



EXPANSION AND DIVERSIFICATION

NORTHERN INTEGRATED COMMERCIAL FISHERIES INITIATIVE



Program Application
Guide

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Introduction

The Northern Integrated Commercial Fisheries Initiative (NICFI) provides funding and support to interested Indigenous groups and communities not eligible for the Atlantic and Pacific Integrated Commercial Fisheries Initiatives, where Fisheries and Oceans Canada (DFO) manages the fishery¹, to develop and maximize the potential of their community-based communal commercial fishing enterprises (CFEs). This includes redistributive-model enterprises which may sell products only to the community or local area.

The objective of the program is to develop self-sustaining CFEs: Indigenous groups which are fully capable of taking complete ownership of fisheries operations and becoming successful, self-sustaining harvesters. There are four components of the NICFI program:

1. Capacity Building (Business Development).
2. Indigenous Harvester Training.
3. Expansion and Diversification.
4. Aquaculture Development.

This document describes the application process to receive **Expansion and Diversification** funding for economic development opportunities, including how applications are developed, assessed and the required follow-up activities.

A copy of the *NICFI-Expansion and Diversification Application Form* is attached in Annex A.

Expansion and Diversification Overview

Funding is available to eligible Indigenous communities seeking to diversify their commercial, local redistributive, or combined commercial/redistributive fisheries enterprises, including support to obtain access or enhance existing access and other fisheries-related activities, in order to maximize economic returns for the benefit of their communities.

To be eligible for NICFI Expansion and Diversification funding, the recipient must have a documented CFE Business Development Plan in place. Each project submitted for NICFI Expansion and Diversification support must be aligned with their CFE business development plan. It must also support capacity building and sustainability in commercial, local redistributive, or combined commercial/redistributive fisheries activities.

¹ Geographic restrictions do not apply to NICFI eligible groups that participate in the Aquaculture Development component.

Eligible activities for Expansion and Diversification funding support may be related to:

- Vessels (upgrades or replacements).
- Access (acquisition of additional licences/quotas).
- Gear (equipment needed for changes in fishing/fleet operations, fishing strategies, tactics and methods, including Local Redistributive fishery harvesting equipment).
- On-shore facilities (vessel compounds/gear storage/community freezer/processing facility).
- Fisheries related activities such as retail, storage, distribution and tourism.

Roles and Responsibilities

The NICFI Expansion and Diversification component involves a collaborative process involving a number of partnerships. The roles and responsibilities of these partners are as follows:

Organization	Role / Responsibility
Fisheries and Oceans Canada - DFO (NICFI Program Authority)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ultimate decision-maker for all funding-related matters. • Verifies applications have all the information needed to be able to evaluate proposed activities. • Reviews applications to ensure alignment with the revenue and profit generation, capacity-building, employment creation, and sustainability goals of NICFI. • Reviews applications to ensure applicant capacity to complete the work within the Fiscal Year.
Business Development Team (BDT)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The BDT provides advisory services to prospective applicants and assists with project implementation processes including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Helping to refine and analyze a proposed project - Providing application support by reviewing and providing feedback on draft business cases - Reviewing application packages for quality, completeness - Providing project implementation support • Specialised expertise in the Local Redistributive capacity building model is available to all interested program participants. • The BDT does not play a role in the evaluation of business cases and has no decision-making authority

Third Party Evaluator (TPE)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Verifies applications for completeness of information needed to carry out evaluation of the proposals. • Evaluates the applications and assesses its alignment with revenue and profits generation, employment creation, capacity-building, and sustainability goals of NICFI and determines applicant capacity to complete the work within Fiscal Year. • Meets with applicant board and management team to discuss proposed projects and learn about applicant operations. • Prepares reports for DFO outlining results from evaluation and provide recommendations. • Presents reports and recommendations to the Application Review Board (ARB) and NICFI Program Authority.
Application Review Board/Committee (ARB)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ARB reviews project applications and the TPE's findings in order to make recommendations to the NICFI Program Authority including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - whether or not to support a proposal, the funding amount, and any funding conditions - concerning details that may be referred back to the applicant for further work, revisions, and/or resubmission. - identifying other possible sources of complementary project funding for the proposed work or activity. • ARB is comprised of representatives from Indigenous organizations. DFO is an ex-officio participant.

Program Flexibilities

The Expansion and Diversification component of the NICFI program has flexibilities to enable multi-year contribution agreements for projects to be implemented in stages with secured funding. Multi-year agreements may extend from one to five years.

All decisions on funding flexibility requests are subject to the approval of the NICFI Program Authority.

General Application Requirements

Project Objectives – The activities must be aligned with the CFE’s Business Development Plan and support its development and implementation..

Eligibility – NICFI can be accessed by all Indigenous communities/groups not eligible for Atlantic or Pacific Integrated Commercial Fisheries Initiative (AICFI or PICFI) in all areas where DFO manages the fishery.

Business Cases - All prospective applicants are required to work with the Business Development Team (BDT) to develop associated business cases and ensure applications are complete, including all supporting information, prior to submission to the NICFI Program

Authority. Note that there is no cost to the applicant for the services provided by the BDT. Business cases should include the following:

- Project Description / Purpose.
- Linkage to Business Development Plan.
- Level of impact (direct and in-direct) to community/CFE (employment, revenue, etc.).
- Quotes.
- Detailed budget that includes immediate and longer-term costs of the project.
- Consideration of alternative sources of funding.
- Technical / scientific /regulatory requirements² and other factors that could affect project success.
- Any other information that could be relevant to the review of the proposal.

Note: All applications involving major work on vessels must be per the recommendation of a qualified Marine Surveyor. Project activities that are commonly considered ongoing and regular vessel and equipment maintenance activities are not eligible for support. These activities include, but are not limited to: vessel painting, replacement of fishing gear, etc.

Financial Details - All applications must include detailed budget information, outlining the complete costs for each project, and the sources of funding expected. Specifically, each application must include a minimum 10% cash contribution from the applicant to the total project cost.

Letter of Support - All applications must include a letter of support from the authorized representative of the applicant, e.g. Leader, Chief, Executive Director, President, Mayor, or Band Council Resolution (BCR), etc., authorizing the submission of an application under NICFI.

Application Deadline – The deadline for NICFI Expansion and Diversification funding is November 30th, to guarantee review for the current fiscal year. Applications can be submitted at any time.

Confidentiality

All information provided by an applicant in the application and supporting documentation will be held in confidence by the NICFI Program Authority and the TPE. The evaluation of applications will be carried out under strict confidentiality by those involved. Application and project details will remain confidential even after projects are approved. Further, the TPE's report and recommendations will only be made available to the Program Authority and the ARB, unless otherwise instructed by the applicant.

² It is the responsibility of each applicant to ensure they have met the necessary regulatory requirements before initiating a project. Approval of funding under NICFI does not constitute approval of any requests for permits, licences, assessments, etc.

Application / Review Process

Step 1 – Interested community works with its BDT member(s) to develop project work plans and supporting business cases for submission, and completion of the NICFI Expansion and Diversification application. Prospective funding recipients should also investigate all possible sources of funding for their project.

Step 2 – Once completed, each applicant should submit the application documents to the NICFI Program Authority (see Contact Information), along with a letter of support from their authorized representative such as the Leader or Chief of their community, the Executive Director of the organisation, President, Mayor, etc.

Step 3 – DFO will refer the application to the Third Party Evaluator (TPE) for review. The TPE will evaluate each application with a particular focus on the technical and economic feasibility and practicality of the work proposed. The TPE will contact the community to schedule a meeting in the community in order to evaluate and draft a project assessment report.

Step 4 – Upon receipt of the TPE’s report, the application and report will be forwarded to the Application Review Board (ARB), which includes Indigenous representatives, for further evaluation and recommendation. The evaluation will be based on the strength of the project and business case. The recommendation of the regional ARB, including recommended levels of support, will be conveyed to DFO.

Step 5 – DFO will review the ARB’s recommendation and make the final determination regarding funding support under NICFI. If a project is approved for support, DFO will send a Letter of Offer to the applicant outlining the level of support available, as well as any conditions associated with the funding.

Note: Each project will be reviewed solely on project merit for funding approval.

Step 6 – If the applicant is in agreement with the Letter of Offer, their authorized representative must indicate in writing to the Program Authority their acceptance of the offer and the associated conditions.

Step 7 – Once the work and level of funding are agreed upon, DFO will develop a contribution agreement for ratification by the authorized representative and DFO. Proceeding with a project before a contribution agreement is issued, without pre-approval from the NICFI Authority, will be done at the risk of the commercial fishing enterprise.

Note: Project expenses incurred prior to the ratification of a contribution agreement are done so at the applicant’s risk, and are not guaranteed for reimbursement.

Program Policy

While it is recognized that very large projects may involve several phases or steps, acceptance of a project by NICFI does not imply commitment to provide support for follow-on work or projects submitted for consideration in subsequent years.

While it may be helpful to describe the entire undertaking when applying for NICFI Expansion and Diversification funding, approval will be limited to the work outlined in the Letter of Offer.

Contact Information

To begin working with the program, please contact the NICFI Program Authority at the address below. The NICFI Program Authority will direct you to the BDT member for your community.

Applications should be submitted to:

NICFI Program Authority
Indigenous Affairs Directorate (IAD)
Fisheries and Oceans Canada
200 Kent Street
Ottawa, ON, K1A 0E6
DFO.NICFI-IPCIN.MPO@dfo-mpo.gc.ca

**ANNEX A – Northern Integrated Commercial Fisheries Initiative (NICFI) Expansion and Diversification -
Application Form**

Section 1: Applicant Information			
Organization:			
Mailing Address:		Date:	
		Application Contact:	
		Phone:	
		Email:	

Section 2: Confirmation of Application Attachment and Pre-Requisites	
Full work plan and schedule, and breakdown of estimated costs are attached.	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
NICFI CFE Business Development Plan is active.	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
Fisheries Management System (or equivalent) is in use.	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
Business Case is attached.	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
Supporting documents (e.g. quotes, permits, etc.) are attached.	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
Detailed budget Information is attached.	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
Supporting letter signed by the Authorized Representative is attached.	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
Minimum 10% cash contribution requirement met.	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>
Summary of the proposed work and estimate of total costs is included.	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

Section 3: Applicant and Partners
Identify the principal applicant, and any name(s) of Indigenous groups in the aggregate group and any affiliated business entities who are the partners in this project.
Organization and Nature of the Relationship (s)

Section 4: Goals and Objectives	
Note: Use a separate document if more space is needed	
Complete the following table to identify the goals and objectives of the project on how they relate to the NICFI funding objectives – support revenue and profits generation, capacity building, employment creation, and economic sustainability of operations and facilities.	
1. Employment: How many new jobs will be created from this project?	
2. Indigenous employment: Of the new jobs that are created through this project, how many of those would be Indigenous staff?	
3. Capacity Building: How many personnel will be trained from this project? For how many days?	

4. What level of revenue will be generated from this project?	
5. What is the expected level of profit from this project?	
6. Self-sustainability: How will the project sustain itself beyond NICFI funding?	

Section 5: Summary of Project		
ACTIVITY DETAILS: PLEASE INDICATE THE CATEGORY THIS APPLICATION APPLIES TO		
PROJECT CATEGORY:	1. VESSEL UPGRADES/REPLACEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/>
	2. ACCESS ACQUISITION	<input type="checkbox"/>
	3. GEAR AND EQUIPMENT	<input type="checkbox"/>
	4. OTHER	<input type="checkbox"/>
BRIEF PROJECT OVERVIEW		
Provide, in a non-technical manner, a description of the proposed project activities, including:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work completed to date (if applicable). • Describe the expansion/diversification activities and type of expenditures that you are requesting for funding. • Project planning process. • Measures that will be implemented to ensure the long-term economic sustainability of the project beyond the project lifecycle. 		

Section 6: Work Plan

Identify and describe the project's major milestones, indicators of success, and the targeted completion dates.

- Project milestones are defined as the achievement of specific activities necessary for the completion of the project (i.e. critical path to project success) and may span across several of the project's activities.
- These milestones can be related to any aspect of the project (e.g., technical, financial, management, etc.).

Section 7: Schedule and Breakdown of Estimated Costs and Financing

Costing Details (By Activity)

#	ACTIVITY TITLE	BUDGET
1.		\$
2.		\$
3.		\$
4.		\$
5.		\$
6.		\$
7.		\$
8.		\$
TOTAL COST OF ACTIVITIES:		\$
SUPPLEMENTARY FUNDING SOURCES (E.G., MINIMUM 10% OWN-SOURCE CASH CONTRIBUTION, FINANCING, OTHER SOURCES)		
Funding Source		\$
Funding Source		\$
Funding Source		\$
TOTAL SUPPLEMENTARY FUNDING:		\$
TOTAL NICFI FUNDING REQUESTED:		\$

Section 8: Regulatory and/ or Other Approvals:

PERMITS AND LICENCES

Where applicable, applicants are responsible for obtaining the appropriate permits and licences prior to the receipt of any NICFI Expansion/Diversification funding support. Further, permits and licences must remain valid for the duration of the project.

Regulatory Approvals	Completion Date

Section 9: Declaration and Signature(s)

The information provided is an accurate description and accounting of the request for NICFI Expansion and Diversification support.

Authorized Representative	Position
Signature	Date

***Please Note:** This Application and supporting documentation may be shared, in confidence, by the NICFI Project Authority, with the TPE, BDT and ARB as appropriate.*