



Income Assistance Costing Research

Using Data to Demand Justice and End Poverty

The Assembly of First Nations (AFN) is mandated to conduct a long-term financial analysis of the investments required to reform the Income Assistance (IA) Program via AFN Resolution 07/2022, *Reform of the On-Reserve Income Assistance Program* and AFN Resolution 85/2023, *Support for the Technical Working Group on Social Development to Continue Income Assistance Program Reform*.



The Initiative

The AFN is seeking support from First Nations IA managers in obtaining information about the current cost of administering the IA Program. The information will be collected and used by a third party, the Institute of Fiscal Studies and Democracy (IFSD) Advisors Ltd., to analyze the IA Program, build an evidence base to advocate for investments into the IA Program, and develop a meaningful costing model to ensure the IA Program provides the support required for clients to maintain a dignified life.



Why This Work Matters

First Nations-led data collection initiatives support future planning, advocacy, and self-determined decision-making. Data collected by Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) is often not shared with First Nations and does not necessarily collect information that is meaningful for First Nations. Access to IA-related data is essential for:

- Understanding the true cost of living within First Nations.
- Identifying funding gaps within the IA Program.
- Creating a strong evidence base to advocate for meaningful investments into IA Program reform.
- Accurate, community-driven data is the foundation for equitable funding and greater accountability.



How First Nations Benefit

- The project will provide First Nations with the data required to advocate for reform of the IA Program.
- Receive quantifiable data relevant to their community and region to identify the gap between the current levels of funding for First Nations and the true cost of living.



The project has the resources to support the collection of First Nations data, and returning it to First Nations for their own use. By participating in this unique research opportunity, you can help build strength in the numbers needed to meaningfully reform the IA Program and demand change. Learn more about the project here: <https://ifsd.ca/income-assistance/>





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Who is Leading the Work?

The IFSD Advisors Ltd. is an independent research group with extensive experience supporting First Nations data initiatives, including Jordan's Principle, First Nations Child and Family Services, and First Nations Indicators of Poverty and Wellness. The IFSD Advisors Ltd.'s work on the IA Program will:

- Analyze how Provincial/Territorial policies impact IA Program administration across regions.
- Inform the development of a culturally appropriate IA funding model based on the First Nations-led policy recommendations to reform the IA Program.
- Respect First Nations control of information, including:
 - o Storing all project data on Canadian servers.
 - o Providing First Nations with regional datasets.
 - o Protecting First Nations data by not sharing the information with any additional parties, including the AFN.



How You Can Support this Work

- The AFN and IFSD Advisors Ltd. are seeking **one** IA Manager from each First Nation across the country to participate in the IA costing questionnaire between September and November 2025.
- Help reach **50% participation** in your region by sharing with Chiefs, Councils, staff, and IA Administrator networks.

More participation = STRONGER, more accurate data to achieve change.



Outcomes

- First Nations reclaim data sovereignty by having the right data required to demand action from the Federal government.
- Evidence of how First Nations-led data collection initiatives can enhance the socio-economic wellness within communities.
- Strengthen the First Nations social safety net to enhance the quality of life for First Nations recipients of IA.



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