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Redesigning the Indian Government Support Programs: Overview of the Policy Proposal

The Old Program:

When Indian Government Support programs were designed in the early 1980s, the goal of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada was to devolve program administration. By March 31, 2010, the authority for Indian and Northern Affairs Canada to fund these programs will expire. The department is seizing this opportunity to set a higher goal.

The New Policy Objective:

Both on and off-reserve, accountable and effective government decision-making determines how much of a difference public funds make to people's lives. First Nations people expect their community administrations to perform as governments, not merely as administrators. The department's new objective, then, is to provide a policy Framework that supports modern First Nations governments.

The New Program:

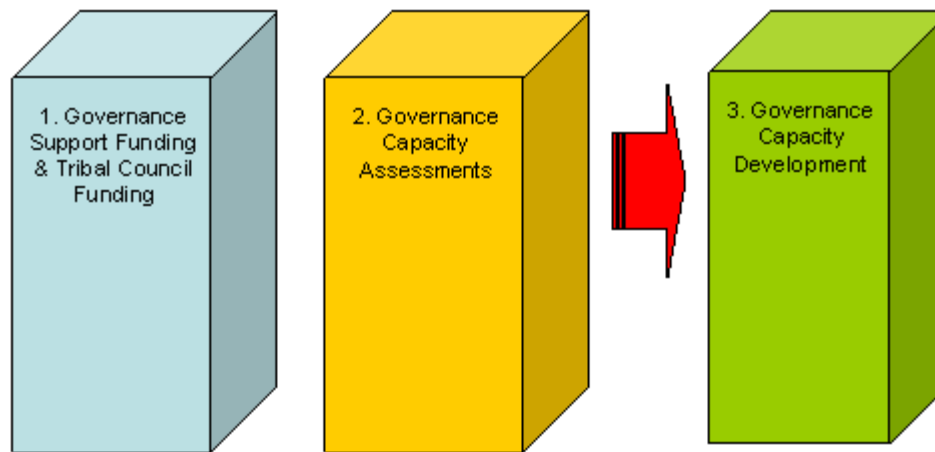
Modern First Nations perform core functions like many other governments:

- Leadership
- Membership
- Strategic Planning and Performance Management
- Law-Making
- Financial Management
- Community Involvement
- External Relations
- Human Resources Management
- Information Management / Information Technology
- Basic Overhead and Administration

The new governance program will fund accountable First Nations leaders and professional First Nations public servants to perform core functions of government through the following simpler program streams:

1. Grants to First Nations for core governance support will continue, much like Band Support Funding.
2. Governance capacity assessments will direct governance capacity development funding to communities which need help. They will also measure the performance of the program itself in improving governance outcomes.
3. Contributions for governance capacity development will continue, much like Professional and Institutional Development funding.

New Program Design



The Benefits:

The new program will be more relevant:

- Good governance will be funded, not mere administration
- Antiquated categories of advisory services will be dropped
- Funding levels will not drop

The new program will be simpler:

- Fewer programs
- No applications or reporting for funding for defined-contribution pensions and benefits
- A simpler formula to replace Band Support Funding

The United Nations has identified universal principles of good governance common to all modern governments. By performing the core functions of any government, First Nations are already adhering to these principles. Indian and Northern Affairs Canada will now seek approval for a new program specifically designed to support First Nations as they achieve this goal.

Date Modified:2009-02-11