User Guide to the Promising Practices Self-Assessment Tool

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How to Use this Guide

This Guide is designed to help you initiate and support a self-assessment process of your ES project using the Promising Practice Self-Assessment Tool. The process of self-assessment provides you with the opportunity to:

- Gain insight into the overall quality of the project
- Ensure you are meeting your goals
- Identify project alignment with best practices
- Identify project strengths and areas needing improvement
- Set priorities and develop Action Plans to address those priorities
- Gather evidence that demonstrates project activities and impact
- Make informed decisions about where to allocate resources

The Guide is divided into 4 sections

- **Overview of the Self-Assessment Tool:** This section explains how the tool was developed, its structure, its scoring method and evidence gathering suggestions. This section also outlines the 12 Markers of Promising Practice.

- **Using the Self-Assessment Tool:** This section describes how to prepare for the assessment and provides a step by step process for completing the Self-Assessment Tool.

- **Working with the Results:** This section guides you through the review of your assessment results, setting priorities and Action Planning. It also provides suggestions on how you might use results to showcase and promote your project.

- **The Appendix:** This section contains helpful resources including detailed description of the Markers of Promising Practice, Suggestions of evidence you can use to support your assessment, a sample of a completed section of the Self-Assessment Tool, and a sample Action Plan Form.

As you read the Guide, take time to reflect on what will work best for you and your project. It is important to make the tool work for you. It is meant to be a learning process that taps into your own and your team's expertise and knowledge. Be creative and enjoy the process.

Overview of the Promising Practice Self-Assessment Tool

How can the Promising Practices Self-Assessment Tool help you?

This self-assessment tool is a clear and concise way for you to measure the presence of best practices in Indigenous Essential Skills (ES) initiatives within your own projects, programs, or resources. It is not meant to be used as a device for judging the project as "good" or "bad." Rather, the tool is intended to help you evaluate your project's strengths and identify areas for improvement. Assessing your initiative against evidence-based best practices will help you to hone in on your own best practices, refine and strengthen your existing ES projects, and guide the development of your future ES projects. While an effective means of assessment, it is suggested that the Self-Assessment Tool be used along with other formal and informal methods of evaluation.

The Tool Structure:

The Self-Assessment Tool is built around the 12 Markers of Promising Practice identified by the First Nations, Inuit and Métis Essential Skills Inventory Project (FIMESIP). The 12 Markers were defined through extensive research and consultation that included: a literature review, an analysis of over 100 Essential Skills initiatives, in-situ research on 10 case studies, and consultation with Indigenous and education leaders. The self-assessment tool is divided into 12 sections, each one assessing a different Marker of Promising of Practice. Each Marker is briefly defined and under each Marker there is a list of descriptive quality indicators associated with the specific best practice.

The Tool Rating System:

The Self-Assessment Tool uses the following rating system to assess the degree to which each quality indicator is evident in your project

Not Started Score = 0	Underway Score = 1	In Place Score = 2
• Use this score if the indicator statement does not ring true to the current practices of your initiative	• Use this score if the indicator statement is partially true to ongoing practices in your initiative	• Use this score if the indicator statement describes a practice that your initiative uses or incorporates regularly
This may include practices which you would like to incorporate, but have not yet made any progress towards. This may also encompass practices that are new ideas to you, and that you would like to incorporate.	This might reflect practices that are just beginning to be incorporated, are gradually being implemented, or only used on occasion. The practice might be present, but not fully integrated or used on a regular basis.	This would reflect practices that are well-integrated and routinely performed in your initiative. It may also include aspects of your project that have been completed.

N/A	If the statement is not applicable to your initiative, score yourself under the Not applicable category.

Once you've finished assessing a Marker, you can compare your Total Score for that Marker with the **Scoring Key**. Your score will place you in 1 of 3 categories: **Gap / Challenge**, **Underway**, or **In Place**.

Gap / Challenge	Underway	In Place
• This indicates a practice that needs to be improved or addressed in your initiative.	• This indicates a practice for continued growth in your initiative.	• This indicates a best practice (strength) in your initiative.

Remember…	Your results are for you/your organization – so be as accurate and objective as possible when assessing your project! This will help you make the most out of the self-assessment tool and its results. Recommendations for how to apply the results of your self-assessment are listed in the **Working with the Results** section.

The Tool's Evidence Based Methodology:

The Promising Practices Self-Assessment is underpinned by an evidence-based methodology. For each indicator that you score as either "underway" or "in place" there is a space (box) underneath the applicable rating to note down what the practice looks like in your project. (Example: documents or activities that demonstrate this indicator and validate your rating of the indicator)

At the bottom of each assessed Marker are suggestions as to the type of information, documents and/or resources that can be gathered as further evidence of the presence of the Marker of Promising Practice in your project. Identify the types of documents/resources that will support your assessment and collect them in hard copy or in a digital folder for ease of reference.

Using the Self-Assessment Tool

Getting Prepared

1. Determine who will fill out the self-assessment form.

You will have different approaches to the self- assessment process based on whether the assessment is completed by an individual or by a team.

The self-assessment tool can be filled out by anyone involved with your initiative that has in-depth knowledge about its inner workings, development, and delivery. If you're completing the tool as a team, you'll want to involve key project personnel. Depending on the project context, you may choose to invite members of major stakeholder groups to participate . Make sure everyone on the team is oriented to the Self-Assessment Tool and the assessment process.

2. Choose the Markers you wish to assess.

Review and familiarize yourself with the Markers of Promising Practice before starting the assessment process. You can refer to the description of the Markers in this guide, as well as the brief descriptions listed in the tool to guide your assessment (see Appendix).

Depending on available time and resources you may decide to focus on specific Markers or to assess all of the them. You may want to focus on only those Markers that are most applicable to your project or present the most opportunity for growth. Or you may wish to go through the entire tool and fully assess your initiative against all 12 Markers. If you decide to assess your project against all 12 Markers we recommend doing this in more than one sitting.

3. Set aside enough time to complete the assessment.

If you are assessing your initiative against all 12 Markers, we'd recommend setting aside an extended period of time (60 mins.) to give it your thorough attention. You may wish to schedule multiple sessions for the assessment.

If you are only assessing a few select Markers, we'd recommend setting aside a shorter period of time (30 mins).

If you are completing the self-assessment as a group, you will want to allot extra time for discussion and decision-making.

TIP: The number and complexity of indicators under each of the 12 Markers varies. Some Markers will take longer than others to assess so you will want to take that under consideration and plan your time accordingly

Completing the Self-Assessment Tool

Self-assessing your project by yourself

1   Select and review the Marker(s) you want to focus on and assess

2   Read the indicator statement and think about how it applies to your initiative

3   Mark the rating (Not Started, Under way, In Place) that best describes your initiative's practices. Note the rationale for your rating choice

4   For each indicator that you score as either "Underway" or "In place," note down evidence or a description of activities that validates your rating in the space provided

5   Once you've scored each indicator, tally the total scores for the maker and record it in the "Total Score" box

6   Identify and gather any additional evidence that validates your rating (photos, documentation, resources, etc.) as suggested in the evidence section

Once you're finished assessing your initiative against one of the markers, you can:

Assess your initiative against more Markers

Compare your total score to the Scoring Key
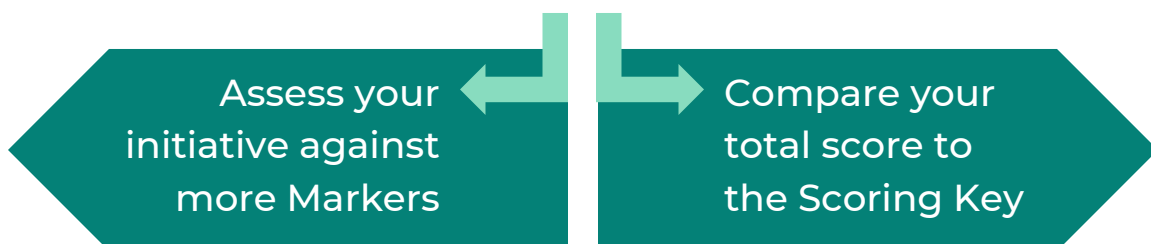
Self-assessing your project in a team

1 — Review and select the Marker(s) that you want to focus on and assess. You may wish to have a copy of the Self-Assessment Tool for each team member or work from a shared tool (i.e., overhead. PowerPoint slides, etc.)

2 — Read the indicator statements under the selected Marker and discuss with your team how it applies to your initiative. Record important ideas that arise from your group's discussion

3 — Come to a group consensus on which rating (Not Started, Under way, In Place) best describes your initiative's practices and mark it on the tool. Record the rationale for your team's rating choice

4 — For each indicator that you score as either "Underway" or "In Place," note down evidence or a description of activities that validates your rating in the space provided

5 — Once your team has rated each indicator, tally the total scores for the Maker and record it in the "Total Score" box

6 — Identify and gather any additional evidence that validates your rating (photos, documentation, resources etc.) as suggested in the evidence section.

Once you're finished assessing your initiative against one of the markers, you can:

Assess your initiative against more Markers

Compare your total score to the Scoring Key
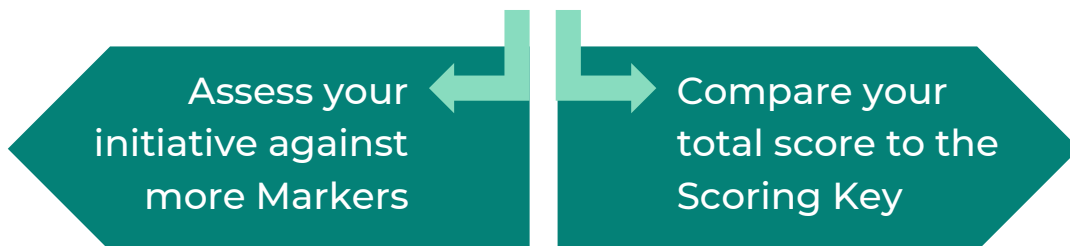
Working with the Results

Review the Results and Consider Your Priorities

Depending on the number of Markers you assessed, this phase of self-assessment process may include reviewing all the Markers assessed and then reflecting on individual Markers and their indicators.

When reviewing the overall results of the assessment you will want to consider the following:

- Which assessed Markers are strongest in the project?
- Which assessed Markers received the lowest overall ratings?
- Does a high or low rating for one Marker affect performance on another? How?

When reviewing specific Markers and their indicators, consider:

- Which indicators are rated the highest? What does your project do to accomplish this?
- Which indicators are rated the lowest? What does your project currently do (or not do) that affects this practice?

Now that you have reviewed your results you will want to prioritize where you will take action. The following questions will help:

- Where are project's strongest results? How can you best extend and capitalize on these results through targeted investment and action?
- Where is the projects most significant gaps/challenges?
- What resources/opportunities exist to address them?
- Would addressing any of these gaps/challenges have a multiplier effect (i.e., progress in one area could result in progress in another or multiple Markers)?
- Are certain Markers more important for your participants, your community, or your partners? Should these be prioritized?
- Are there certain Markers that have greater impact on participant success, program goals, and desired outcomes? If so, should these be prioritized?

Action Planning

Once the review of results is completed you will want to develop an action plan to address those Markers and indicators that you have prioritized. A solid clearly-written action plan will guide you as you make changes and enhance your project.

For your action plan, you'll want to:

- Identify the Marker to be addressed
- State your Goal: make sure it is specific, measurable, achievable (you have the capacity and resources needed), realistic, and timely
- List the specific indicator(s) you want to address
- Have clearly-defined, measurable action steps
- Identify who is responsible for implementing each action
- Set a realistic timeframe for you to accomplish each action
- Indicate how you will measure that you have successfully completed your stated action Regularly review your Action Plan, track your progress, update your Plan as needed, and communicate its effect with your team

Communicating Your Results

The results and evidence based information/resources gathered through the self-assessment process can be used to promote and showcase you project with key stakeholder groups.

Use your results to:

- Provide funders evidence based information demonstrating project impact and best practices
- Enhance project evaluation strategies and reports
- Strengthen funding applications
- Advocate for additional resources
- Make a case for employer involvement
- Expand partnerships
- Build and/or reinforce community buy-in
- Promote your project model and best practices with others
- Help build capacity within your organization and throughout the larger Indigenous Essential Skills Community of Practice

Appendix

The 12 Markers of Promising Practice

The 12 Markers of Promising Practice are evidence-based practices. The literature review, initiative inventory, and case studies conducted as part of FIMESIP (2011-2013) demonstrates how these markers contributed to the success and overall impact of indigenous ES initiatives. The 12 Markers are as follows:

1

First Nations, Inuit, and Métis control and ownership of their own education and training initiatives:

- Indigenous control of Indigenous education/training and resource development has proven vital to increasing educational attainment and to the success and effectiveness of employment training initiatives.
- This is an essential guiding principle of Indigenous education programming and tool development.

2

Partnerships:

- Building strong formal relationships with all stakeholders at all stages of the initiative ensures the best possible program design, planning and delivery.
- Partnerships provide opportunities for cooperation, exchange of information and sharing of resources among organizations with similar mandates and clients.
- Strong partnerships between ES initiatives and employers facilitate the integration of ES into the workplace and create ready-made networks and employment opportunities for clients.

3

Working with and in the Community:

- First Nations, Inuit and Métis community members need to be involved in all aspects of program/resource development and program delivery.
- Community involvement ensures that the initiative meets the needs of the community and that development and delivery models reflect the realities of the community environment.
- Community involvement ensures community buy-in and provides program participants with the support of community members, friends, and family needed to maintain commitment.
- Working with communities includes building capacity and creating a continuum of training by supporting existing community resources.

4

Learner-Centered Approach:

- The learners' needs drive program planning, development and delivery.
- Program structure takes into account and accommodates the learners' lives.
- Assessment tools are used to assist participants in identifying their strengths and skills and to lay out a clear strategy for successfully meeting learners' needs and goals.
- Participation is voluntary and learners are aware of all elements of programming.
- Programs create a safe environment where participants learn at their own pace, are not judged and are respected for who they are.
- Programs implement cost effective appropriate training and education methods to ensure that programs are sustainable for learners and their communities.

5

Holistic Approach to Essential Skills Program Delivery:

- Programming and resources take into account and meet the unique and multiple needs of Indigenous participants including the need for healing, empowerment, and personal support.
- Programming takes into account the whole life of the learner, addressing any issues that may be a barrier to client success.
- Programming addresses all the client's skill needs including ES, life skills, employability skills, career planning, job search, academic upgrading and technical skills.
- Training is targeted, covering the full range of skills necessary for long-term employment.
- Programs reach out to families and communities to ensure that all aspects of the participant's life are considered, particularly if participation requires the client to be absent from their home community.

6

Experienced and Knowledgeable Staff:

- Staff is aware of and sensitive to the unique needs of First Nations, Inuit and Métis learners.
- Staff is familiar with and respectful toward Indigenous peoples' culture.
- Staff is experienced with employment-related training programs, understands issues impacting First Nations, Inuit and Métis trainees and the workplace and is flexible to these concerns.
- Instructors need to be organized, knowledgeable, skilled, able to build rapport, motivate participants, and provide learners with successful learning opportunities.

7

Principles of Adult and Indigenous Learning:

- Programming is responsive to different learning styles and uses a wide range of instruction and evaluation strategies.
- Instructional methods focus on experiential approaches: doing, talking, and then reading, rather than reading, talking, and then doing.
- Learning is hands-on, interactive, and has application to real world or workplace tasks.
- ES are embedded in the curriculum and taught within the context of both workplace and traditional activities.
- Modern training is linked to traditional values. Elders are invited to participate in the training and participants are encouraged to learn through the traditional methods of observation and imitation.

8

Culture, Language, and Traditions:

- The community and Elders are involved in the development and delivery of programming.
- The program is sensitive to biases that appear in existing texts and uses or develops culturally appropriate materials.
- Participants are able to use their language and access content and resources in their own language.
- ES are explored within the context of traditional teaching methods, activities and resources.

9

Employer Involvement and Direct Workplace Experience:

- The program has direct links with employers and incorporates various work experience opportunities.
- The program assist participants to acquire job-related experience, learn about the workplace, and develop employability skills.
- The program develops effective communication between trainees and employers. The program works with employers to coordinate participants' transitions to the workplace, continues to support clients once they are on-the-job, and provides diversity awareness training for employers to assist with creating a culturally aware work setting.

10

On-going Communication:

- A communication strategy is in place to ensure clear and on-going communication between all stakeholders.
- The communication strategy includes the publication of complete and detailed program reports.

11

Established Evaluation Criteria and Methods:

- Evaluation is systematic, built-in from the inception of programs and continued throughout the initiative.
- Evaluation includes identifying, using quantitative and qualitative methods for collecting and analyzing outcomes data, and demonstrating success.

12

Promotes the Business Case:

- The initiative is sensitive to the needs and goals of employer partners.
- The initiative demonstrates to employers how involvement in the program benefits them.
- Successful participant outcomes are connected to successful business outcomes in order support employer participation and investment and to increase program sustainability.

Filling in the evidence section:

Here are suggestions for types of information, documents, and/or resources that can provide evidence of a Marker of Promising Practice in your project and support assessment results.

1	**First Nations, Inuit, and Métis control and ownership of their own education and training initiatives**	e.g., Photos of consultation process, a list of organizations involved in the design of the initiative, a report on a community asset/needs mapping process
2	**Partnerships**	e.g., List of partners/stakeholders involved in the project, a document on the process of their involvement, feedback you've received from partners
3	**Working with and in the Community**	e.g., Photos of family days, a list of community resources, a project plan for involving the community, an evaluation report on the impact of the community's involvement on the project
4	**Learner-Centered Approach**	e.g., Examples of participants' individualized learning plans, training manuals, participant testimonials, evaluation reports
5	**Holistic Approach to ES Program Delivery**	e.g., Support plans for participants, copy of the needs assessment, a list of participant supports, a copy of the curriculum
6	**Experienced and Knowledgeable Staff**	e.g., Staff credentials and bios, performance assessment reports, participant testimonials
7	**Principles of Adult and Indigenous Learning**	e.g., Curriculum, photos of participants in experiential learning environments, testimonials of instructors and/or participants
8	**Culture, Language, and Traditions**	e.g., Curriculum, texts in Indigenous languages, photos of Elders interacting with participants, Elder testimonials
9	**Employer Involvement and Direct Workplace Experience**	e.g., Employer and participant survey reports, copies of the employer awareness training curriculum, participant employment performance reviews
10	**On-going Communication**	e.g., Copy of the communications strategy, participant survey reports, stakeholders distribution list
11	**Established Evaluation Criteria and Methods**	e.g., Evaluation reports, evaluation methodology and plan, participant outcome data
12	**Promotes the Business Case**	e.g., A return on investment report, reports on use of funds, outcome reports, employer testimonials/surveys

Example of an Assessed Marker

Marker 9: Employer Involvement and Direct Workplace Experience

The initiative has direct links with employers, providing participants with work experience opportunities and meeting employers' needs for a skilled and diverse workforce.

Indicators of promising practice	Rating			
	Not started 0	Underway 1	In place 2	N/A
The initiative provides work experience opportunities that allow participants to acquire job related experience, learn about workplace culture, and develop employability skills.			Programming designed to meet identified local labour market needs. Our 1st Nations community has economic development projects on the go and are hiring people from our project. Curriculum addresses employability skills. All participants involved in 4 wk. placements.	
The initiative creates partnerships with employers (and their networks), which supports participants' future work development opportunities.		Continue to form strong employer partnerships Community Leadership is in charge of forging such partnerships through Impact Benefit Agreements.		
Staff work directly with employers to coordinate participants' transition from training to the workplace.		Staff meet with employers before, during and after placements. Have Work Placement Agreements in		

Indicators of promising practice	Rating			
	Not started 0	Underway 1	In place 2	N/A
		place outlining employer, program, participant expectations. Need to work harder on this.		
Employer partners are directly involved in the development and delivery of the project.			Employers engaged in development of training curriculum; provide work placements, come to speak to the cohort, perform mock interviews which often result in hires.	
The initiative works directly with employer partners to identify the specific competencies needed to do the job being offered and customizes participant training to reflect the ES and competencies required to successfully get and keep that job.			Work with employers to identify the job they want filled and specific job skills required. Program customizes training to address needed ES and specific skills to do that job.	
Employers provide feedback to the project to ensure that training continues to meet the needs of the workplace and job roles.			Employers provide informal and formal feedback throughout program. Meet with employers during work placements and at end of program. Have	

Indicators of promising practice	Rating			
	Not started 0	Underway 1	In place 2	N/A
			Employer feedback forms.	
There are workplace supports in place to help participants succeed in the completion of their training placement *(e.g., on-site monitoring, follow-up, work place mentorships, etc.).*		Monitor participants on the job site, but haven't perfected this service yet. Some employers are more open to this than others. Would like to set up work place mentorships.		
Employers and their staff are oriented to the project and it goals in order to better support successful work placements.		Meet with employers during development phase and prior to work placements. Work place agreements. Don't always meet with staff.		
Participants and employers have the opportunity to share feedback during the work placement so any issues preventing success may be addressed.			Monitor participants on the job site. Meet with employers during work placement. Monitor addresses issues. Participant can receive extra training as needed. Employer provides participant with performance	

Indicators of promising practice	Rating			
	Not started 0	Underway 1	In place 2	N/A
			review at end of work placement	
Indigenous awareness & workplace inclusion training is provided for employers.	We haven't done this want to			
Employers have culturally sensitive human resources personnel that can effectively assist participants experiencing inappropriate workplace behaviours.		This is available in 1st Nations community economic development projects		
Total Score	**15**			

Evidence of the Assessment: (Examples of evidence that will support your assessment. E.g. Employer and participant survey reports, copies of the employer awareness training curriculum, participant employment performance reviews)

- Partnership Memorandums of Understanding
- Data on number of ES and specific occupation training programs delivered
- Data on number of participants hired by employers
- Workplace Agreement Forms
- ES and occupational training curriculum
- Work place monitoring forms
- Employer quotes and testimonials
- Employer Feedback Forms
- Participant Feedback forms
- Pictures of Participants at their Work place
- Video of employer presentation to cohort
- Pictures of employers giving participants mock interview

Sample Self-Assessment Action Plan Form

Project: _____ Date of Assessment:_____

Maker of Promising Practice:					
Goal Statement: *(what do we want to achieve)*					
Indicator(s) to be addressed	Actions to be taken	Person (s) Responsible	Timeline	Resources Needed	Measure of Success
Indicator					
Indicator					
Indicator					