



First Nations Child and Family Services (FNCFS) Project – Phase 2 Monthly Update

April 2020

IFSD is pleased to provide the eighth monthly update to its stakeholders on the progress of the First Nations Child and Family Services (FNCFS) Project – Phase 2.

Principal updates

- We hope this update finds you, your families, communities and agencies safe and well as we collectively deal with the COVID-19 pandemic.
- This month's update is focused on COVID-19 emergency funding and considerations in the allocation, flow and speed of funding.
- IFSD is grateful to the agencies who continue to share their experiences for this work through survey participation and meetings via distance. IFSD welcomes your feedback throughout this work.
- In spite of the national health and economic circumstances, IFSD is continuing its work with stakeholders on the FNCFS project.

Are you an agency that hasn't yet participated in the questionnaire?

[Connect with IFSD](#) or [download the questionnaire](#)

Emergency funding for COVID-19: Responses and support to Indigenous Peoples

SUMMARY

The pandemic has sent economies into recession and is stressing health systems and the people they serve. In response, the Government of Canada has introduced a variety of interim measures to ease the immediate financial pain caused by the pandemic.

While all economic sectors and people have been in some way affected by the pandemic, vulnerable populations or populations with pre-existing social and economic challenges may be more severely burdened. Indigenous Peoples, and especially, First Nations living on-reserve with overcrowded housing, limited access to social and health services, and higher incidences of child and family services interventions, are at greater risk of ramifications.

Recognizing the particular challenges, Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) announced \$305 million for the [Indigenous Community Services Fund on March 26, 2020](#). This funding is to be distributed across groups of Indigenous Peoples, with 65% of the funding attributed to First Nations.

When considering three parameters for assessing resource allocation and distribution (allocation, flow and speed), the announced funding falls short. While funding will flow principally to First Nations communities, there is no definition of targeted people or services. Without a plan, the impact of emergency funding may be limited.

Precedents exist to better allocate and distribute funding in crisis situations. Four broad approaches to distributing emergency funding can be defined, each with its own trade-offs in allocation, flow and speed. These approaches have clear targets and intentions, e.g. immediate financial relief allocated directly to a recipient, or long-term disaster mitigation planning. To address needs in an emergency and to build resiliency for the next unexpected situation, funding targets, approaches and amounts will differ.

There are models of planned and targeted emergency response. Consider for instance, Dakota Ojibway Child and Family Services (DOCFS), based in Manitoba. The organization has a well-developed business continuity plan that can be actioned in one half-day. From staff roles to connections with other branches of the Tribal Council, DOCFS works to fulfill the emergency needs of the people they serve from the procurement and delivery of food to personal items.

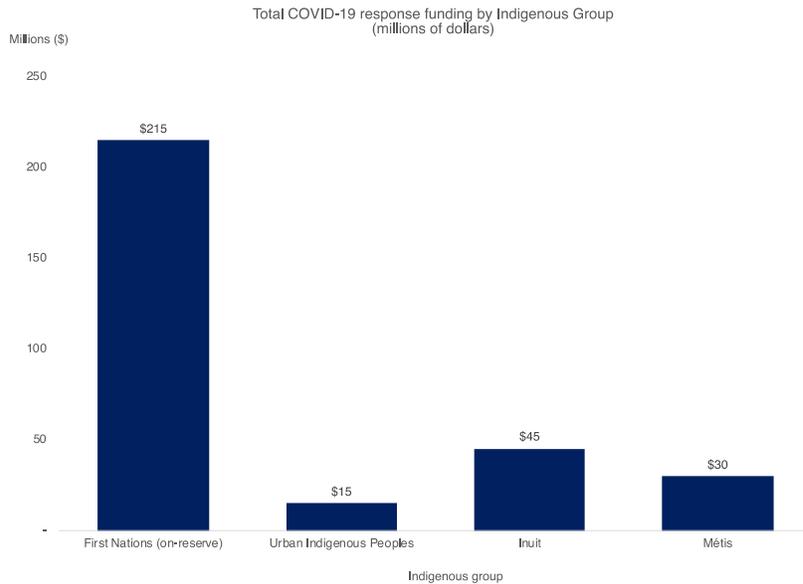
Emergency funding is a tool that should have clearly defined purposes to reach those in need in moments of crisis. Allocating funding is one step, getting it to work is another.

Introduction

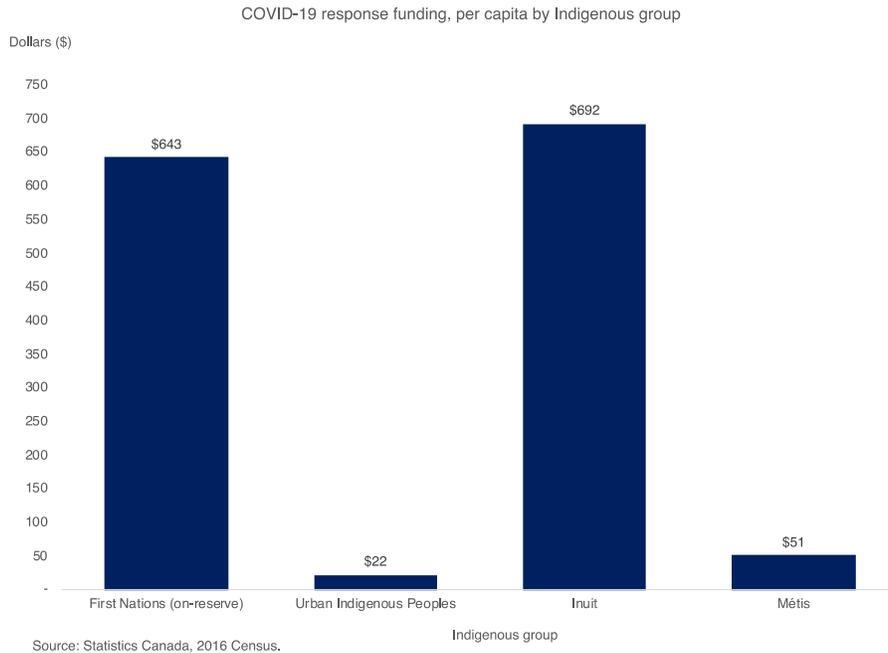
The pandemic has sent economies into recession and is stressing health systems and the people they serve. In response, the Government of Canada has introduced a variety of interim measures to ease the immediate financial pain caused by the pandemic.

While all economic sectors and people have been in some way affected by the pandemic, vulnerable populations or populations with pre-existing social and economic challenges may be more severely burdened. Indigenous Peoples, and especially, First Nations living on-reserve with overcrowded housing, limited access to social and health services, and higher incidences of child and family services interventions, are at greater risk of ramifications.

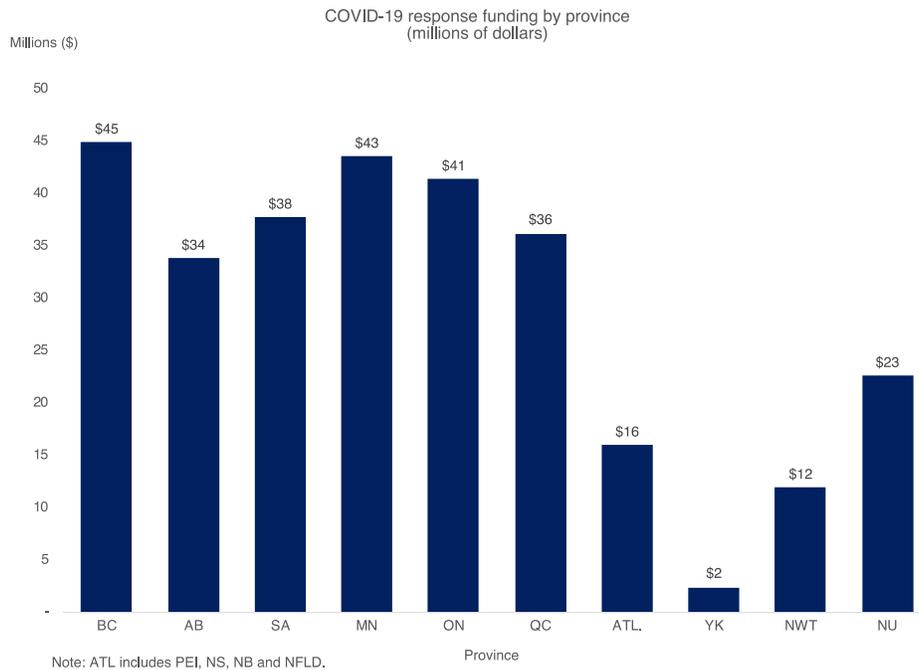
Recognizing the particular challenges, Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) announced \$305 million for the [Indigenous Community Services Fund on March 26, 2020](#). This funding is to be distributed across groups of Indigenous Peoples, with 65% of the funding attributed to First Nations. In mid-April, nearly [\\$307 million was announced for Aboriginal businesses](#), largely made available through Indigenous financial institutions through short-term interest free loans, and non-repayable contributions.



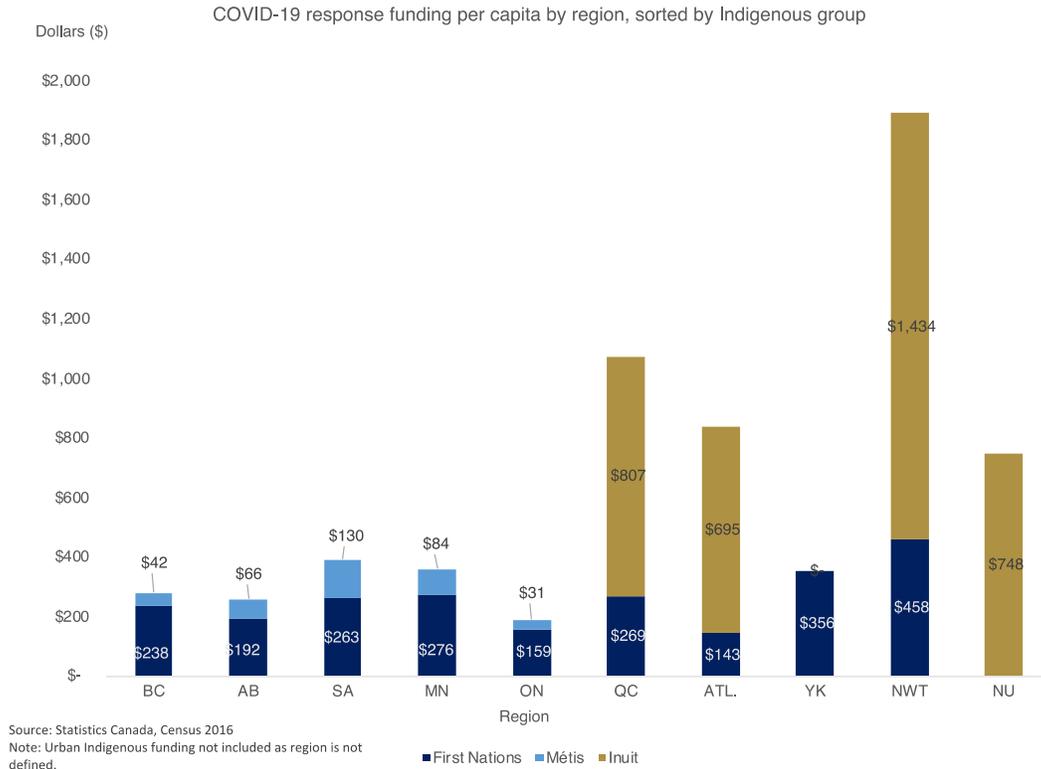
To provide a rough comparative basis on which to understand the funding, per capita calculations suggest that First Nations on-reserve receive approximately \$645 per person, Inuit receive approximately \$700, with Métis and Urban Indigenous Peoples receiving substantively less on a per capita basis:



Most of the total funding (approximately \$290 million or 92%) is being allocated on a regional basis. Since funding for urban Indigenous services is proposal-based (approximately 5% of total funding), there is no defined regional association (until the funding is allocated).



On a per capita basis, North West Territories receive the highest per capita funding amounts and Ontario receives the lowest.



At the time of writing, ISC had not released information on if and when allocated resources have flowed to participants. For the funding allocated by proposal, the deadline for proposals was April 13, 2020.

Beyond the dollar amounts, there are three principal considerations on resources:

- 1) The way in which funding is **allocated** (i.e. who gets what)
- 2) The way in which funding **flows** (i.e. how money moves to recipients)
- 3) The **speed** with which funding is distributed (i.e. when it flows to recipients)

Allocation

ISC defines *population*, *remoteness* and *need* as three parameters for distributing funding to First Nations. ISC can be credited with identifying relevant factors for funding. The problem, however, is that the definition of the factors and their application are unclear. Without understanding how population, remoteness and need are being used to determine allocations, they have little meaning.

Flow

On the matter of funding flows, ISC defined different means of moving money based on recipient group. For instance, First Nations dollars will flow directly to communities, whereas funding for Inuit will flow based on an allocation determined by ITK and regional Inuit land claims organizations. In the case of Métis and Urban Indigenous funding, eligible parties can apply for funding.

There is a helpful distinction to be made between emergency response funding to ease the immediate shock/pain of a pandemic, versus the longer-term funding that is meant to support development in communities.

In the current circumstances, it may be helpful to ensure funding flows to recipients as quickly and as efficiently as possible to ensure their basic needs are being met, especially in challenging circumstances.

Speed

The speed with which funding reaches recipients is closely connected to how it flows. ISC has defined different means through which Indigenous Peoples will receive support: directly through their First Nation, through a land-based organization, or by applying for funding.

The most efficient funding receipt will likely be among First Nations. It can be expected that funding will move with relative ease to First Nations (as mechanisms and agreements already exist), and that the band council structures in place should generally be able to put funding into practice. The slowest funding by contrast, may be funding allocated through the call for proposals for those providing services to Indigenous Peoples in urban centres or off-reserve.

Re-thinking emergency funding

There are four principal models that emerge when considering approaches to delivering emergency funding across jurisdictions: application-based temporary assistance; direct transfers to persons; medium- to long-term grants; and third-party managed funding.

There are considerations for each of these funding approaches, that may be suitable to responding to different types of crises or particular moments over the course of a crisis and its recovery.

Next steps

1. Model funding approaches and develop explanatory notes for funding components.
2. Analyze initial expenditure data from ISC.
3. Analyze data shared by FNCFS agencies and build case study profiles.
4. Build research on transition and resource considerations.

Contact information



IFSD is pleased to respond to requests for further information or to provide individual briefings on the project and its project. For questions about the project or to participate, please contact:

Dr. Helaina Gaspard, Director, Governance and Institutions
Institute of Fiscal Studies and Democracy (IFSD) at the University of Ottawa
helaina.gaspard@ifsd.ca
1 (613) 983-8461