

Income Assistance – Website update (June 2026)

What is a performance framework and why does it matter?

A performance framework collects information to monitor change over time. It helps describe *what* is occurring, rather than *why* it is occurring. This information builds an evidence base that can be used for:

- 1) **Decision making:** Supporting informed decisions and accountability to community members;
- 2) **Funding requests:** Strengthening the rationale for funding requests; and
- 3) **Advocacy:** Informing advocacy efforts aimed at change.

Measuring what is happening involves defining a baseline against which change can be evaluated. Monitoring what is occurring means using the relevant information gathered to adjust approaches in consideration of context and outcomes for income assistance (IA) recipients.

A performance framework requires defining a strategic outcome, sub-strategic outcomes, indicators, and measures (Table 1).

Table 1

Performance framework category	Definition
Strategic outcome	The overall goal or guiding purpose for measurement within the performance framework.
Sub-strategic outcomes	The goals that contribute to the overall goal and can be monitored over time.
Measurement areas	Functional groupings of indicators.
Indicators	The observable components used to track progress toward the intended outcomes.
Measures	The methods or approaches used to collect information.

Development of a performance framework for the IA program

The group of collaborators on the IA project revised and refined a performance framework drafted by IFSD for the reformed IA program. The framework can be aligned to intake practices, as the approach encompasses a wholistic understanding of the client seeking access to IA.

Figure 1 provides an illustrative overview of a strategic outcome, sub-strategic outcomes, indicators, and measures for monitoring the performance of the IA program. For illustrative purposes, a sample vision is included:

Consistent with the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP), the First Nations-led IA Program delivers supports and

services to meet the basic needs of community members with equity and dignity.

Culturally appropriate and informed by language and identity, the Program is delivered through a wholistic well-being approach.

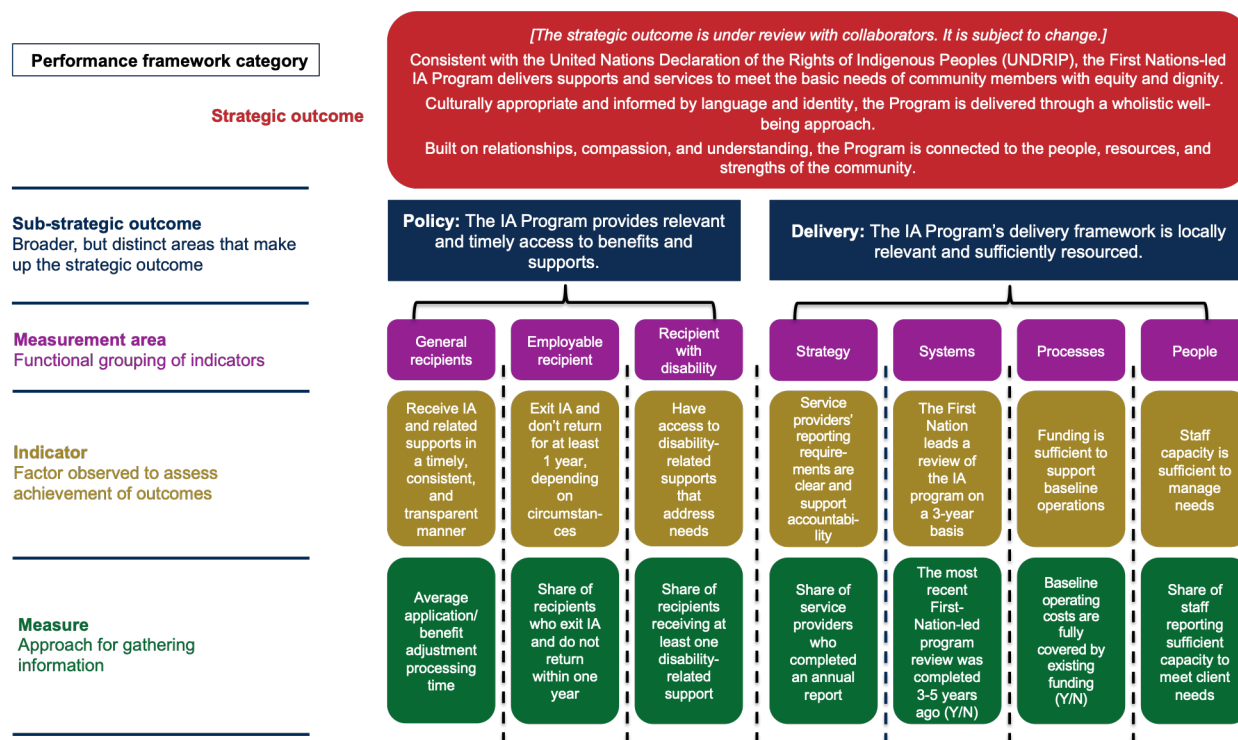
Built on relationships, compassion, and understanding, the Program is connected to the people, resources, and strengths of the community.

The framework and vision are currently in development with collaborators. The complete framework is available in Appendix A.

IFSD notes that this is an output-based framework. There is insufficient information on IA to build an outcomes-based framework. An outcomes-based framework would focus on results for clients and communities rather than programmatic operations. The operational data, however, is a critical step to understanding program operations, and quantifying gaps and successes.

Figure 1

[In development with collaborators.]



IFSD is grateful for collaborators' contributions to the performance framework and will continue to refine the measures as the project progresses.

Context indicators

At the request of collaborators during the workshop, IFSD prepared a set of community-level context indicators. The indicators reflect unique environments of First Nations and consider factors that influence the delivery of IA, including access to essential services (water, transportation, etc.), income, employment, education, etc.

Data availability by First Nation was assessed for each indicator, with data for 6 of 10 indicators fully available. The full set of context indicators with data availability considerations is available in Appendix B.

Appendix A – Performance framework for the IA program

Table 2 presents the revised measurement framework for the IA program, based on collaborator input. The framework is in development and will continue to be refined as the project progresses.

Table 2

[In development with collaborators.]

Level	Sub-strategic outcomes	Indicators	Example(s) of measure
Policy	General recipients: Stable income and recipient tailored approach to case management by moving toward independence	Meet basic needs (income and shelter) that reflects the local cost of living.	<i>e.g., Share of recipients who report being able to provide for their (and their family's) basic needs, including food, clothing, transportation, utilities, and other personal and household needs.</i>
		Recipients receive income assistance (IA) and related supports in a timely, consistent, and transparent manner.	<i>e.g., Average application / benefit adjustment processing time.</i>
		Recipients have employment opportunities in or around community.	<i>e.g., Are there sufficient job opportunities in or around the community? (Yes/No)</i>
		Recipients achieve long-term financial independence from IA.	<i>e.g., Share of recipients who exit IA and do not return to IA for at least 5 years.</i>
		Recipients and their needs should be addressed through a strengths-based, case management approach that addresses their wholistic well-being.	<i>e.g., Share of recipients with an active case plan that reflects a strengths-based, wholistic assessment of their needs, goals, and supports.</i>

		Recipients have access to coordinated, wrap-around supports that align with their needs, with referral and ongoing follow-up.	<i>e.g., Share of recipients receiving at least one coordinated wraparound support aligned with their identified needs, with documented referral and follow-up.</i>
		Recipients are treated with dignity, respect, empathy, and in a culturally-appropriate manner when accessing IA services.	<i>e.g., Share of recipients reporting experiencing dignity, respect, empathy, and cultural safety when accessing IA services.</i>
	Employable recipient: Active participation in employment opportunity and financial independence.	Recipients participate in employment, training, education, or other form of productive and culturally relevant activity in or near the community.	<i>e.g., Share of recipients engaged in employment, training, education, or other identified productive activities.</i>
		IA staff support youth in pre-employment, education, and training.	<i>e.g., Share of youth receiving IA who engaged in at least one pre-employment, education, or training support activity.</i>
		Recipients exit IA and do not return to IA for at least 1 year, depending on circumstances and changes.	<i>e.g., Share of recipients who exit IA and do not return within one year, depending on circumstances and changes.</i>
		Recipients maintain accountability and eligibility based on their case plan.	<i>e.g., Share of IA recipients who meet accountability and eligibility requirements outlined in their case plan.</i>

	Recipient with disability: Stable income and access to appropriately accommodated employment opportunities.	Recipients have access to temporary disability-related supports that address recovery needs.	<i>e.g., Share of recipients receiving at least one disability-related support or referral aligned with their assessed recovery needs.</i>
		Recipients have access to long-term disability-related supports that address ongoing needs.	<i>e.g., Share of recipients receiving at least one disability-related support or referral aligned with their assessed needs.</i>
		Recipients exit IA in alignment with temporary disability-related circumstances and readiness to re-enter employment.	<i>e.g., Share of recipients who meet criteria for readiness of employment and exit IA for a pre-defined period of time.</i>
		Recipients exit IA and do not return to IA for at least 1 year, depending on circumstances and changes.	<i>e.g., Share of recipients who exit IA and do not return within one year.</i>
		Recipients are included and participate in the community.	<i>e.g., Share of IA recipients who participate in at least one community activity, event program, or group.</i>
		Recipients experience improved quality of life that promotes independence.	<i>e.g., Share of recipients reporting improved overall well-being and stability in daily life.</i>
Delivery	Strategy: The program's mission, priorities, goals, and culture guide program design and delivery.	Program design reflects community needs, program objectives, mission, and values.	<i>e.g., Availability of a program logic aligned with the vision for the IA program (Y/N).</i>
		Service providers develop and implement an annual plan for service delivery aligned with community needs.	<i>e.g., Share of service providers with an annual service delivery plan.</i>

		Funding arrangements with service providers are sufficiently flexible, adequate, and support locally-responsive and integrated service delivery.	<i>e.g., Share of service providers in budget deficit, share of service providers reporting unmet capital needs.</i>
		Service providers' reporting requirements are clear and support accountability and improvement.	<i>e.g., Share of service providers who completed an annual performance report, share of service providers who report using performance data to inform service delivery.</i>
	Systems: The arrangements or building blocks for functioning service delivery are established.	Service providers have a technical tool for data gathering aligned with their mandate.	<i>e.g., Service providers have and use a technical tool for data gathering that is aligned with their mandate (Y/N).</i>
		Service providers have the analytical capacity to connect data to contextual observations.	<i>e.g., Service providers demonstrate the ability to analyze data and link it to contextual observations (Y/N).</i>
		Systems are available and used to support payment delivery and case management.	<i>e.g., Systems for payment delivery and case management are in place (Y/N), recipients receive payments in a timely manner (Y/N).</i>
		Service providers have a technical tool that supports case management and integrated delivery.	<i>e.g., Service providers using a technical tool that supports case management and integrated service delivery (Y/N).</i>

	The First Nation leads a review of the IA program on a 3-year basis.	<i>e.g., The most recent First Nation-led program review was completed within the last 3-5 (Y/N), Service providers and recipients were consulted within the last 3-5 years to inform program reviews (Y/N).</i>
Processes: The actions, such as program activities, organizational structure, etc. are established. taken to deliver the mission (strategy).	Roles and responsibilities are clearly defined and understood by staff.	<i>e.g., Roles and responsibilities are documented for all positions (Y/N).</i>
	Funding is sufficient to support baseline operations.	<i>e.g., Baseline operating costs are fully covered by existing funding (Y/N).</i>
	Service providers deliver coordinated IA-related supports to meet recipient needs.	<i>e.g., The IA Program offers case management (Y/N), the IA Program offers employment and skills supports.</i>
	Service delivery is supported by First Nations-led and culturally sensitive approaches.	<i>e.g., Services are delivered through First Nations-led and culturally sensitive approaches (Y/N).</i>
	Wraparound programs (e.g., financial literacy courses) are available and accessible to support early intervention: - Addictions support - Financial literacy - Life skills - Cultural connections - Other	<i>e.g., Service provider offers at least one wraparound program and report that eligible recipients can access it in a timely manner.</i>
People: Staffing, recruitment, retention, and training of qualified staff are in place to	Staff capacity is sufficient to manage needs.	<i>e.g., Share of staff reporting sufficient capacity to meet client needs.</i>

	implement strategy, use systems, and apply processes.	Capital is appropriate for staff number and functions.	<i>e.g., Share of service providers that report having adequate capital resources (e.g., infrastructure, workspace, etc.) to support staff roles and functions.</i>
		Staff receive First Nations-led onboarding and training necessary to fulfill their responsibilities.	<i>e.g., First Nations-led onboarding and training is available to staff (Y/N), number of new staff who complete onboarding.</i>
		Availability of specialized staff necessary to deliver culturally appropriate services.	<i>e.g., Number of Elders and specialized staff involved with program delivery.</i>
		Salary and benefits align with position requirements.	<i>e.g., Number of positions with salary and benefits aligned to the position requirements.</i>

Appendix B – Context indicators for the IA program

At the request of collaborators during the June 2026 workshop, IFSD prepared a set of community-level indicators presented in Table 3. The indicators reflect unique environments of First Nations and consider factors that influence the delivery of IA. Data availability by First Nation is assessed for each indicator based on publicly available sources.

Table 3

[In development with collaborators.]

Legend

Available
Partially available
Not available

Indicator	Definition	Data source	Availability
Median Household income (After tax) compared to Market Basket Measure (MBM)	The median household income is a metric to measure income-based poverty by taking the difference with the MBM. If it is a negative number, households are in poverty. If it is positive, they are not in poverty. Families in chronic and persistent poverty are especially prone to challenges with self-sufficiency and may require additional support to reach this objective.¹ The median household income is the amount that divides the income distribution of all the households in a community into two halves, i.e., the incomes of half of the units in that group are below the median, while those of the other half are above the median. Median household income data is available through Statistics Canada.	Statistics Canada	

¹ Statistics Canada, “Dictionary, Census of Population, 2021: Appendix 2.3 Derived statistics,” Government of Canada, last modified November 7, 2022, https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/ref/dict/app/index-eng.cfm?ID=A2_3.

Housing suitability	Housing suitability measures the quality of the shelter for a specific household by assessing the required number of bedrooms. Living in an overcrowded house can contribute to negative mental and physical health outcomes.² Housing suitability refers to whether a private household is living in suitable accommodations according to the National Occupancy Standard (NOS). This indicates whether the dwelling has enough bedrooms for the size and composition of the household. A household is deemed to be living in suitable accommodations if its dwelling has enough bedrooms, as calculated using the NOS.³ Information on housing suitability is available through the Census.	Statistics Canada, Census data	
Dwelling conditions	Dwelling conditions measures the quality of the shelter for a specific household by assessing the building conditions. Poor housing conditions can lead to negative health impacts.⁴ Dwelling conditions refer to whether the dwelling is in need of repairs. This does not include desirable remodeling or additions.⁵ Information on dwelling conditions is available through the Census.	Statistics Canada, Census	

² Philippa Howden-Chapman et al., “Review of the Impact of Housing Quality on Inequalities in Health and Well-Being,” *Annual Review of Public Health* 44, no. Volume 44, 2023 (2023), <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-publhealth-071521-111836>.

³ Statistics Canada, “Dictionary, Census of Population, 2021: Housing suitability,” Government of Canada, last modified October 26, 2022, <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/ref/dict/az/definition-eng.cfm?ID=households-menage029>.

⁴ Karl A. Holden et al., “The Impact of Poor Housing and Indoor Air Quality on Respiratory Health in Children,” *Reviews, Breathe* 19, no. 2 (2023), <https://doi.org/10.1183/20734735.0058-2023>; Rebecca Bentley et al., “Housing as a Social Determinant of Health: A Contemporary Framework,” *The Lancet Public Health* 10, no. 10 (2025), [https://doi.org/10.1016/S2468-2667\(25\)00142-2](https://doi.org/10.1016/S2468-2667(25)00142-2).

⁵ Statistics Canada, “Dictionary, Census of population, 2021: Dwelling condition,” Government of Canada, last modified July 7, 2023, <https://www12.statcan.gc.ca/census-recensement/2021/ref/dict/az/definition-eng.cfm?ID=dwelling-logements003>.

Sufficient and safe water from source to tap	Clean, accessible, and sustainable drinking water is indispensable for meeting national and international standards of health, justice, equality, and responsibility.⁶ Unsafe drinking water has negative impacts on health, general well-being, and economic growth.⁷ Access to potable water ensures safe drinking water in accordance with Health Canada's policies.⁸	From community There is no nationally available data source for First Nations Alternative: Use data from ISC on boil water advisories in First Nations. While this is not an indication of access to potable water from source to tap, it indicates if there are contamination problems.	
Food insecurity (Access to food)	Food insecurity refers to "the inability to acquire or consume an adequate diet quality or sufficient quantity of food in socially acceptable ways, or the uncertainty that one will be able to do so."⁹ Household food insecurity is often linked with the household's financial ability to access adequate food. Additionally, food insecurity can contribute to negative mental and physical health outcomes.¹⁰	From community There is no nationally available data source for First Nations	

⁶ Department of Economic and Social Affairs, "Ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all," United Nations, accessed June 10, 2026, <https://sdgs.un.org/goals/goal6>.

⁷ Office of the Auditor General of Canada, *Access to Safe Drinking Water in First Nations Communities—Indigenous Services Canada* (Office of the Auditor General of Canada, 2021): 1, https://opencanada.blob.core.windows.net/opengovprod/resources/7445c056-703f-4dee-85a0-886102794011/parl_oag_202102_03_e.pdf?se=2026-01-19T21%3A24%3A10Z&sp=r&sv=2024-08-04&sr=b&sig=ixJ2y/6jkUFrc4yVw%2B0TpKLLHDNu3%2BmUNfMA5oOY58%3D; Melanie O'Gorman, "Mental and Physical Health Impacts of Water/Sanitation Infrastructure in First Nations Communities in Canada: An Analysis of the Regional Health Survey," *World Development* 145 (September 2021), <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.worlddev.2021.105517>; Katherine B. Starzyk et al., "Is Water a Human Right?: Priming Water as a Human Right Increases Support for Government Action," *The International Indigenous Policy Journal* 12, no. 3 (2021), <https://doi.org/10.18584/iipj.2021.12.3.9342>.

⁸ Canadian Food Inspection Agency, "Water for use in the preparation of food," Government of Canada, last modified February 27, 2025, <https://inspection.canada.ca/en/preventive-control-plans/preventive-control-plans/water-preparation-food>.

⁹ Health Canada, "Household food insecurity in Canada: Overview," Government of Canada, last modified February 18, 2020, <https://www.canada.ca/en/health-canada/services/food-nutrition/food-nutrition-surveillance/health-nutrition-surveys/canadian-community-health-survey-cchs/household-food-insecurity-canada-overview.html>.

¹⁰ Seyedeh Parisa Moosavian et al., "The Association Between Food Insecurity and Adverse Health Outcomes in Adults: An Umbrella Review of Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses," *Nutrition Reviews*, (2025): 8, <https://doi.org/10.1093/nutrit/nuaf136>; Joy Hutchinson and Valerie Tarasuk, "The Relationship between Diet Quality and the Severity of Household Food Insecurity in Canada," *Public Health Nutrition* 25, no. 4 (2022): 1013–26, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S1368980021004031>; Ali Pourmotabbed et al., "Food Insecurity and Mental Health: A Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis," *Public Health Nutrition* 23, no. 10 (2020): 1778–90, <https://doi.org/10.1017/S136898001900435X>.

Transportation	Transportation can facilitate access to locations helping to fulfill basics needs. It refers to the method used to move a person from one geographic location to another. Availability of transportation options is a helpful insight on whether an individual can access employment, training, and other opportunities.	From community There is no nationally available data source for First Nations	
Remoteness index / Geographic zone	Geography and remoteness impact costs of goods and services and access to them, e.g., health care, food, employment options, etc. Statistics Canada developed a remoteness index by Census subdivision. Distance to population centres in a given radius and their population size are used to build the index.¹¹ First Nations with a land base have a remoteness index. Geographic zones 1 to 4 are also by ISC used to indicate the proximity of a First Nation to the nearest service centre, with consideration of year-round road access.¹²	Statistics Canada ISC	
Addiction (Substance misuse)	Substance misuse can lead to a variety of health issues both physical and mental and has negative impacts on outcomes regarding employment and general well-being, etc.¹³ The rate of addictions in a First Nation is an important indicator of well-being.	There is no nationally available data source for First Nations	

¹¹ Statistics Canada, "Index of Remoteness," Government of Canada, last modified June 10, 2026, <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/catalogue/17260001>.

¹² For a detailed description of the different zones, see: Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada, "Government of Canada, last modified January 14, 2026, <https://fnp-ppn.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/fnp/Main/Definitions.aspx?lang=eng>.

¹³ Geoffrey Maina and Leegay Jagoe, "The Impact of Substance Use and Addiction on Families' Quality of Life in the Canadian Context," in *Handbook of Addiction, Recovery and Quality of Life: Cross-Cutting Perspectives from Around the Globe*, ed. Maria Florence et al. (Springer Nature Switzerland, 2024), https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-031-65873-0_26.

High school completion rate	High school graduation rates can indicate positive economic,¹⁴ physical,¹⁵ and mental¹⁶ well-being of individuals. In the Census, the number and proportion of persons aged 15 and over in private households with a high school diploma or equivalency certificate is available. High school completion rate is measured using the variable "Secondary (high) school diploma or equivalency certificate."¹⁷	Statistics Canada, Census data	
Employment rate	Employment rate is an indicator that can be used to inform the economic conditions in a community,¹⁸ as well as the general community well-being.¹⁹ The percentage of the working age population who are employed is available through the Census.	Statistics Canada	

¹⁴ Mohammad A. Jareebi and Ahmad Y. Alqassim, "The Impact of Educational Attainment on Mental Health: A Causal Assessment from the UKB and FinnGen Cohorts," *Medicine* 103, no. 26 (2024), <https://doi.org/10.1097/MD.00000000000038602>; Marc Frenette, "High school academic performance and earnings by postsecondary field of study," Government of Canada, May 8, 2023, <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/36-28-0001/2023004/article/00001-eng.htm>.

¹⁵ Kristen Schultz Lee and Yulin Yang, "Educational Attainment and Emotional Well-Being in Adolescence and Adulthood," *SSM - Mental Health* 2 (December 2022), <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssmmh.2022.100138>; Mohammad A. Jareebi and Ahmad Y. Alqassim, "The Impact of Educational Attainment on Mental Health: A Causal Assessment from the UKB and FinnGen Cohorts," *Medicine* 103, no. 26 (2024), <https://doi.org/10.1097/MD.00000000000038602>; Mirza Balaj et al., "Effects of Education on Adult Mortality: A Global Systematic Review and Meta-Analysis," *The Lancet Public Health* 9, no. 3 (2024): e161, [https://doi.org/10.1016/S2468-2667\(23\)00306-7](https://doi.org/10.1016/S2468-2667(23)00306-7).

¹⁶ Kristen Schultz Lee and Yulin Yang, "Educational Attainment and Emotional Well-Being in Adolescence and Adulthood," *SSM - Mental Health* 2 (December 2022): 1-2, <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.ssmmh.2022.100138>; Mohammad A. Jareebi and Ahmad Y. Alqassim, "The Impact of Educational Attainment on Mental Health: A Causal Assessment from the UKB and FinnGen Cohorts," *Medicine* 103, no. 26 (2024): 1, 4, <https://doi.org/10.1097/MD.00000000000038602>.

¹⁷ Statistics Canada, "High school completion rate by sex, age group and selected demographic characteristics," Government of Canada, last modified June 10, 2026, <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/en/catalogue/3710017001>.

¹⁸ Statistics Canada, "Quality of Life Hub: Employment," Government of Canada, last modified March 25, 2026, <https://www.statcan.gc.ca/hub-carrefour/quality-life-qualite-vie/prosperite-prosperite/employment-emploi-eng.htm>.

¹⁹ Cigdem Gedikli et al., "The Relationship between Unemployment and Wellbeing: An Updated Meta-Analysis of Longitudinal Evidence," *European Journal of Work and Organizational Psychology* 32, no. 1 (2023): 128, 140, <https://doi.org/10.1080/1359432X.2022.2106855>.