

Final Engagement Summary Report

Date: February 17, 2021

Indigenous Energy Support Programs Review

Engagement Initiated: February 2020

Engagement Description

The IESO has four Indigenous Energy Support Programs (ESPs), designed to promote participation in Ontario's energy sector by supporting community energy planning and renewable energy project development, as well as the building of energy knowledge and awareness, and skills related to energy projects. The four programs are: Community Energy Champion Program (CEC), Indigenous Community Energy Plan Program (CEP), Education and Capacity Building Program (ECB), and Indigenous Energy Projects Program (IEP).

The IESO regularly conducts reviews of its Indigenous ESPs, informed by feedback from communities and program recipients.

Engagement Objective

The objective of this engagement was to work with communities to discuss and obtain feedback on the ESPs being offered, to identify opportunities for improvement within the program designs to increase the accessibility and effectiveness of the program offerings, and ultimately to release updated program documents for all four Indigenous Energy Support Programs.

Engagement Approach

This was a public engagement process and was conducted in accordance with the IESO's approved [engagement principles](#). The approach for this engagement initiative included opportunities to provide input through various channels such as surveys, webinars, and written feedback. All materials, including feedback and commentary from communities, and IESO responses to feedback, was posted on the dedicated IESO engagement webpage for this initiative.

Conclusion

Community engagement on the ESP Review began with a February 2020 survey of past and current ESP recipients, seeking feedback on existing programs. Over one hundred survey responses were received, with three key themes identified from the responses:

- Program Accessibility
- Available Funding and Existing Capacity
- Eligible Expenses and Activities

Through further survey response analysis and conversations with communities, five objectives of the ESP redesign effort were identified to help address the feedback received:

- Advance professional and community-led capacity building in the Indigenous energy space
- Foster better communication and information-sharing amongst communities and with the IESO
- Develop clear program reporting metrics
- Ensure existing resources and funding sources continue to be used efficiently
- Increase program accessibility, transparency and clarity

As the next step in the engagement, the IESO held an online meeting in July, 2020. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss and summarize the survey feedback, discuss the primary objectives noted above, and then to present proposed program revisions for further feedback from communities. Meeting participants were able to provide feedback during the meeting, were presented with five polls throughout the meeting to respond to, and then had the opportunity following the meeting to submit written feedback to the IESO for consideration.

In addition to the discussion during the meeting and the poll responses, IESO received feedback submission from various communities and organizations across all four Energy Support Programs. Key themes from these responses included:

- Program flexibility and scope
- Barriers to participation
- Need for capacity building support

In the September, 2020 meeting, the IESO discussed the feedback received and described how it was considered as the program redesigns took further shape. One previously proposed program change was to incorporate a new minimum standard for all Community Energy Champions (CECs). Community and stakeholder feedback indicated that a new minimum standard could impose barriers in a variety of ways, and in response to this feedback, to ensure accessibility to the program for all Indigenous communities and organizations, no minimum requirements for CECs were implemented. Additional feedback was received on the partnerships stream of Indigenous Energy Projects (IEP) Program, specific to the funding timelines and general positioning of the program. Based on the feedback provided, the IESO will require completed Community Energy Plans (CEPs), if available, to be included in an IEP application, but it will not require a specific IEP project to be identified in the

CEP. And further, the decision was made for there will not be a requirement to submit a CEP for applications to the partnerships stream for a transmission project.

The Indigenous Energy Support Programs Review engagement concluded following the September online meeting, and on October 19, 2020, the IESO released updated program documents for all four Indigenous Energy Support Programs.