

# Grant Program Development through Indigenous Community participation and collaboration

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**Organisation:** Department of Communities, Culture & Heritage

**Country:** Canada

**Level of government:** Regional/State government

**Sector:** Recreation, culture and religion

**Type:** Partnerships

**Launched in:** 2013

**Overall development time:** 6 month(s)

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# Description

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Engaging the Indigenous community of Nova Scotia (Mi'kmaq) in grant program development and funding decisions.

Peer review and community engagement are not new practices used by governments. However, we believe the approach used to bring together representatives from all 13 Mi'kmaq communities in the province, plus offreserve representatives, to design a grant program was unique. The session was held in a Mi'kmaq community. The Indigenous community representatives were chosen by their Chiefs specifically for the task. In many cases, the representatives were community members with expertise in cultural activities and traditions rather than staff from Mi'kmaq organizations. Participants were asked to share their views challenges and potential solutions, including how best to design a funding program that could address gaps and preserve Mi'kmaq culture across the province., not simply their individual communities. The Mi'kmaq Cultural Activities Program guidelines and adjudication processes were designed directly from the feedback gathered during the community engagement session.

We believe that this innovation has already been replicated, by the Mi'kmaq community itself. The Mi'kmaq History Month Committee, comprised of representatives from the province's Mi'kmaq community organizations, has adopted this process. The committee is engaging input from the community to design and allocate funding to support community based activities during Mi'kmaq History Month (October). By working directly with those members of civil society most affected, it increased government's capacity to better understand the issues and barriers. The result is improved program delivery and access, as well as citizen engagement and transparency. We believe this approach can be replicated to improve social equity.

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## Why the innovation was developed

- It was recognized that the Indigenous (Mi'kmaq) Community of Nova Scotia (13 Bands) faced barriers in accessing cultural funding programs offered by the province. Submissions by the community and their success rates of applications were low. Not unlike Indigenous Peoples across the world, the Mi'kmaq of Nova Scotia wish self-determination, including preservation and control of their cultural traditions, practices, and promotion. The Government of NS took the step to design a grant program and engage the Mi'kmaq community through the entire process; the community was best positioned to identify their cultural preservation and development needs. We believe this was a significant step in breaking down barriers and supporting self-determination and governance.
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## Objectives

Develop staff capacity, Enhance public trust, Enhance transparency, Improve access, Improve effectiveness, Improve service quality, Improve social equity, Improve user satisfaction, Increase citizen engagement

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## Main beneficiaries

Civil Society, Ethnic or racial minorities, High-risk populations, Low-income groups

# Results

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## Effectiveness

- The Mi'kmaq Cultural Activities Program has been effective in supporting cultural development for the Mi'kmaq across the province. The majority of applicants to the program have not applied for funding in the past. As participants in the adjudication process, Mi'kmaq community members also have the opportunity to build their understanding of provincial government funding and skills in application development.
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## Service quality

### Accessibility:

- A total of six deadlines for applications have been adjudicated since the program was implemented. Each deadline has new Mi'kmaq communities and organizations submitting applications. With the Mi'kmaq Cultural Activities Program implemented, there is also an increase in the number of applications by the community to other department programs.

### Responsiveness:

- The program was designed with the needs of the community embedded. As a result, it has responded to the Mi'kmaq community's desire to preserve their cultural traditions and practices. It has also increased the diversity and breadth of cultural activity in the province.
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## User satisfaction

- Having members of the Mi'kmaq community engaged in the design of and funding decisions for the program, the community's satisfaction with the support of cultural development offered by the province of Nova Scotia has increased. The community actively promotes the program.

# Development

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## Design

Front-line staff in the department's Communities Nova Scotia unit presented the idea. Taking this approach to develop the funding program by fully engaging the Indigenous community of NS was based upon community development principles and experience. Design time: 2 month(s)

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## Testing

- We would consider the "testing" phase as the initial invitation to the 13 Chiefs. The decision to proceed was due to all positively responding to the approach and sending representatives.

Testing time: 2 month(s)

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## Implementation

### Tools used:

- Horizontal departmental collaboration was a critical to which led to the success of the engagement of the Mi'kmaq community. The department of Communities, Culture and Heritage worked with the province's Office of Aboriginal Affairs. In addition, the report generated through the community engagement session was the key resource in developing the grant program.

### Resources used:

- The Government of Nova Scotia invested approximately \$10,000 for the facilitated community engagement session. This included providing support for travel and accommodation of participants. The planning and execution of the session, as well as the creation of the program guidelines, was undertaken by government staff. Currently, one program officer is responsible for overseeing the program delivery, including regular engagement of the Mi'kmaq community for adjudication and funding allocations.

Implementation time: 2 month(s)

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## Challenges and solutions

- Ensuring that the engagement session focused on the needs of the collective Mi'kmaq community of Nova Scotia, not individual needs, was a challenge during the session. Our solution was to encourage all participants to provide input in all aspects of the session. The facilitated session was designed to emphasis the need and importance of everyone's input. The limitations of public funding was also an area that participants were made aware. The need for transparency and accountability was also shared with participants.
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## Partnerships

### Discussed below

Civil Society, Private sector

The Department of Communities, Culture and Heritage partnered with all 13 Mi'kmaq Bands in the province, the Native Council of Nova Scotia, Assembly of Nova Scotia Chiefs, Mi'kmaq Grand Council, Confederacy of Mainland Mi'kmaq and the Office of Aboriginal Affairs. The funds for the program are made available by the NS Provincial Lottery and Casino Corporation (NSPLCC). Representatives from the NSPLCC attended the session, as well.

When the NSPLCC funds were made available, the partnerships were cursory. Through the planning stages and community engagement session, all parties became committed to the success of the initiative. With the funding program in place, the relationships among all partners have deepened, trust has been established and other collaborations have been undertaken.

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# Lessons Learned

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## Lessons Learned

- Governments across the world seek to improve the lives of Indigenous Peoples and other traditionally marginalized communities. We believe that the full engagement of the communities affected by programs and policies is a key to creating responsive solutions and working toward social equity.
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## Conditions for success

- Strong and motivated leadership and a willingness to do things differently were necessary for the success of this innovation. Also, key was the ability to listen to the end user.
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## Other information

The process used to engage the Mi'kmaq community offered the Department of Communities, Culture and Heritage the opportunity to establish a more positive and collaborative working relationship with the province's Indigenous community. The lessons learned from this innovation have also provided valuable insight into supporting the province's other diverse communities.

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