



Indspire

Indigenous education,
Canada's future.

L'éducation des autochtones.
L'avenir du Canada.

Nurturing Capacity: Documenting Community Success Program Implementation Guidebook

A Process of Design, Implementation and Evaluation

August 30, 2020

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Project Purpose

Beginning in 2013, Indspire's K–12 Institute set a direction that established a range of initiatives to support the improvement of educational outcomes for First Nations, Inuit and Métis students across the country, including the Nurturing Capacity: Documenting Community Success Program (Nurturing Capacity Program).

The Nurturing Capacity Program supported communities to improve educational outcomes through the documentation and evaluation of their innovative practices. The sharing of these educational strategies helped to increase the success of K–12 students. The program provided fully funded research support to Indigenous communities. Indspire employed researchers to systematically measure initiatives in Indigenous education that demonstrate one of the seven principles developed through national consultations (see Appendix A). Indspire developed a format for documenting best practices in Indigenous education and utilizing a team of researchers who were well-respected in the Indigenous community, initiatives that demonstrated a positive impact on the success of K–12 Indigenous students were documented.

The Nurturing Capacity Program was made possible by the generous contribution of Founding Supporter, Suncor Energy Foundation. For the last five years, Indspire has mobilized collaborations and partnerships to support organizations and educational bodies engaged in reconciliation and innovation initiatives within Indigenous education. Changes to federal funding priorities in 2019 resulted in a review and transformation of both the K–12 Institute and our educational programming and also saw the conclusion of the Nurturing Capacity Program.

The Nurturing Capacity: Documenting Community Success Program Implementation Guidebook was created to support communities moving forward in the development, implementation and evaluation of innovative education programs across Canada. The guidebook will serve as a community resource and touchpoint for individuals interested in creating their own educational programming and documenting the key steps along the way.

Nurturing Capacity: Documenting Community Success

Program

Between 2012 and 2018, the Nurturing Capacity Program supported communities to improve educational outcomes through the documentation and evaluation of innovative K–12 practices for Indigenous learners. With research support from the program, communities were able to leverage a standard approach to measure initiatives in Indigenous education.

The Nurturing Capacity Program helped document the types of methods and data involved in the project evaluation, as well as the activities and outcomes accomplished, which, in turn, aided in providing a summary of best practices and lessons learned throughout the process. Through the program, communities were able to define trends associated with educational programs and track student progress both inside and outside the education system.

Ultimately, the program provided communities with the capacity to identify facilitators and barriers to Indigenous education outcomes, and these communities were able to leverage project data in order to positively impact the education experience for Indigenous youth.

Basic Evaluation Principles

Whether you are new to evaluation or a seasoned evaluator, it is always helpful to go back to the basics. What follows are some guiding principles for evaluation, which we encourage project teams and communities to consider when developing their program. In addition, a glossary of evaluation terms and definitions can be found at the end of this guidebook (see Appendix B).

- Evaluation is about learning and creating and sharing knowledge. Evaluations need to be designed to ensure maximum opportunities to engage participants and affected parties in discussions around lessons and their implications.

- There is no single best way to undertake evaluation, or any one best plan or methodology. It is, however, considered good practice to use multiple methods and data sources. This technique is consistent with the recognition that there are many perspectives, and that individual effects ripple through the family, school, community and/or organization.
- Context is critical in undertaking evaluation, and a holistic framing of the issues and questions, along with a sense of the interrelationship of the different actors and components — students, staff, services, systems, communities and so on — is required. In this regard, evaluation must incorporate traditional ways of knowing and varying worldviews.
- Flexibility is required when implementing the evaluation framework in light of the diversity of our communities, organizations, schools and cultural groups.
- All evaluations should adhere to ethical standards for participatory research that have been provided with the proposal format.
- The design and implementation of the evaluation should involve the active participation of as many of the community, school or organizational stakeholders as possible.
- Evaluations should always assess the extent to which gender equality has been integrated in the project design and implementation. Where applicable, all projects should have a gender-based analysis as part of the design.
- The evaluation process should be seen as an opportunity for building capacity.
- Evaluation design and implementation should be based on the project logic model.
- Evaluations should be useful and relevant to schools and communities.
- The evaluation process must recognize that changes are rarely linear or sequential. They often occur in spurts after periods of preparation or apparent stagnation. Some changes only occur after long periods of time, possibly longer than the context of the project.
- Evaluations should be situated in the larger context of sustainability and other overarching factors affecting First Nations, Métis and Inuit education.
- Evaluation activities should be proportionate to the size of the project.

Preparing for an Evaluation

Any good evaluation begins with solid preparation. Understanding the purpose of the evaluation, garnering buy-in from your stakeholders and determining whether you have the capacity to take on an evaluation are all important steps to consider during preparation. We recommend that project teams and communities review the following four steps to ensure that they are adequately ready to begin the evaluation process.

Clarifying What Will Be Evaluated

Knowing what you are evaluating and why is just as important as how you carry out an evaluation. This means that project teams and communities will need to have a thorough understanding of the program they are evaluating, including program objectives, activities and outcomes. All of these components will feed into the design of your evaluation plan, so it is important to understand them at the outset. Although project teams and communities will be evaluating different education initiatives, the end goal is the same: implementing a robust evaluation to help document best practices and lessons learned.

Engaging Stakeholders

A successful evaluation includes engagement and buy-in from all stakeholders. These are individuals who are involved in or affected by the evaluation, including program management and staff, funders, volunteers, community partners and program participants. The values and interests of key stakeholders affect what is evaluated, how information is collected and interpreted, and how the findings are used. If you are having difficulty identifying key stakeholders, ask yourself some of these questions:

- Who is funding the program?
- Who delivers the program?
- Who has requested the evaluation?
- Who will use the results of the evaluation and how?
- How will the organization, stakeholders and personnel respond to findings?
- To whom will the evaluation results be disseminated?

Assessing Resources and Evaluability

The next steps are to assess the available resources for evaluation and then determine whether the program is ready to be evaluated. Evaluations can be time-consuming and expensive, and so an honest assessment of resources at the beginning will help avoid constraints later on in the process. Resources include funds, time, in-kind support, approval processes (for example, ethics) and timelines for implementation and completion. When assessing evaluability, consider the following:

- Is there clarity on the program to be evaluated/why you are doing an evaluation?
- Will the evaluation be useful?
- Is there buy-in and engagement from stakeholders?
- Are adequate resources available?
- Is the timing right?

First, use this information to decide whether conducting the evaluation is feasible and necessary. Then, use the information to further define your evaluation.

Understanding Ethical Considerations

An evaluation may include the collection of personal information for the purpose of assessing a specific program. It is the responsibility of the project team and communities to identify any ethical considerations that need to be addressed *prior* to implementing the evaluation. This may involve administering consent forms to obtain informed consent from participants, acknowledging any community-developed ethical guidelines and building capacity for the project team and communities to understand ethical engagement with Indigenous participants.

Developing an Evaluation Plan

Once you have laid the groundwork for your evaluation, you are ready to begin developing your evaluation plan. An evaluation plan is a written document that describes the overall approach or strategy that will be used to guide the evaluation. We recommend that project teams and communities review these four components to ensure that they have developed a robust evaluation plan.

Describing Your Program

An evaluation plan begins with a program profile that describes the rationale for the program and the context in which it's situated, the program's goals and outcomes, and the program's target population. Documenting the program's rationale and context will allow you to understand why the program was established and what it seeks to accomplish. Documenting the program's goals will allow you to describe the changes that the program aims to achieve and the intended short-, medium- and long-term impacts. Finally, documenting the program's target population will help you understand who the program is intended to serve, and how it will benefit this population.

Developing a Program Theory and Logic Model

Program theory describes how the program works. It describes the relationships and assumptions about planned work (inputs and activities) and intended results (outputs and outcomes). The program theory is summarized into a simplistic graphical description called a logic model (see Appendix C).

A logic model defines the scope and ambition of a program: its goals and objectives, the activities and measurable indicators of success and also what will be different as a result of the program undertaken. To begin, the logic model is filled by defining the ultimate goal(s) of the program, the long-term outcome and then continuing backwards from this goal by asking the question "If we want this, then how can we achieve X?" for each component.

Once developed, the logic model can then be used for evaluating progress on the program. This is done by reading the logic model in a forward direction, asking the question "Did we accomplish X?" for each section.

Identifying Your Evaluation Questions

The planning of a program evaluation includes the development of evaluation questions, which ask us to think about the project results/outcomes that we had planned to achieve

through the logic model, as well as the processes used to achieve current results. These questions are linked to our program and evaluation objectives.

The mix of subject areas and specific questions will be different for each program and will be informed by input from key stakeholders. It is important that the evaluation focuses on a few essential questions — those that are most important for the program objectives — and they will inform the evaluation process. A sample list of evaluation questions has been provided at the end of this guidebook (see Appendix D).

Determining Appropriate Methods of Measurement

Once you have mapped out the components of the program you will be evaluating, you will then need to decide on how it will be evaluated. This includes the selection of data sources, or where you are collecting your program data, and indicators, which are specific measures indicating the point at which goals and/or objectives have been achieved.

Data used for your evaluation may be quantitative (numerical), qualitative (words and images) or both (mixed methods). Quantitative data can be collected through surveys, questionnaires, tests and administrative data. Qualitative data can be collected through interviews, focus groups and observations.

Often, indicators are proxies for goals and objectives that cannot be directly measured to assess program objectives. Indicators can be used as measures of program activities (participation rate, level of satisfaction, capacity to deliver services) or program effects (changes in knowledge, behaviour, practices).

Once your components of the evaluation plan have been decided, these can be mapped to an evaluation framework. An evaluation framework is a tool used to organize and link evaluation questions, outcomes or outputs, indicators, data sources and data collection methods for the evaluation. It also includes information on evaluation timelines, roles and responsibilities, and how the data will be analyzed.

Conducting the Evaluation

With your evaluation plan now complete, you can begin to conduct your evaluation. Through the collection and analysis of evaluation data, you will be able to monitor the progress toward program goals and make recommendations for program improvement. We recommend that project teams and communities review the following three components to ensure that they have carried out a vigorous program evaluation.

Collect Your Data

When you select a data source, you need to develop a corresponding collection tool to capture that data. For some, this might be as easy as accessing and documenting administrative information about grade point averages. For others, it might be developing a survey to measure program satisfaction. It is important to understand when and how you collect your data for the evaluation, as these will affect your ability to establish a change over time in terms of program impact on participants. A great way to monitor and track your data collection process is to integrate these items into your evaluation framework.

Analyze Your Results

After data collection comes your analysis. Organize the data in a format that can be easily summarized and interpreted. This may involve conducting statistical analysis of quantitative data or identifying themes in qualitative data. Either way, this process sets the stage for interpreting and sharing your findings.

Share Your Findings

The final step in your evaluation is to share your findings. Anchor the interpretation to the original evaluation questions and objectives. Create a list of recommended actions that address your outcomes, then use this information to create the materials used for communicating your findings. The presentation of your findings can take many forms, such as a written report, a slide show presentation and/or short informational videos. Visual aids can also be powerful methods for communicating evaluation results. Make

your results available to various stakeholders and audiences who were involved in the program evaluation. Finally, tailor what is disseminated to their specific interest in the evaluation and how they plan to use the results.

Appendix A: Indspire's Guiding Principles

Indspire's guiding principles were developed through national consultations. These principles are:

Principle 1: Indigenous peoples have the right to retain shared responsibility for the education and well-being of their children.

Principle 2: As an expression of respect, reciprocity and reconciliation, strengthened partnerships between Indigenous peoples, governments (federal, provincial and territorial) and public institutions are the basis of working relationships, implicit in treaties, agreements and other constructive agreements with Indigenous peoples.

Principle 3: Indigenous Knowledges (ways of being, knowing, valuing and doing), which convey our responsibilities and relationships to all life, are valued and foundational aspects of the learning program for all children and youth.

Principle 4: Cultural/language communities have the right to define success for their own well-being.

Principle 5: Learning is viewed as lifelong, holistic and experiential, rooted in language and culture, and is place-based, spiritually oriented, communal and open to multiple ways of knowing the world.

Principle 6: Programs, schools and systems are responsive to both the aspirations and needs of Indigenous peoples.

Principle 7: Recognizing the legacy of the colonial histories of Indigenous peoples, education is also a process of decolonization, which seeks to strengthen, enhance and embrace Indigenous Knowledges and experiences through various strategies, including but not limited to anti-racist, anti-oppressive pedagogies and Indigenous pedagogies.

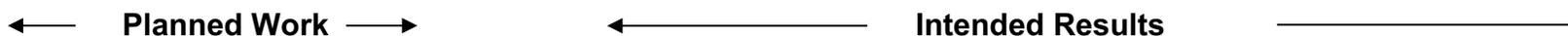
Appendix B: Definitions and Terms

Term	Application in This Document
Analysis	An examination of a specific set of variables in a study in relation to other elements to gain a better understanding of the study's impact.
Baseline Data	Information available to provide a benchmark against which future data will be measured.
Community	Applies not only to a geographical location or settlement, but also to a school or community of similar interest within a particular location.
Evaluation	A research process that involves gathering, ordering and making judgments about information in a methodical way.
Impact	A meaningful change in systems, conditions or environments. As used in the logic model: long-term project changes expected to be achieved, as well as future results.
Indicators	As used in the logic model: signs that tell us whether or not we were successful.
Logic Model	A logic model is a tool that helps to define the scope and ambition of an initiative or a project: its goals and objectives, activities and measurable indicators of success and what will be different as a result of the initiative undertaken.
Objectives	As used in the logic model: always written as "Strategic," "Measurable," "Achievable," "Realistic" and "Timed."

Outcome	A describable change in condition resulting from a cause-and-effect relationship. As used in the logic model: changes in the knowledge, behavior or impact of the people, students, parents, community, teachers, staff.
Outputs	As used in the logic model: results of the project activities.
Performance Indicators	Quantifiable information that is used to measure the attainment of an outcome. For example, the number of students who have graduated each year over five years.
Project Team	Community, organization, school board, school or person with whom we are working on a specific Nurturing Capacity project to document their program.
Success	As used in the logic model: success means the achievement of the project's outcomes in a way that is meaningful (socially, culturally, economically and politically) to the school, community or organization. Success is accomplished through careful planning, review, reflection and revision.
Successful Practices	Practices that reliably demonstrate their objectives have been achieved through quantitative and qualitative evaluations or assessments, or which may offer innovative approaches to achieve their objectives on a more sustainable basis.
Sustainability	When the benefits of an intervention carry on beyond the life of a project. Local "ownership" and a commitment to carry forward the changes brought about by a project are indicators of sustainability.

Transferability	The ability to replicate the outcomes of a project in another First Nations, Métis or Inuit community or school using the same approach and process.
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Appendix C: Logic Model



Inputs: Resources — Human and Financial	Strategies/Major Activities	Outputs or Performance Indicators	Short-Term (immediate) Outcomes or Objectives	Intermediate Outcomes or Objectives	Ultimate Goal/ Impact (Long-Term Outcomes)
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Inputs: Resources — Human and Financial

List the resources that are needed to accomplish your project. For example, financial resources; teaching staff; administration; university partner; technicians and software developers; trainers for professional learning communities (PLC).

Strategies/Major Activities

Resources needed to accomplish these planned activities. For example, development of community-based cultural curriculum; intensive teacher training on literacy and numeracy; formation of professional learning communities among grade-level teachers for math and language arts; development of electronic student achievement system to monitor student performance, attendance and retention; use of standardized testing to monitor student achievement over time; training of teachers on response to intervention (RTI) for managing behaviour in the classroom; in-service training for teachers on professional learning communities.

Outputs or Performance Indicators

Indicators are used for the measuring the outputs, outcomes and the impact of the project. These include: forecasts of how well the activities will go (for example, number of parents participating). What outputs or products will result from the activities (for example, program for volunteer parents) and also what measures will be available to indicate success (for example, data on student attendance over a period of three years)? Some questions to ask when planning performance indicators and measures for the evaluation: How will we measure success in a way that is meaningful for us? What are some of the measurable or observable elements that can tell you about your program and its effects? What results will tell us that our activities are successful? What are some of the products that we hope to produce that will indicate our success? Do we have existing benchmarks that we can use to measure our indicators? For example, partnership with a university for teacher training; information and awareness program for parents; electronic system for monitoring student achievement; increased language and culture programming in school; parent committee; local education authority; in-service sessions for teachers.

Short-Term (immediate) Outcomes or Objectives

Outcomes that are directly attributable to the project's outputs. These are short-term results and most often apply to changes at the individual level, such as increased awareness of parents' role in the education of their children. Immediate outcomes relate to individual learning as a result of the project. Ideally, immediate outcomes should be achieved by the mid-point of the project. For example, increased student attendance; increased parental involvement in education/school; teacher in-service programs for literacy and numeracy; development of professional learning communities in school; increased self-identity and self-esteem in students.

Intermediate Outcomes or Objectives

Outcomes that are directly attributable to the project's short-term outcomes.

These are intermediate-term results and most often apply to changes at the individual level, such as increased awareness of parents' role in the education of their children. **Immediate** outcomes relate to individual learning as a result of the project. Ideally, **intermediate** outcomes should be achieved by the mid-point of the project. For example, increased student attendance; increased parental involvement in education/school; teacher in-service programs for literacy and numeracy; development of professional learning communities in school; increased self-identity and self-esteem in students.

Ultimate Goal/Impact (Long-Term Outcomes)

The highest-level outcome that can be reasonably attributed to the project in a causal manner and that is the consequence of one or more intermediate outcomes having been achieved. These high-level results usually signify a change in systems, conditions or environments. Long-term outcomes are usually assessed well after a project ends. They are difficult to measure, because change at such a high level can be influenced by many factors in addition to the project being evaluated. For example, successful Indigenous students.

Appendix D: Sample Questions for Project Evaluation

Outcomes/Results

1. How successful have we been in the implementation of our plan?
2. What results have been accomplished, both expected and unexpected, positive and negative?
3. Have we achieved the outcomes that we hoped to achieve? If not, have we partially achieved what we set out to do? If not, what happened?
4. How do the different research components fit together? Which pieces are essential to the success of the project?
5. To what extent are gender equality considerations fully integrated into project design and implementation, and reflected in the results?

Relevance

1. Do the project results support the research question(s)? If not, why not?
2. Does the project make sense in relation to the conditions, needs or problems to which it is intended to respond?
3. Is the project consistent with research areas that were defined?

Sustainability

1. What is the likelihood that project benefits will continue after its completion without over-burdening local organizations or partners?
2. Is institutional capacity being developed at the individual, organizational and systems levels, and if so, is it adequate to ensure that the school, community or organization will take over and sustain the intended benefits?
3. To what extent do local project partners and beneficiaries participate in the program and “own” the program’s results?

Appropriateness of the Project

1. Are the management and oversight structures appropriate?

2. Are the project resources, capacities and selected strategies sensible and are they sufficient to achieve the intended results?
3. Do the project components complement one another?
4. Does the project use proven, successful practices?
5. Is the project innovative, yet not high risk?

Local Partnerships

1. How strong and effective are the local project partnerships?
2. Are the partners aware of their roles and responsibilities?
3. Does each partner contribute resources (financial, human or pedagogical) to the project in a manner that is fair and reasonable?
4. Do shared responsibility and accountability exist for project results by all partners?
5. How effective are the communication, co-ordination and co-operation among the project partners?

Challenges, Constraints, Risks and Opportunities

1. What have been the key challenges, constraints and risks facing the project?
2. Are there other contributing factors or external factors/events that have had an impact on, or have contributed to, the project results or outcomes?
3. If so, how did the project deal with them and with what degree of success?
4. Have the basic assumptions that were made, when the research questions were developed, remained true throughout the project?

Lessons Learned

1. What lessons can be drawn from the project experience, including those that may be applicable to future K–12 educational programming?
2. Which lessons learned from this project could be applied to other First Nations, Métis or Inuit K–12 programs?
3. What were the reasons why some elements worked well and others didn't?

Future

1. Where should the research focus in the future? Are there other areas of the same research question(s) that should be explored?
2. What are some suggested changes in the project design that could respond to emerging needs or changing circumstances in the educational environment?
3. Are there recommendations to be made concerning future applications of this research in other First Nations, Métis and Inuit K–12 programs?