



## ASSEMBLY OF FIRST NATIONS

# FIRST NATIONS EARLY LEARNING AND CHILD CARE RESULTS FRAMEWORK AND EVALUATION STRATEGY

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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The development of this First Nations Early Learning and Child Care (ELCC) Results Framework would not have been possible without the guidance, expertise, and dedication of many individuals and organizations.

We extend our deepest gratitude to the National Experts Working Group (NEWG), whose invaluable insights and steadfast commitment to First Nations children and families have shaped this framework. Their leadership and advocacy ensure that the future of ELCC systems remains rooted in First Nations values, cultures, and ways of knowing.

We also wish to acknowledge the First Nations ELCC staff across the country, whose tireless efforts in supporting communities, delivering programs, and advancing the vision of culturally grounded ELCC services have been instrumental in this work. Their on-the-ground knowledge and unwavering dedication to First Nations children, families, and communities are the foundation upon which this framework is built.

Following more than a year of hard work from First Nations ELCC experts, the results framework and evaluation strategy were approved, in principle, by AFN Resolution 31, *First Nations Early Learning and Child Care Results Framework and Evaluation Strategy*. The AFN and the NEWG continue to seek feedback on the indicators within the results framework from all First Nations to ensure the data collected is meaningful. We thank you again for your work, your knowledge, and your commitment to providing high-quality ELCC programming for the next generation of First Nations children.

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# 1. BACKGROUND

In response to the longstanding and historical inequities that First Nations children face in their early years, the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) and the National Expert Working Group (NEWG) on First Nations Early Learning and Child Care (ELCC) developed a National First Nations ELCC Policy Framework, which was endorsed by the AFN First Nations-in-Assembly through AFN Resolution 83/2017, *Support for the National First Nations Early Learning and Child Care Policy Framework*. The Policy Framework was then included by Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC) as the First Nations chapter of the National Indigenous Early Learning and Child Care (IELCC) Framework in 2018. The First Nations ELCC Policy Framework articulates a First Nations Vision of high-quality First Nations-led ELCC:

*First Nations envision a system of diverse, high-quality programs and services that lays the foundation for the health and well-being of First Nations children, provides choices for families, and revitalizes and supports the cultural continuity of First Nations communities and nations. This vision is achieved through a First Nations-led ELCC system of programs and services that are designed and governed by First Nations; rooted in First Nations knowledge, language and culture; guided by Indigenous practices in childhood development; and strengthened by partnerships with governments, service delivery organizations and community members.<sup>1</sup>*

To achieve this Vision, the Policy Framework articulates seven connected principles/goals. They are:

1. A First Nations ELCC system of programs and services that is anchored in distinct First Nations knowledges, languages, and cultures and responds to First Nations priorities, needs and responsibilities.
2. A First Nations ELCC system that is controlled and directed by First Nations, including authority and decision-making at all levels of policy development, and funding allocations and governance, with reciprocal accountability.
3. Well-funded ELCC programs, services and supports that are diverse and of high quality, as evidenced in children’s programming and learning, physical environments, Elders’ leadership, well-trained staff who earn equitable wages, and family and community engagement.
4. ELCC programs and services that are available, affordable, flexible and responsive to the unique needs of First Nations children and their families, including flexible funding approaches that respond to community needs and provide supports for children and families with diverse and exceptional needs.
5. Programs and services that are transparent and accountable.
6. Collaborations and partnerships that support the establishment of a coordinated, integrated First Nations-led ELCC system of policies, programs, services and supports, including national and regional linkages between relevant departments, governments, nations, and related sectors.

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<sup>1</sup> ESDC, 2023.

7. First Nations capacity that is supported at national, regional and community levels to successfully establish and guide a First Nations ELCC system.

Within the First Nations ELCC Framework, the NEWG identified the need to create a First Nations Results Framework and Evaluation Strategy, with the overall goal of measuring progress towards the Vision articulated by First Nations in the ELCC Policy Framework, and committed to by the federal government, as well as supporting First Nations in telling the story of culturally-relevant and self-determined ELCC in meaningful and strengths-based ways.

## 2. WHAT IS A RESULTS FRAMEWORK?

Broadly speaking, a results framework is a structured approach to planning, measuring, and evaluating the success of a program, initiative, or framework that is primarily focused on establishing:

- **Outcomes** - these are the changes or impacts that result from implementation of the First Nations ELCC Framework. They describe what success looks like in concrete terms.
- **Indicators of success** - these are measurable signs that an outcome is being achieved. They provide evidence of progress and help track whether the intended impact is happening.

Given the First Nations Policy Framework is primarily focused on driving transformational systems change, this Results Framework is also focused on measuring progress on systems change. This focus is important to understand because it alerts us to what this Results Framework is **not**: a detailed evaluation of how individual ELCC programs perform. While this work may guide and inform those program level evaluations, this is not the purpose of this Results Framework.

### 2.1 APPROACH

As mentioned, this Results Framework seeks to track progress towards the system change envisioned within the First Nations ELCC Policy Framework. To ensure alignment, we used the seven principles within ELCC Policy Framework as our foundation. Each principle includes a set of outcomes and accompanying indicators of success.

The Results Framework is designed to be **evergreen**, meaning it is a living document that evolves over time. This flexibility ensures that the framework remains responsive, relevant, and reflective of the changing needs, priorities, and realities of First Nations children, families, communities, and ELCC programs.

## 3. KEY TERMS

Evaluation, monitoring, and measurement have a very specific language of their own. With this Results Framework, we have made a best attempt to make this work easily understood and reflective of First Nations practices. However, we have included this list of key terms as a quick guide to support readers.

Key Term	Definition
<b>Outcome</b>	The changes or impacts that result from implementation of the First Nations ELCC Policy Framework. They describe what success looks like in concrete terms. For example, a desired outcome may be:

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased wage equity among First Nations ELCC staff, leading to improved retention, job satisfaction, and overall program quality within First Nations ELCC programs.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Indicator</b></p>	<p>Measurable signs that an outcome is being achieved. They provide evidence of progress and help track whether the intended impact is happening. For example, an indicator for the above outcome may be:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Percentage of First Nations ELCC staff earning wages at or above the median salary for comparable roles in the region, adjusted for experience and qualifications, with a focus on closing any identified pay gaps within the workforce.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Data Source</b></p>	<p>A data source is the origin of information used to measure progress toward an indicator of success in a Results Framework. It provides the evidence needed to assess whether outcomes are being achieved.</p> <p>Data sources can be quantitative (numerical) or qualitative (descriptive) and come from a variety of places, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Program reports and administrative data</li> <li>• Surveys and questionnaires</li> <li>• Interviews and focus groups</li> <li>• Observation and assessment</li> <li>• Census or government data</li> </ul>



<p><b>Principle 2</b></p>	<p><b>A First Nations ELCC system that is controlled and directed by First Nations, including authority and decision-making at all levels of policy development, funding allocations and governance, with reciprocal accountability.</b></p>		
<p><b>General Focus:</b> Governance and Self-Determination</p>	<p><b>INDICATOR 2.1</b></p>	<p>Number of regions with regional governance structures that hold authority and capacity to make decisions related to First Nations ELCC in each respective region.</p>	
	<p><b>Outcome 2.1</b></p>	<p><b>Level</b></p>	<p><b>Potential Data Source</b></p>
	<p>Regions have robust regional governance structures with the authority and capacity to independently oversee and make decisions for First Nations ELCC, contributing to culturally appropriate and region-specific service delivery.</p>	<p>Regional, National (regional funding allocations)</p>	<p>Annual reports from each region’s First Nations ELCC governance body, and administrative data from federal partners regarding First Nations ELCC funding and capacity-building programs.</p>
	<p><b>INDICATOR 2.2</b></p>	<p>Percentage of regional First Nations ELCC governance bodies that report having sufficient capacity (e.g., skills, resources, and knowledge) to guide First Nations ELCC programs/services.</p>	
	<p><b>Outcome 2.2</b></p>	<p><b>Level</b></p>	<p><b>Potential Data Source</b></p>
	<p>Regional First Nations ELCC governance bodies are well-equipped with the skills, resources, and knowledge necessary to effectively guide First Nations ELCC programs and services that meet the needs of their communities.</p>	<p>Regional</p>	<p>Regional annual reports submitted by each First Nations ELCC governance body, which include a section on capacity. This section would provide a brief self-assessment or summary of capacity levels in key areas such as skills, resources, and knowledge, offering a straightforward and consistent way to track capacity across regions over time.</p>
	<p><b>INDICATOR 2.3</b></p>	<p>Satisfaction with the transparency and responsiveness of federal departments in the funding allocation process.</p>	

	<b>Outcome 2.3</b>	<b>Level</b>	<b>Potential Data Source</b>
	Regional governance bodies feel well-supported by funding processes that are transparent, responsive to regions and communities.	Regional  Community	Annual satisfaction survey of regional governance bodies and communities including quantitative ratings and qualitative feedback on transparency and responsiveness within the funding allocation process.

<b>Principle 3</b>	<b>Well-funded ELCC programs, services and supports that are diverse and of high quality, as evidenced in children’s programming and learning, physical environments, Elders’ leadership, well-trained staff who earn equitable wages, and family and community engagement.</b>		
<b>General Focus:</b> Ensuring Quality	<b>INDICATOR 3.1</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Children’s demonstrated growth in culturally valued social skills, such as empathy, cooperation, and responsibility toward others and the land.</li> <li>b. Increased holistic impacts of First Nations ELCC programs and services for families and children.</li> <li>c. Percent of recipient organizations that perceive First Nations ELCC investments as a positive contributor to cultural revitalization.</li> </ul>	
	<b>Outcome 3.1</b>	<b>Level</b>	<b>Potential Data Source</b>
	Increased positive holistic impacts of First Nations ELCC programs and services for First Nations children and families, including children’s increased ability to demonstrate empathy, cooperation, and responsibility in ways that reflect and honour cultural values and relationships, fostering positive connections with their peers, Elders, family members, and the land.	Regional  Community	<p>Annual reports collecting qualitative narratives and observational assessments from families, children, and First Nations ELCC staff, that speak to holistic outcomes of First Nations ELCC programs and services.</p> <p>Narratives from service providers on First Nations ELCC successes and challenges from the past year.</p>

		First Nations ELCC organization feedback on the impacts of First Nations ELCC investments in contributing to cultural revitalization.
<b>INDICATOR 3.2</b>		<p>a. Program satisfaction with the physical spaces of First Nations ELCC facilities in terms of safety, accessibility, and cultural appropriateness.</p> <p>b. Number of organizations offering alternative service options that meet diverse community needs (and what those alternative service options include).</p>
<b>Outcome 3.2</b>	<b>Level</b>	<b>Potential Data Source</b>
Increased satisfaction among families and staff with the safety, accessibility, cultural appropriateness of First Nations ELCC facility physical spaces, and the ability of First Nations ELCC programs and services to meet diverse needs.	Regional Community	<p>Annual reports collecting qualitative observational assessments from ECE staff (could include staff reflections).</p> <p>Annual reports collecting information on the number of First Nations ELCC organizations offering alternative service options, and the types of alternative service delivery options.</p>
<b>INDICATOR 3.3</b>		Percentage of First Nations ELCC staff earning wages at or above the median salary for comparable roles in the region, adjusted for experience and qualifications, with a focus on closing any identified pay gaps within the workforce.
<b>Outcome 3.3</b>	<b>Level</b>	<b>Potential Data Source</b>
Increased wage equity among First Nations ELCC staff, leading to improved retention, job satisfaction, and overall program quality within First Nations ELCC programs.	Regional Community	<p>Regional wage assessment comparing First Nations ELCC staff wages to provincial/territorial benchmarks for similar roles.</p> <p>Additional data sources may include staff satisfaction surveys focusing on perceptions of wage fairness and equity, as well as staff retention and turnover records.</p>

<p><b>Principle 4</b></p>	<p><b>ELCC programs and services that are available, affordable, flexible, and responsive to the unique needs of First Nations children and their families, including flexible funding approaches that respond to community needs and provide supports for children and families with diverse and exceptional needs.</b></p>		
<p><b>General Focus:</b> Available, Affordable, Flexible</p>	<p><b>INDICATOR 4.1</b></p>	<p>Number and percentage of secured and flexible multi-year funding agreements.</p>	
	<p><b>Outcome 4.1</b></p>	<p><b>Level</b></p>	<p><b>Potential Data Source</b></p>
	<p>Increased stability and sustainability of First Nations ELCC programs through secured and flexible multi-year funding agreements that enable long-term planning, program continuity, and adaptability to evolving community needs.</p>	<p>Regional  Community</p>	<p>Annual reports from regional governance bodies based on funding agreement allocations and terms.  First Nations ELCC staff feedback on the adequacy and appropriateness of the funding provided, including identified gaps. Gathered through annual reporting.</p>
	<p><b>INDICATOR 4.2</b></p>	<p>Number of new or renovated facilities.</p>	
	<p><b>Outcome 4.2</b></p>	<p><b>Level</b></p>	<p><b>Potential Data Source</b></p>
	<p>Enhanced access to safe, culturally appropriate, and high-quality First Nations ELCC facilities for First Nations children and families, supporting optimal learning environments that reflect community values and meet health and safety standards.</p>	<p>Regional</p>	<p>Annual reports from regional governing bodies based on funding agreement allocations and terms.</p>

	<b>INDICATOR 4.3</b>	External barriers that impact the delivery of First Nations ELCC and the uptake from students, parents, and families. (i.e., the social determinants of health)	
	<b>Outcome 4.3</b>	<b>Level</b>	<b>Potential Data Source</b>
	Improved understanding of community-specific barriers to First Nations ELCC access. This understanding fosters enhanced program design, greater inclusivity, and increased uptake and satisfaction among students, parents, and families accessing First Nations ELCC services.	Community	Qualitative responses from First Nations ELCC programs in annual reports.
	<b>INDICATOR 4.4</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a. Number of First Nations ELCC funded childcare spaces available to First Nations children.</li> <li>b. Number of First Nations ELCC funded sites.</li> <li>c. Number of First Nations children on waitlists for First Nations ELCC.</li> </ul>	
	<b>Outcome 4.4</b>	<b>Level</b>	<b>Potential Data Source</b>
	Improved reach of programs and services through increased creation and use of culturally appropriate First Nations ELCC physical spaces.	Regional National	Quantitative data from annual reports from each region’s First Nations ELCC governance body.  Administrative data from federal partners regarding First Nations ELCC funding.

<b>Principle 5</b>	<b>Programs and services that are transparent and accountable.</b>
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<b>General Focus:</b> Reporting and Results	<b>INDICATOR 5.1</b>	Annual federal funding allocated to community and regional capacity-building initiatives for research, evaluation, and monitoring for First Nations ELCC.	
	<b>Outcome 5.1</b>	<b>Level</b>	<b>Potential Data Source</b>
	Increased capacity within communities and regions to undertake research, evaluation, and monitoring for First Nations ELCC programs, leading to greater self-determination, culturally relevant data collection, and evidence-based decision-making.	Regional	Annual reports from regional governing bodies based on funding agreement allocations and terms.  Capacity support funding requests not approved (oversubscription to available funds).

<b>Principle 6</b>	<b>Collaborations and partnerships that support the establishment of a coordinated, integrated First Nations-led ELCC system of policies, programs, services and supports, including national and regional linkages between relevant departments, governments, nations, and related sectors.</b>		
<b>General Focus:</b> Collaboration and Partnerships	<b>INDICATOR 6.1</b>	The frequency and quality of engagement between regional First Nations ELCC representatives and key partners across various departments and sectors.	
	<b>Outcome 6.1</b>	<b>Level</b>	<b>Potential Data Source</b>
	Enhanced coordination and communication between First Nations ELCC representatives and key partners, leading to a more unified approach in delivering early learning and child care services.	Regional	Annual reports from regional governing bodies using quantitative metrics (number of engagements) and qualitative responses to determine quality.
	<b>INDICATOR 6.2</b>	Demonstrated embeddedness of community, regional, and national First Nations leadership and direction within federal policy, program, and funding decisions on First Nations ELCC.	

	<b>Outcome 6.2</b>	<b>Level</b>	<b>Potential Data Source</b>
	Federal policy, program, and funding decisions on First Nations ELCC consistently reflect the priorities, values, and direction set by community, regional, and national First Nations leadership, resulting in culturally relevant and community-driven First Nations ELCC services.	Community Regional National	Satisfaction surveys from community, regional, and national First Nations leadership (elected and policy/program leaders) to assess satisfaction with the extent of their ability to enact self-determination within federal First Nations ELCC policy, programming, and funding decisions.

<b>Principle 7</b>	<b>First Nations capacity that is supported at national, regional and community levels to successfully establish and guide a First Nations ELCC system.</b>		
<b>General Focus:</b> Capacity Generation	<b>INDICATOR 7.1</b>	Amount and impact of federal funding allocated to capacity-building initiatives specifically aimed at enhancing First Nations recruitment and retention for First Nations ELCC system development.	
	<b>Outcome 7.1</b>	<b>Level</b>	<b>Potential Data Source</b>
	Increased capacity and sustainability of the First Nations ELCC workforce, demonstrated by higher recruitment and retention rates of First Nations professionals in First Nations ELCC roles, strengthened community-led system development, and enhanced delivery of culturally relevant programs.	National	Federal administrative data, funding allocations.
	<b>INDICATOR 7.2</b>	Number and retention rate of First Nations ELCC professionals at regional and community levels, indicating the growth and sustainability of a skilled First Nations ELCC workforce within First Nations communities.	

	<b>Outcome 7.2</b>	<b>Level</b>	<b>Potential Data Source</b>
	A stable and growing First Nations ELCC workforce in First Nations communities, characterized by increased numbers of professionals, longer employment tenures, and improved workforce sustainability, resulting in enhanced community-led First Nations ELCC program delivery.	Regional  Community	Annual reporting from regional governing bodies.  Annual reporting from community programs.
	<b>INDICATOR 7.3</b>	Amount of funding allocated to building renovations, upgrades, or new builds for ELCC Centers.	
	<b>Outcome 7.3</b>	<b>Level</b>	<b>Potential Data Source</b>
	Safe and usable First Nations ELCC Centers that support both safe and sustainable ELCC Programming, as well as a safe space for staff to teach, case note, and meet with parents.	National	Federal administrative data – funding allocations.

**One Time Indicator**

Implementation of the First Nations ELCC Framework has been ongoing for five years. It is important to tell the story of the First Nations ELCC since the onset of the IELCC initiative. For this reason, the Results Framework includes a “one-time” indicator to capture the successes, challenges, and impacts over the past five years.

<b>Vision of First Nations ELCC</b>	Healthy, happy, First Nations children and their families are supported by regionally-driven early learning and childcare systems—rooted in Indigenous languages and cultures and governed by First Nations.
<b>ONE TIME INDICATOR</b>	Description of key First Nations ELCC initiatives, successes, and challenges over the past 5 years.

Outcome	Level	Potential Data Source
Improved documentation and understanding of the impacts, successes, and challenges of First Nations ELCC over the last five years.	Regional Community	Qualitative narratives from First Nations ELCC families, staff, and organizations about successes, challenges, and holistic impacts of investments in First Nations ELCC from 2020 to 2025.

## 5. EVALUATION STRATEGY

The Evaluation Strategy builds on the Results Framework. It details the ‘how’ of actioning the Results Framework – evaluation objectives, methods, data sources, timelines, milestones and OCAP considerations. The Evaluation Strategy guides the systematic collection, analysis, and interpretation of data. The tools that will be used (i.e., surveys, reporting templates, etc.) will be developed in the next phase of the work.

Currently, it is envisioned to set a baseline data, where feasible, using the available information. Key milestones are set at 2, 5, and 10 years to best analyze trends, report on progress, and provide important opportunities to update the indicators within the results framework to ensure they best serve First Nations goals and priorities. Decisions still need to be made regarding who is responsible for collecting, analyzing, and storing the data.

### 5.1 OCAP

Embedding OCAP® principles within the Results Framework and Evaluation Strategy requires thoughtful planning to ensure data sovereignty, cultural safety, and meaningful engagement with First Nations. Certainly, there will be some areas where OCAP application will be challenging, specifically the data collected at the federal level. However, we can identify some measures to support OCAP adherence where possible. These can be built into the tools during the tool development phase of the work. Some considerations related to OCAP include:

#### Ownership

- Defining Ownership: Clarify what ownership means in the context of the results framework. Does it include co-designing the framework, community-defined indicators, or full decision-making authority over data use?
- Accountability: Establish mechanisms to report back to communities on progress and results.

#### Control

- Governance Structures: Establish data governance structures that enable control over how data is collected, analyzed, and shared.
- Decision-Making Power: First Nations must have authority to approve or deny how data will be used within the results framework and in implementation.

**Access**

- Transparency: Ensure First Nations have clear and easy access to their own data, both in raw and analyzed forms.
- Language and Format: Present data and results in accessible formats.

**Possession**

- Data Sovereignty: Establish clear agreements about data storage, ensuring it resides within systems owned or controlled by First Nations' organizations or communities.