

Suggested Activities to be Funded Using the K-12 Education Governance Grants

1. ESTABLISHING OR REVIEWING / UPDATING THE GOVERNING AUTHORITY'S STRUCTURE, OPERATIONS AND/OR PROCEDURES

Related work could include:

- Developing and formalizing processes and protocols for the operation of the Authority, conduct of meetings / meeting procedures, etc.
- Creating or updating Terms of Reference for a Governing Authority, including creating working groups or a committee to lead the work, and/or organizing opportunities to consult with community leadership, families, and others, as appropriate.
- Hosting meetings / a retreat to have the Governing Authority participate in a self-assessment process (see resources below for suggestions), possibly with a consultant for facilitation and feedback.
- Accessing information / advice related to Society Act or Independent School Act requirements (for governance of First Nation Independent Schools).

Sample previous activities sponsored using the Education Governance grants:

- We developed an Education Committee that combines our political governing structure and our traditional governing structures, so the education committee will be successful and will be of the people. The discussions included all families to make sure no one is left behind.
- We hosted meetings of an education committee and elders to develop an education declaration, which will guide our governance and education policy framework. Legal counsel has also developed a workplan and work sheets to help our staff and Chief and Council complete this work.
- We hired a consultant to assist us in developing an Education Advisory Committee, which consists of portfolio holders, elders, parents, and students. We went through a comprehensive education policy review process that included community consultation to launch our new Advisory Committee.
- We engaged a consultant to help develop our Education Board's Terms of Reference, structure, composition, and regular operating procedures.
- We hosted an Education Forum to explore education governance models and to promote community involvement.
- A Governing Authority structure has been established, which we will now adjust to reflect the cultural values and traditions of our Nation. Our Hereditary groups will be meeting with the school's leadership to instill traditional and cultural ways into our governance practices. To start, we have developed a meeting protocol that is embedded in the cultural and traditional values of our Nation and our ways of learning, knowing, and doing. This has allowed for safety in meetings, with everyone heard, respected, and valued.

Resources available to support related activities:

- A ***Handbook for First Nation School Governing Authorities*** provides information regarding various responsibilities of School Governing Authorities. The Handbook includes a number of sections related to Governing Authority operations, including procedures, meetings, and considerations for leading the school governing authority forward. See www.fnsc.ca for a copy of the Handbook.
- The ***Handbook for First Nation School Governing Authorities*** also includes a self-assessment tool that can be adapted and used as relevant.
- FNESC has created a discussion document: ***School Governing Authority Sample Terms of Reference For Consideration By First Nation Schools in BC***. The paper includes important considerations, as well as *sample* Terms of Reference provisions. The document is intended as a starting point to help First Nation school communities discuss and establish thorough and effective Terms of Reference or governance policies of their own. Contact programs@fnesc.ca for a copy of the Terms of Reference.

Possible activities / expenses could include:

- hosting meetings or a retreat to discuss the Governing Authority's operations, including paying associated facility, catering, materials, travel costs, etc.
- paying for consulting / legal advice, as needed.

2. STRENGTHENING THE CAPACITY OF GOVERNANCE AND EDUCATION LEADERS

Related work could include:

- Professional development for education leaders / Governing Authority members related to topics such as, but not limited to, confidentiality, conflict of interest, effective education advocacy, education funding and financial management, education-related human resource management, attendance, school safety issues, and information and communications technology management and planning.
- Training related to interpreting and monitoring students' education achievement to support data-informed decisions and reporting to the community

Sample previous activities sponsored using the Education Governance grants:

- Chief and Council participated in governance training related to our LEA and Strategic Plan.
- We hosted "Cultivating Safe Spaces" professional development workshops for our education department workers and our School Governing Authority members. These full-day workshops helped our school leaders become skilled in building a trauma-informed school environment
- Pro-D in the following areas was very much needed to build leadership and management capacity to support our education governance model: having critical conversations, the implications of lateral violence, effective and efficient communications, and financial management. We organized workshops and professional development days to meet the immediate needs of our education leaders and to build capacity from within. We promoted mindfulness practices and tools to promote holistic well-being, which has reduced stress and tension and made our work more effective.

- We hired and trained a project coordinator who will monitor student achievement data and ensure that plans are in place to monitor and track student attendance and success.

Resources available to support related activities:

- The ***Handbook for First Nation School Governing Authorities*** includes a variety of topics that could be used as a basis for professional development. See www.fnsc.ca for a copy of the Handbook.
- An ***Attendance Toolkit*** or ***Attendance Counts: An Information Guide for First Nation School Governing Authorities*** could be used as a resource for a facilitated meeting on the important topic of attendance. Contact programs@fnsc.ca to request a copy by email or mail.
- A new ***Information and Communications Technology (ICT) Planning Toolkit for First Nation Schools*** is now available to support school leaders and Governing Authorities build their capacity for ICT planning.
- A series of short, virtual sessions to support First Nation School Governing Authorities are being offered in May and June 2024, to cover topics of interest to First Nation school leaders. Those sessions may provide ideas for School Governing Authorities to implement. Contact programs@fnsc.ca for an information flyer.

Possible activities / expenses could include:

- hosting meetings or a retreat for professional development, including paying associated facility, catering, materials, travel costs, etc.
- paying for consultants to offer professional development, as needed.
- paying the costs for school leaders to attend relevant conferences / workshops.

3. BUILDING CAPACITY FOR WORKING WITH EDUCATION PARTNERS

Related work could include:

- Sharing information and building knowledge for policy and program development with partners.
- Preparing for or undertaking consultations with school districts regarding: Local Education Agreement negotiations or implementation; the provincial professional learning day for educators focused specifically on Indigenous education; or other issues as relevant.
- Preparing a community-based response to Bill 40, which was recently passed by BC and:
 - will allow First Nations to determine which schools their students will attend, through their own internal processes with parents;
 - will allow First Nations to apply a Model Local Education Agreement where the First Nation has students enrolled with a Board of Education and there is no existing LEA between the First Nation and Board;
 - requires school districts to have an Indigenous Education Council (IEC), which will prioritize First Nations on whose territory the school district operates, consistent with a distinctions-based approach.

Sample previous activities sponsored using the Education Governance grants:

- We co-developed, with families, a culturally inspired education agreement, with assistance from a lawyer and knowledge keepers – “a first step in striving to collaborate with the local school and district.”
- We worked with the school district on a strategic plan that values an inclusive education community and promotes and respects culture, respect, reciprocity, resilience, and personal success for all students.
- We established an operational plan, including steps to be taken with local school districts, to create an LEA that meets the needs of students in a holistic way -- addressing their mental, physical, social, and spiritual needs.
- We reviewed our current LEA and had ongoing meetings with the School District to make appropriate changes or improvements. This involved discussing current processes and procedures for the K-12 program, determining what needs to be improved, and identifying ways to have our cultural traditions and Indigenous history incorporated into our youth's education.

Resources available to support related activities:

- A New Model Local Education Agreement has been finalized and is available for First Nations to review and use.

Possible activities / expenses could include:

- Costs of hosting meetings or a retreat to plan for and implement related activities, including paying associated facility, catering, materials, travel costs etc.
- paying for consultants / legal advisors for input, as needed.

4. DEVELOPING OR REVIEWING / UPDATING COMMUNITY EDUCATION AND/OR FIRST NATION SCHOOL POLICIES

Related work could include:

- Establishing a committee or working group to review existing policies, possibly with consultant or legal support.
- Hosting a retreat / meeting of appropriate community personnel, families, and/or community representatives to discuss needed policies.

Sample previous activities sponsored using the Education Governance grants:

- We hosted in-person focus group sessions with students (K to Grade 12), staff, School Board members, parents and community members to get feedback on policies that needed to be updated: governance, operations, business operations, human resources, school administration, health and safety, students and community engagement.
- A consultant reviewed our policies and procedures manual and combined all of our policies into one comprehensive document.
- We consulted with Indigenous educators / administrators and other First Nation schools to identify discussion topics for a community meeting focused on governing, family and school staff responsibilities, and community involvement. We also created an Education Governance Survey based

on our research and consultations, to gather more input from school staff, parents, and the community. We will be setting up meetings to discuss the survey results and draft follow-up policies and protocols.

- We had an established school policy and procedures manual, as well as Band personnel policies. We combined and aligned those two documents, working with senior leadership and with our elders and cultural leaders for input and advice.
- We worked in partnership with the local school district to have input into a review of our First Nation school's policies and practices.
- We worked with our local school district to create an Indigenous Education Policy.

Resources available to support related activities:

- A new *Policy and Procedures Resource Guide* provides samples to help school communities create, review and possibly revise policies of their own. The Guide includes policy discussion papers that provide an overview of research as well as a sample policy for: Attendance, Student Behaviour Issues, Non-Graduation Certificates, Shortened School Days, Student Progress Reporting, Student Record Keeping, Family Engagement, Staff Retention, and Supporting Students Who Have Exceptionalities. It also includes sample policies for school operations, school safety and security, and human resources. Contact programs@fnesc.ca for a copy of the Terms of Reference.
- A new ***Privacy Toolkit for First Nation Schools*** is in development, and will be available by Fall 2024 to support the development of privacy policies, procedures, documents, and professional development sessions.
- A new ***Information and Communications Technology (ICT) Planning Toolkit for First Nation Schools*** can assist with ICT planning and any related policy development.

Possible activities / expenses could include:

- hosting meetings or a retreat to discuss policy needs, including paying associated facility, catering, materials, travel costs etc.
- paying for consultants / legal advisors for input, as needed.

5. ENHANCING FAMILY ENGAGEMENT FOR EDUCATION TRANSFORMATION

Related work could include:

- Building mechanisms for parents / caregivers to exercise their roles and responsibilities and participate in education decision-making, including defining Terms of Reference or policy for a Parent Advisory Council (PAC) or other type of parent committee / group.
- Organizing professional development / information sharing opportunities to enhance the capacity of families to support their children's education.

Sample previous activities sponsored using the Education Governance grants:

- We hosted a dinner / information session on roles and responsibilities for parents / caregivers in education decision-making.

- We incorporated a Parent Advisory Council (PAC) and shared information to promote greater parental voice in our school.
- We worked to promote and empower parents and caregivers to increase parental involvement in their children's education. Our work was directed by parent meetings, gatherings with teachers and parents together, and ceremonies to acknowledge and honor our educational achievements and successes. Our Parents Advisory Group supports parents in learning about the education system, increasing their skills with computers, and fulfilling other related tasks.
- We created an Indigenous PAC on-reserve, and we hosted parent-teacher conferences on-reserve to promote improved parent attendance.
- We hosted a Board training session on parental engagement, to explore how the Board can work effectively with families and the community. We also established a communication policy and protocol, and we created a staff handbook and parent handbook.
- Using a Families as Learning Leaders (Fall) model, we worked to empower 1 or 2 parents from each classroom to: be liaisons and help with communications between the teacher and other parents; foster connections and networks between parents; and contribute to education decision-making from a parent perspective. This is intended to decrease some anxieties, fears or misunderstandings parents might have, and allow parents to support one another and encourage their investment and voice in their children's education. The FALL parents were trained in effective communications, using technology platforms for communications, and leadership / mentorship skills.

Resources available to support related activities:

- FNESC has created a discussion document: ***Parent Advisory Council / Parent Committee Sample Terms of Reference For Consideration By First Nation Schools in BC***. The document is intended as a starting point to help First Nation school communities discuss whether they want to create Terms of Reference or policies for a Parent Advisory Committee and, if they do, to help school communities establish Terms of Reference or policies of their own. Contact programs@fnesc.ca for a copy of the Terms of Reference.
- A ***Parents Toolkit*** provides a series of short, reproducible papers that can be adapted and shared with parents to provide information about topics in three general areas: appreciating the importance of parental involvement in education; understanding the structure of the school system, how to build positive relationships with school staff for the benefit of students, and what to do if difficulties arise; and thinking about how to create healthy and supportive learning environments at home.
- An ***Attendance Toolkit*** or ***Attendance Counts: An Information Guide for Families*** could be used as a resource for a facilitated meeting on the important topic of attendance. Contact programs@fnesc.ca to request a copy by email or mail.

"In our community, I organized a series of Zoom sessions for parents, during which we read through each section of the Parents Toolkit together. I had pizza delivered to the parents who participated, and they could keep their cameras on or off – however they felt comfortable – as we read through the information sheets and talked about how we could use the ideas. Some parents who don't usually attend events joined us. Some parents even joined sessions from their cars if they were out. And the exciting thing is we heard feedback from students showing that people are using the information. For example, a student told us their family is sitting down for family meals more often now!"

Feedback from a participant in the 2023 FNESC Education Conference

“It might be useful to use the Parents Toolkit in staff professional development sessions. It could help our staff build *our* capacity for sharing information with families.”

Input from a March 2024 Attendance Capacity Building Session for First Nation School Staff

Possible activities / expenses could include:

- fees for a Home-School Coordinator or Parent Liaison Worker to lead activities to enhance parental engagement in education.
- hosting meetings or a retreat for community / school education staff to plan for parent engagement activities, or for families to discuss relevant topics, including paying associated facility, catering, materials, travel costs etc.
- paying for education leaders to access professional development on how to promote family engagement.
- paying for consultants to support professional development / information sharing with families.

6. PROMOTING COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT IN EDUCATION

Related work could include:

- Building mechanisms for community members to contribute to education decision-making.
- Hosting information sharing opportunities to inform the community about important education matters.
- Organizing a committee to review and update the mission and vision for a First Nation school, and/or hosting a community information session to share the mission and vision and ensure it reflects the community's expectations for its school and students.
- Creating communications materials / platforms for sharing information.

Sample previous activities sponsored using the Education Governance grants:

- A graphic designer was hired to create a new web site that will be the main communication tool used for communicating with parents and the community. A former student was hired to work with the Graphic Designer so that he can keep the site updated on a regular and consistent basis.
- Our mission statement was translated into our language, and we installed a sign outside our school showcasing the mission statement to promote greater understanding of our school's work and purpose.
- We held a community forum to review the significance of the United Nation Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples, discuss the fundamental importance of Indigenous languages and cultures in First Nations schools, and discuss the role of our Education Authority in addressing the following quote from the FNEsc/FNSA Handbook for First Nation School Governing Authorities: “School Governing Authorities work toward a clear purpose, ensuring and overseeing the development of a shared school vision, mission, goals and values to support high levels of learning and achievement for all students.”
- We set up Education Department information booths at our community's monthly meetings for parents, leadership, and community members. This was intended to help community members be more aware of the Education Department happenings, opportunities, challenges, and issues. Community members were able to ask questions at the booths in an informal way, which may be more comfortable for them.

- We revisited our school's mission, vision and values to make them reflective of the school's staff, students, parents, and community members. Student voice was accessed through a student leadership group. We shared drafts for our elders, language speakers, and community members to see. We now want to incorporate more traditional governance perspectives through ongoing meetings with staff, our PAC, and Traditional Governance groups. We are also gathering input from parents and community members on ways to promote more engagement with the school community. Questionnaires distributed at a community meeting and on-line surveys are assisting us in gathering information about how we can eliminate barriers to participation.

Resources available to support related activities:

- The **Attendance Toolkit** could be adapted to host a community meeting on the important topic of attendance. Contact programs@fnesc.ca to request a copy by email or mail.
- The **Handbook for First Nation School Governing Authorities** includes significant information related to identifying the school's purpose and establishing a mission and vision. See www.fnsc.ca for a copy of the Handbook.

Possible activities / expenses could include:

- hosting meetings or a retreat for community / school education staff to plan for community engagement activities, or for community discussions of relevant topics, including paying associated facility, catering, materials, travel costs etc.
- paying for consultants to support professional development / information sharing.

7. SUCCESSION PLANNING / BUILDING THE CAPACITY OF FUTURE EDUCATION GOVERNANCE LEADERS

Related work could include:

- Organizing opportunities for students to have voice in education decision-making
- Offering leadership workshops / training sessions for community members / students who are interested in education governance.
- Sponsoring community members' attendance at leadership / government related workshops or conferences.
- Establishing a Student Advisory Committee to contribute to school decision-making and build student leadership.

NOTE: the funding grants cannot be used to pay for courses for post-secondary students.

Possible activities / expenses could include:

- hosting leadership workshops / training sessions, including paying associated facility, catering, materials, travel costs, etc.
- paying for consultants to offer professional development, as needed.
- paying for community members to attend relevant leadership conferences / workshops.