



Indigenous and
Northern Affairs Canada

Affaires autochtones
et du Nord Canada

Finding Solutions

The Reserve Land and Environment Management Program Renewal Discussion Guide



Canada 

Working Together to Find Solutions

The Government of Canada is committed to a whole-of-government approach to Nation-to-Nation and Inuit-to-Crown relationships. As part of its commitment to support First Nations governance and socio economic development, INAC is seeking input on how the Reserve Lands and Environment Management Program (RLEMP) can better meet the needs of First Nations wanting to manage their own lands. Continuous program improvement is important to ensure that First Nation communities have the supports they need to manage their reserve lands.

To ensure that this engagement process meets the needs of First Nation communities, INAC met with both national and regional Indigenous lands managers associations to identify key themes to guide the engagement discussions with First Nations and stakeholders.

This discussion guide provides an overview of the RLEMP program features and funding, offers some questions for further discussion, and provides options to share your feedback with us.

What is RLEMP?

The RLEMP program provides funding to First Nations to develop the capacity needed to manage and exercise increased responsibility over their reserve land, resources and environment under the *Indian Act*. Funding is available to train and certify a professional land manager and on-going operational funding is provided to support land and environmental activities.

Building lands and environmental capacity through participating in the RLEMP program can also prepare First Nations to manage their reserve lands beyond the *Indian Act*, and to take advantage of the benefits of First Nations Land Management or comprehensive self-government.



How do First Nations Progress Through RLEMP?

There are three levels of progressive responsibility under RLEMP. As First Nations progress from one level to the next, they develop the lands and environmental management capacity required to manage their reserve lands.

Level 1: Training and Development Level

First Nations are funded to train a certified land manager and set up a lands office

First Nations gradually take on land management responsibilities in partnership with INAC

This is typically a two year process



Level 2: Operational Level

Once a First Nation has a certified land manager, they progress to the operational level of RLEMP

First Nations actively manage their reserve lands, natural resources and environment under the *Indian Act* and work as partners with INAC regional offices



Level 3: Delegated Authority Level (closed to new entrants since 2011)

First Nations have additional lands management authority under **section 53** and/or **section 60** of the *Indian Act*

Responsibilities and Liability under RLEMP

Under RLEMP, First Nations become responsible for co-managing their lands, environment, and resources with INAC under the *Indian Act*. These responsibilities include:

- **Lands management** such as leases or permits
 - **Environmental management** such as environmental site assessments
 - **Natural resource management** such as permits for natural resource extraction like fishing and logging
 - **Community-based land use planning** such as zoning and designations
 - **Compliance management** such as promotion, monitoring, and enforcement
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Terms and conditions for each First Nation participating in RLEMP are outlined in a funding agreement and include:

- **A monthly expense plan**
- **A schedule of payment** for annual funding allocation
- **Program and service delivery requirements** as indicated in the Statement of Work by Roles and Responsibilities
- **Annual reporting requirements**

Three checklists have been developed to help First Nations and INAC meet program requirements:

1. First Nations managing their lands at the **training and development level** will be evaluated by their regional office using the Training and Development Level Compliance Framework Checklist.
2. First Nations managing their land at the **operational level** will be evaluated by their regional office using the Operational Level Compliance Framework Checklist.
3. First Nations managing their land at the **delegated authority level** will be evaluated by their regional office using the Delegated Authority Compliance Framework Checklist.

All efforts are made to ensure that First Nations remain compliant under RLEMP. However, First Nations that are unable to meet the terms and conditions of their funding agreement will no longer receive funding under RLEMP and INAC will reassume related responsibilities.

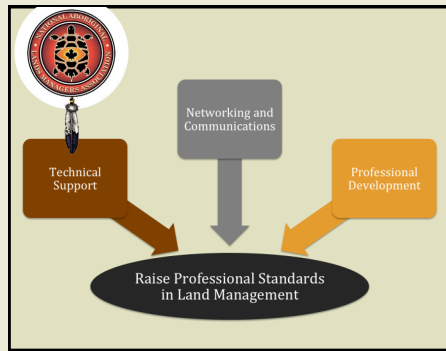
It is important to note that while First Nations are responsible for the administration of lands and environmental transactions, the liability for these transactions still remains with the Minister of INAC.



What Training is Available under RLEMP?

Training is an important component of RLEMP. INAC provides funding to train and certify one professional land manager for a First Nation through the **Professional Land Management Training and Certification Program (PLMCP)**. This funding covers costs such as:

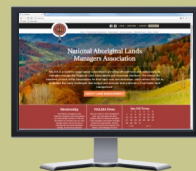
- **Tuition**
- **Travel**
- **Accommodations**
- **Other administrative fees**



The **PLMCP** was created in partnership between INAC, the University of Saskatchewan, and **the National Aboriginal Land Managers Association (NALMA)**. The goal of the **PLMCP** is to train a professional land manager to effectively manage reserve lands and processes under the *Indian Act* through a two-phase process:

- **Post-secondary training (level 1)**
- **Technical training (level 2)**

For more information on PLMCP training, please visit **NALMA.ca**



Post-secondary Training

Level 1

The Post-secondary training (otherwise known as the **Kanawaihetayan Askiy Program**) is delivered by the University of Saskatchewan and provides new land managers with the basic knowledge they need to manage the legal and environmental aspects of their reserve lands.



Starting in April every year, the program takes 12 months to complete and requires both on-campus and at-home study periods.

A level one certificate of achievement is received from the University of Saskatchewan upon successful completion. The post-secondary training is a prerequisite to the technical training.

Technical Training

Level 2

Technical training is delivered by NALMA and also takes 12 months to complete.

This training gives new land managers practical hands on experience to manage the day-to-day legal and environmental obligations of lands management on reserve.



To complete level 2 training, a participant must finish:

- **Five technical courses each conducted over a one-week period**
- **One online technical course conducted over a five week study period**
- **37 hours of work relevant experience**

A level 2 certificate of achievement is received from NALMA recognizing the successful completion of the technical training.



Upon completion of both levels, graduates receive certification from NALMA recognizing their expertise in First Nations land and environment management.

Who can participate in the PLMCP training?

Anyone can participate and be certified through the PLMCP as a lands manager.

However, First Nations participating in RLEMP will receive funding to have one employee certified through the PLMCP. First Nations are also welcome to self-fund and certify as many other land managers as they wish.

How is Operational Funding Calculated under RLEMP?

RLEMP provides operational funding to First Nations to manage their reserve lands. Operational funding is determined by a formula that considers:

Population size of the First Nation



Size of the reserve land base



Type, number and complexity of land and natural resources interests and transactions registered in the Indian Lands Registry System



Environmental activities such as:

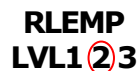
- site assessments
- impact assessments
- monitoring and audits



Compliance activities



Level of responsibility



Funding increases in recognition of the additional administrative responsibilities performed under the *Indian Act* as First Nations progress from level 1 to level 3 of RLEMP.

While a First Nation is training a land manager, they are eligible for 80% of their operational funding to set up and start running a lands office. Once they have a certified lands manager, First Nations then receive 100% of their operational funding as they take on full responsibility for lands and environmental management activities.

Level 1: Training and Development Level 

Level 2: Operational Level 

Level 3: Delegated Authority 



How do First Nations Apply to Participate in RLEMP?

To join RLEMP, a First Nation or Tribal Council must:

- Pass a Band Council Resolution agreeing to the terms of the Program; and
- Submit an Entry Request and Capacity Self-Assessment to their INAC regional office.

Based on this, INAC regional offices determine a First Nation's readiness to join the program.

Generally, RLEMP's eligibility criteria are:

- A low General Assessment score;
- Providing INAC with audited financial statements in accordance with Canadian Accounting Standards;
- Having, or pursuing, economic development projects/activities; and
- Having land management activity registered in the Indian Lands Registry.

RLEMP works on a continuous intake basis so there are no application deadlines. However, it is important to note that there are deadlines to apply for PLMCP training that communities may wish to take into consideration when applying to RLEMP. First Nations are encouraged to speak with their regional offices if they want more information about the program or the entry process.

Pre-Engagement: What we Have Heard so Far

To better prepare for this engagement, pre-engagement meetings were scheduled with the following Indigenous groups:

National Aboriginal Lands Managers Association (NALMA)

Atlantic Region Aboriginal Lands Association (ARALA)

First Nation Lands Managers Association for Quebec and Labrador (FNLMAQL)

Ontario Aboriginal Lands Association, (OALA)

Manitoba Uske

Saskatchewan Aboriginal Land Technicians (SALT)

Treaty and Aboriginal Land Stewards Association of Alberta (TALSAA)

British Columbia Aboriginal Land Managers (BCALM)

The valuable feedback received helped shape this discussion guide. Our hope is that we can work together and focus on finding the best ways RLEMP can continue to support First Nation communities into the future.



RLEMP Training is Effective but Could be Further Improved

- While the University of Saskatchewan is doing a great job at providing training, it would be nice to have academic training offered at more institutions across the country, including training in French.
- There are not enough on-line/distant learning options currently available for students who may not be able to travel to all the required training.
- More hands-on training (e.g. job shadowing/mentorship/apprenticeship) is needed to help enhance the academic learning and provide real on the ground experience for new lands managers.
- The networking opportunities for participants in the PLMCP training program are very valuable and should not be forgotten.
- RLEMP only provides training for one land manager per community; this does not help First Nations who lose a lands manager and does not help with succession planning.
- There is not enough on-going training after land managers are certified for continued professional development.
- Prior learning assessment and recognition based on the competencies of an individual would be helpful during the certification process.

- There are First Nations communities who are not eligible for RLEMP funding but who still send their lands managers on the training because they see the certification as important and useful.
- More environmental training is needed; many land managers do not feel like they know enough to do what is required.
- Better coordination is required with land management and environmental management training.



The RLEMP Funding Formula Should be Examined and Updated

- The current RLEMP funding formula is inefficient to administer and difficult to explain many lands managers do not understand how their operational funding is calculated.
- A transaction-based formula does not capture all the work that lands managers do to help their communities.
- Not all lands transactions are captured in the formula – consideration should be given to expanding the kinds of transactions used to calculate funding, or to find a way to provide funding to recognize the other work lands managers provide.
- Some First Nations do not receive enough funding to cover the costs of staffing or supporting a land management office – this is due to smaller population size / smaller land base / lower number of transactions registered in the Indian Lands Registry System.
- Better compliance and accountability tools need to be developed to ensure that funds are more efficiently used to support a lands office.
- Even after the training, regional offices continue to provide substantial administrative support to some RLEMP First Nations even though they receive full operational funding.

Better links can be Made to Other Lands Programs/ Regimes

- More could be done to improve pre-readiness for First Nations who would like to join RLEMP but do not currently meet the entry criteria.
- More could be done to improve pre-readiness under RLEMP for First Nations who wish to transition under the Framework Agreement on First Nations Lands Management.



Four Discussion Themes and Questions for Further Discussion

Four themes and discussion questions were identified with our partners to help guide the RLEMP engagement process. We encourage you to read, think about, and prepare your thoughts in advance of the discussion sessions in your province / territory.

Theme 1: Community planning and lands and environmental management

Theme 2: Building lands and environmental management capacity

Theme 3: RLEMP funding formula

Theme 4: Transitions into and out of RLEMP



Theme 1: Community Planning and Lands and Environmental Management

- What are the land related goals for your community? (e.g. housing, infrastructure, economic development, environmental protection, etc.)
- What are the environment related goals for your community? (e.g. waste, contaminated sites, energy, environmental protection, etc.)?
- How do you plan to meet these goals?
- If you are not currently in RLEMP, have you considered it to help with lands and environmental management for your reserve? If yes, why? If no, why not?
- Does your community have any lands related planning in place such as a land use plan, environmental plan, and comprehensive community plan? How have these plans helped your community meet your goals?
- How do environmental issues in your community impact land management?
- If you are in RLEMP, did it contribute to the success of an economic development or natural resource project? If so, how? If not, what could have contributed to its success?



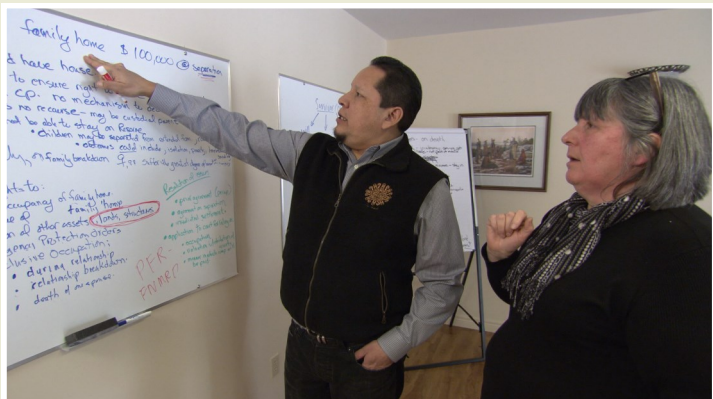
Theme 2: Building Lands and Environmental Management Capacity

- If you have not taken the PLMCP training, what kind of training do you think you need to be a lands manager in your community? What kinds of support would you need to be successful? What barriers do you face to getting the training you need?
- If you have taken the PLMCP training, do you feel it has prepared you to be a lands manager in your community? What things did you like about the program? What things would you improve and how?
- What value does certification under the PLMCP through NALMA bring to your community?
- Do you feel your community is prepared to take on environmental management and deal with environmental issues?
- What tools, resources and knowledge do you require to strengthen environmental management in your community?
- How did RLEMP training affect your ability to manage natural resources or any potential natural resource projects? What sort of training would you require to effectively manage natural resources in your community?



Theme 3: RLEMP Funding Formula

- Do you understand the current RLEMP funding formula?
- If your community is considering RLEMP, how much does the current funding formula impact your decision on whether or not to apply?
- If your community is in RLEMP, what do you like about the current RLEMP funding formula and would like to keep?
- If your community is in RLEMP, what do you not like about the current RLEMP funding formula and would like to see changed? How would you change it?
- What funding sources outside of RLEMP funding do you access to fund your land and environment related activities on reserve?
- How much time and resources are you spending to secure these additional funding sources?



Theme 4: Transitions into and out of RLEMP

- For First Nations that do not participate in RLEMP currently, what advice would you give to INAC to help the program better meet your needs?
- For First Nations that currently participate in RLEMP, do you think RLEMP prepares you for land management outside of the Indian Act (e.g. First Nation Land Management (FNLM), comprehensive self-government)? What advice would you give to INAC to make the program better prepare your First Nation to transition to FNLM, if you so choose?
- For First Nations in FNLM, what advice would you give to INAC to improve RLEMP to make the transition to FNLM easier for other First Nations?



We Look Forward to Hearing from You

Thank you for reading the RLEMP Discussion Guide, we look forward to hearing from you in person, online, or in writing.

Please send written comments in an email or a letter to the contact information below.

Contact us

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