Nations regional and community ELCC system infrastructure for all First Nations ELCC funding decisions Who: First Nations
Systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create partnerships and linkages for First Nations governance of First Nations ELCC funding Who: First Nations with Regional First Nations ELCC Coordination Centre support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create policies and guidelines for regional and local allocations ensuring First Nations-determined governance and reciprocal accountability Who: First Nations with Regional First Nations ELCC Coordination Centre support 	

Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inform and involve parents, families and community Elders of First Nations ELCC planning and evaluation Who: First Nations ELCC Coordination Centres	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> With community leadership, support, enhance and create First Nations ELCC programs and services that reflect, promote and preserve the languages and cultures of First Nations communities Who: First Nations with First Nations ELCC Coordination Centre support	
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6.4 Linkages and partnerships

The First Nations ELCC service delivery landscape is complex and multi-faceted. This reality makes it necessary to create and enhance linkages and partnerships at multiple levels and in varied contexts in order to achieve a coordinated system of ELCC programs and services for First Nations children and families.

Coordination is based in respectful relationships. These relationships in the form of linkages and partnerships may be informal or formal, for example, in nation to nation agreements between First Nations and other orders of government, partnerships between programs providing services for the same families, or linkages to post- secondary institutions providing early childhood education, as well as to health and education sectors. The overarching intent of these partnerships and linkages is to:

- extend the reach and quality of ELCC programs and services for First Nations children and families
- enhance existing programs and services
- create continuity of care for children and families
- leverage each other's innovative practice
- harmonize and support mutual policy development
- increase the integrity of ELCC programs and legitimacy of their service structures on First Nations terms
- decrease duplication of efforts
- reduce competition between programs and services

Strategic Actions

Strategic actions for linkages and partnerships are meant as a resource for systems and capacity development in this area of framework implementation, and will be enriched, enhanced and further developed from regional experience of implementation. Strategic actions may also be used for regional implementation work plan development and evaluation.

LINKAGES AND PARTNERSHIPS			
STRATEGIC ACTIONS	Short Term Actions	Medium Term Actions	Long Term Actions
Structural	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create national and regional coordination plans that articulates specific linkages and partnerships Who: First Nations with Regional First Nations ELCC Coordination structures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Following First Nations leadership, create new structures of ELCC through concerted action in partnership Who: First Nations with Regional First Nations ELCC Coordination structures <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create national and regional linkages with related child and family programs and services to extend 	

		reach and scope of ELCC options Who: First Nations, Regional First Nations ELCC Coordination structures and federal government ministries	
Systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ensure policies and guidelines articulate the roles and responsibilities of linkages and partnerships Who: First Nations with Regional First Nations ELCC Coordination structures Facilitate identification and coordination of ELCC programs and services such as AHSOR, FNICCI, K4-K5 programs ... Who: First Nations through Regional First Nations ELCC Coordination structure 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Co-develop new systems for support of First Nations ELCC programs and services Who: First Nations with Regional First Nations ELCC Coordination structures 	
Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create community coordination plans that articulates specific linkages and partnerships Who: First Nations with Regional First Nations ELCC Coordination structure support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Inform and lead systems development and structural transformation Who: First Nations with Regional First Nations ELCC Coordination structures 	

6.5 Reciprocal Accountability, Research and Evaluation

Accountability, research and evaluation are fundamental to successful First Nations ELCC systems, programs and services. These processes can ascertain and inform the successes of the overall First Nations ELCC system as well as its component parts locally, ensure successful First Nations governance and mechanisms of policy development (especially in community and other engagement), as well as facilitate innovation, strength-sharing, observance of OCAP principles, and intercultural knowledge translation. Reciprocal accountability is also a key to successful funding relationships among governments and their delegated agencies and must be made clear in coordination and planning processes.⁶

Strategic Actions

Strategic actions for accountability, research and evaluation are meant as a resource for systems and capacity development in this area of framework implementation, and will be enriched, enhanced and further developed from regional experience of implementation. Strategic actions may also be used for regional implementation work plan development and evaluation.

ACCOUNTABILITY, RESEARCH AND EVALUATION			
STRATEGIC ACTIONS	Short Term Actions	Medium Term Actions	Long Term Actions
Structural	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Develop and facilitate an overall evaluation framework including measures for quality and outcomes Who: First Nations and government 		

⁶ Reciprocal accountability means shared responsibility – amongst First Nations (at community, regional and national levels), the Federal Government, and Provincial Governments – to achieve common goals. Historically, accountability has been a one way relationship from First Nations to governments for funds received. Under governance arrangements, accountability is much broader and not just about money. It is about working together and each Party being responsible for the effective operation of their part of the policy system recognizing that the space occupied by each is interdependent and interconnected. A First Nations ELCC accountability framework shall be developed to ensure effective and legitimate framework operation. A further guide for reciprocal accountability—from health governance—may be found in the BC First Nations Health Council’s (2011) *Consensus Paper on British Columbia First Nations Perspectives on a New Health Governance Arrangement* (from which some of this section is excerpted).

	<p>partners</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a reciprocal accountability framework that is transparent and includes strategies for adequately resourced multi-level accountability Who: First Nations, Regional First Nations ELCC Coordination structures and government(s) • Undertake ongoing ELCC community engagement with children, families and community members as a way to: 1) inform and be accountable to those being served and 2) develop, legitimate and coordinate policy development initiatives including regional institutional and leadership engagement. Who: First Nations • Develop an overarching research framework including intervention and policy initiatives that is informed by regional priorities, initiatives and partnerships' successes and challenges Who: First Nations 		
Systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop formative and summative evaluation strategies that are inclusive of funders, First Nations partners and stakeholders Who: Federal government funding agencies and First Nations • Engage with First Nations in each region to determine and share research needs and support developmental linkages, partnerships and First Nations governance Who: First Nations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a baseline of data for ELCC programs and services Who: First Nations and Regional First Nations ELCC Coordination structures • Integrate research and policy development in First Nations ELCC according to Indigenous protocols, practices and knowledge systems Who: First Nations and Regional First Nations ELCC Coordination structures 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Undertake longitudinal Indigenous-led studies of Indigenous childhood, family and community development in evolving conditions specific to Indigenous experience and histories Who: First Nations and Regional First Nations ELCC Coordination structures
Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop inclusive and transparent community-based evaluation strategies and processes with the guidance of the program and service recipients that feedback into First Nations systems of governance Who: First Nations leadership/government and Regional First Nations ELCC Coordination structures • Co-develop and establish evaluation processes at the onset of new programs and services Who: First Nations with First Nations and Regional First Nations ELCC Coordination structure support • Review and enhance evaluation processes for existing programs and services Who: First Nations with First Nations and Regional First Nations ELCC Coordination structure support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop First Nations community-based research capacities as community leadership (especially for First Nations women) and ELCC capacity promotion Who: First Nations and Regional First Nations ELCC Coordination structures 	

6.6 Capacity Development

First Nations capacities at all levels (community, Nation, region and national) require financial and technical development support in order to realize the goals of this framework. Strategic actions throughout this section of the framework require new and enhanced First Nations capacities in all areas and at all levels

(structure, system & program). 'Capacity' includes professional development and planning support, specialized training and other education, the means for coordination and governance at all levels and for the realization of all that this framework would make possible. With respect to accountability and evaluation, capacity also refers to abilities and resources by which to maintain productive and accountable relationships at all levels, and to work together to ensure transformation of systems and structures.

Strategic Actions

Strategic actions that require and engender capacity development are embedded throughout the strategic actions in this section of the framework. The framework as a whole is for systems and capacity development, divided into specific areas of framework implementation.

CAPACITY DEVELOPMENT			
STRATEGIC ACTIONS	Short Term Actions	Medium Term Actions	Long Term Actions
Structural	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create capacity development committee at the National level to support and monitor First Nations capacity development Who: First Nations and Federal government 		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All responsibility for First Nations capacity support and development in ELCC is First Nations' Who: First Nations
Systems	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create mechanisms for the sharing of capacity development resources among regions with their participation Who: First Nations with Regional First Nations ELCC Coordination Centre support 		
Program	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that First Nations ELCC capacity development begins in communities and their leadership, and is coordinated with regional and national capacity development Who: First Nations 		