Evaluation of the Northern Ontario Development Program (NODP)
Audit and Evaluation Branch
Senior Management Committee – January 2022

Management Response and Action Plan

A - For inclusion in the report

The findings and recommendations of the Evaluation of the Northern Ontario Development Program (NODP) were provided to the Federal Economic Development Initiative for Northern Ontario (FedNor), formerly a branch at Innovation Science and Economic Development Canada (ISED) and, as of August 12, 2021, a standalone agency – Federal Economic Development Agency for Northern Ontario. Management has been consulted and agrees with the findings included in this report and will take action to address all applicable recommendations by March 31, 2023.

B - For follow-up purposes - Detailed actions to address the recommendations in the report

Recommendation	Planned Action on the Recommendation	Responsible Official	Target Completion
Relevance *FedNor should examine how it can provide services that are more tailored to the culture and challenges faced by Indigenous communities and whether its target groups should be expanded.*	FedNor agrees with this recommendation. Through its Northern Ontario Development Program (NODP), FedNor will continue to invest in projects led by municipalities, First Nations, and other organizations and institutions that support community economic development, diversification, job creation and self-reliant communities. FedNor will undertake a series of activities and engagements to inform the development of options for management's consideration on enhancements to the NODP to augment how Indigenous businesses and organizations interface with FedNor's NODP program and service offerings. This includes: • As part of its Prosperity and Growth Strategy for Northern Ontario (PGSNO), FedNor undertook extensive public consultations, including with Indigenous peoples. Feedback will be reviewed and incorporated into options as appropriate. • Increase outreach to Indigenous recipients through project monitoring and administration activities. FedNor will develop and pose a set of questions that are targeted towards Indigenous stakeholders to solicit feedback on their client experiences provided through NODP. Data will be collected over a period of six months and reported on to management. • Examine ways to update NODP guidance materials issued to program officers and action the development of an external NODP Application Guide to further reflect sensitive and culturally relevant approaches to engagement and project development with respect to Indigenous stakeholders. • Through a series of engagements, FedNor will increase horizontal collaboration with federal and external partners working with Indigenous people in Northern Ontario to help align efforts to provide support to Indigenous clients in recognition of their unique needs.	Vice-President, Policy and Communications	December 2022
	FedNor is also taking action to modify its public-facing website to highlight available FedNor support for Indigenous stakeholders, as well as to link to other existing federal programming that support Indigenous clients in one easy-to-access location.	Vice-President, Policy and Communications	March 2022
	FedNor supports the ongoing training of its staff, which includes a continued focus on better understanding the historical and cultural contexts of each Indigenous community in the region and the path to reconciliation. To this end, FedNor will promote and organize Indigenous awareness learning activities, including on Indigenous reconciliation, to facilitate awareness and build knowledge. The completion of activities will be tracked as part of FedNor employees' Learning and Development Plans in 2022-2023. FedNor will also ensure the recruitment of Indigenous employees and the retention and advancement of Indigenous Employees are prioritized when developing strategies to meet Agency workforce needs in the area of program delivery.	FedNor Executive Management Committee: •Interim Chief Financial Officer •Vice-President, Policy and Communications •Director Program Delivery	December-2022
	With regard to all target groups, FedNor began pilot testing a Diversity and Equity Annex to our application format in June 2021. Historically, FedNor captured data at the project benefits level for women, Indigenous peoples, Francophones and youth only. This annex will allow applicants to self-declare in an expanded number of categories reflective of under-represented groups. Data will be collected on NODP at the applicant level and at the project benefits level to better understand programming gaps and to inform the development of FedNor's Performance Information Profile (PIP) Improvement Plan for the Agency's Departmental Results Framework, where target group expansion will be considered as part of NODP.	Vice-President, Policy and Communications	December 2022

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Recommendation	Planned Action on the Recommendation	Responsible Official	Target Completion
Efficiency *FedNor should continue to explore opportunities to streamline project approvals. It should also consult with groups, such as Indigenous communities and visible minorities, to see how it can better assist them with the application process.*	FedNor agrees with this recommendation. FedNor acts as a convenor, pathfinder, resource and point of contact for all stakeholders, including Indigenous and visible minority clients on the NODP application process. This approach will continue to be built on to provide meaningful support to clients in their ongoing planning, community economic development and capacity-building. On August 12, 2021, FedNor was established as a standalone regional development agency to enable it to better respond to the region's economic development needs. As FedNor implements this transition, it will work to enhance all client service delivery by identifying opportunities to improve outward-facing application tools and service standard goals, including the current standard of providing a decision on applications within eighty (80) working days of receipt of a fully completed application. FedNor will also implement the Grants and Contributions Program Management System (GCPM), which will streamline the application and intake process. This system will further assist FedNor in tracking decision making timelines and also allow for increased, easier and more secure reporting as well as a more streamlined and digital interaction with clients. FedNor will deliver specific training to help groups, such as Indigenous and visible minority groups, onboard to the new system. As part of its client centric approach, FedNor will invite feedback on the various stages of the lifecycle of the NODP application process through focus group discussions with Indigenous and visible minority groups. This effort will include a session with Northern Ontario's three Indigenous-led Community Futures Development Corporations. Feedback will be shared with management and will inform prioritized improvements of the application process, including through the development and implementation of new digital and streamlined program management tools. A GBA+ approach will be applied throughout this process to help ensure that barriers to participation for Indigenous and visible minority groups are considered and better addressed.	Director, Program Delivery Director, Program Delivery Director, Program Delivery	September 2022 March 2023 March 2023