TRANSFORMING INDIGENOUS PROCUREMENT

2023 Cando Survey

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Executive Summary

This survey aims to understand the experiences of Indigenous businesses and communities in the realm of public procurement in Canada. The report provides insights into the demographics, economic activities, public procurement experiences, successes, and challenges faced by Indigenous businesses.

Demographics

Our respondents (N=163) were predominantly from First Nations (75%) and Metis (14%) communities. More than half of the respondents were male (58.9%), with a fairly even distribution across three age groups (under 45, 45-54, and over 55). Many respondents lived in communities with fewer than 5,000 people, with 58.28% residing in rural communities.

Economic Activity

Indigenous communities exhibit a proactive approach to economic development, with 87.65% of respondents having at least one person responsible for this function. Community-based supports for economic development, such as community economic development organizations, were accessible to 60.74% of respondents. However, respondents reported gaps in access to financial, training, technology, and insurance supports essential for business growth. Indigenous businesses operate across various sectors, including construction, transportation, utilities, retail, and professional services, with notable participation in the green energy sector. Despite the diverse economic activity, the adoption of certifications, which is known to be critical for showcasing business capabilities in competitive markets, was relatively low among respondents.

Public Procurement Experiences

Our respondents had a wide range of experiences with public procurement. Of the total bids submitted, only 39% were successful. Factors associated with winning contracts included being an Indigenous-owned business, offering high-quality products or services, competitive pricing, territorial and traditional knowledge, risk awareness, and cultural training. These results suggest that Indigenous businesses benefit from their unique knowledge and understanding of their land, environment, and culture.

Challenges

Despite the opportunities offered by the federal government's policy of allocating at least 5% of the total value of contracts to Indigenous businesses, several challenges hinder participation in public procurement. Respondents cited lack of resources, government assistance, technical skills, and mentorship as significant barriers to accessing procurement contracts. Constraints associated with Request for Proposal specifications, such as lack of insurance or experience, and excessively large contract sizes, were also identified.

Key Takeaways

The federal government's policy presents unique opportunities for Indigenous businesses. However, our survey reveals a mismatch between current capacities and procurement requirements. There is a need for targeted government policies and initiatives to better align Indigenous businesses with Government procurement activities. Examples include initiatives focused on making procurement more accessible to Indigenous businesses and providing clear and easily accessible Indigenous procurement policy guidelines for procurement officers. Further, fostering knowledge exchange and providing timely information on procurement opportunities are crucial for developing effective procurement readiness and scaling strategies.

To fully harness Indigenous businesses' potential in public procurement, collective efforts to address the identified challenges are essential. Such efforts can create an environment that fosters the growth and success of Indigenous businesses, while ensuring the benefits of public procurement are equitably distributed across Indigenous communities.

cando
Inspiring Success

Introduction

Recent studies from Indigenous organizations like the Council for the Advancement of Native Development Officers (Cando), Indigenous Works, and the Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business (CCAB) emphasize the need to address economic disparities between Indigenous and non-Indigenous populations. The 2020 OECD report, "Linking Indigenous Communities with Regional Development in Canada", underscores the significant economic potential of Federal procurement and partnerships in bridging these disparities. Reflecting this understanding, on August 6, 2021, the Government of Canada implemented a policy ensuring that, by 2024, a minimum of 5% of the total value of contracts would be held by Indigenous businesses.

Existing data on Indigenous procurement activities and capacity needs are sparse. To create an effective Indigenous framework and ensure procurement readiness, Cando requires more comprehensive information. Thus, Cando developed and conducted an Indigenous procurement survey in collaboration with a team of Canadian academic researchers funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (SSHRC) which explored public Indigenous procurement in Canada including federal, provincial, municipal, foreign, and Crown corporation procurement.

With these considerations in mind, the 2023 Cando Procurement Survey was designed with the following objectives:

1. Determine the types of procurement contracts Indigenous businesses have been awarded,
2. Ascertain the value of contracts and ways to increase value,
3. Identify the barriers and challenges Indigenous businesses face in participating in procurement opportunities, and
4. Determine the capacity needed for Indigenous businesses to participate effectively in procurement opportunities.

The foundation of this research was built on a spirit of collaboration, with Cando partnering closely with academic researchers to ensure a rigorous and informed approach. A primary goal of the survey was not just to gather data but to implement its findings in a meaningful way. The results are intended to be instrumental in developing actionable strategies to enhance procurement opportunities for Indigenous businesses in Canada. Beyond immediate strategy formulation, these research findings have the potential to drive policy changes. They aim to play a pivotal role in influencing future decision-making processes, ensuring that Indigenous procurement considerations remain central in policy discussions and implementations.

This report begins with a description of the survey's methodology, followed by details on respondent demographics, an overview of business and economic characteristics, and insights into public procurement experiences. It concludes with a comprehensive data analysis, key findings, and actionable recommendations.

Methodology

The survey was conducted online and made available in both English and French. It was collaboratively developed by our team and the Council for the Advancement of Native Development Officers (Cando). Leveraging Cando's extensive network, the survey was distributed through their social media channels and membership databases. The target audience comprised Cando members and alumni, totalling approximately 3,000 potential respondents.

Figure 1: Respondent Map

Figure 1 provides a visual representation of the geographical distribution of our respondents.

The survey was open for participation from January 31, 2023, to March 31, 2023. Out of the potential respondents, we garnered 163 responses, yielding a 5.4% response rate. Participation was entirely voluntary, and the survey employed a self-selection method. This allowed respondents the flexibility to complete the entire survey or only specific sections based on their preference.

It is important to note that due to the voluntary and open nature of this survey, the collected data remains unweighted. Therefore, the results should not be viewed as a representative sample of the entire Indigenous business population in Canada.

Section 1: Demographics

Understanding the diversity of our survey respondents is crucial for interpreting our findings. In this section, we delve into the demographic characteristics of the Indigenous businesses and communities that participated in the survey. This comprehensive demographic analysis allows us to better appreciate the varied perspectives and experiences represented in our data.

As shown in Figure 1.1, Table 1.2, and Table 1.3, we analysed the data based on key demographic factors such as Indigenous identity, gender, and age:

- 75% of respondents identified as First Nations, followed by 14% who identified as Métis.
- The gender distribution among respondents was 58.9% male and 38.8% female.
- The age of respondents was evenly distributed across three categories: under 45, 45-54, and over 55.

Figure 1.1: What group do you identify yourself with?

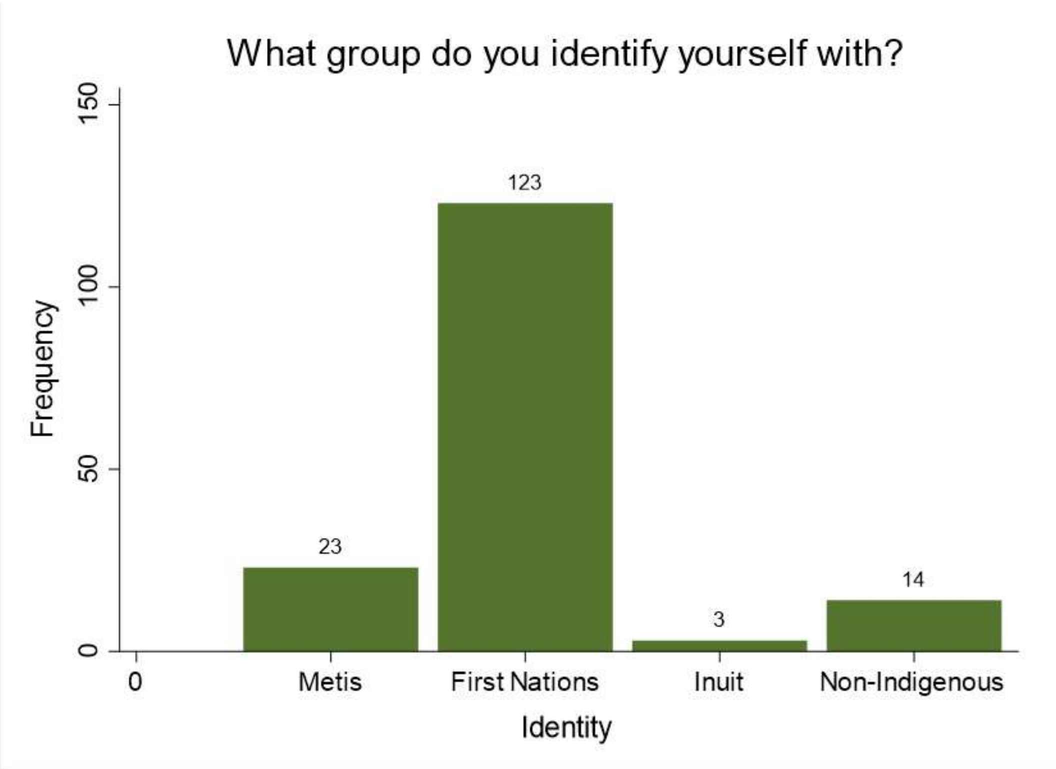


Table 1.2: Gender - How do you identify?

Gender	Frequency	Percent
Male	96	58.90
Female	65	39.88
Prefer not to answer	2	1.23
Total	163	100

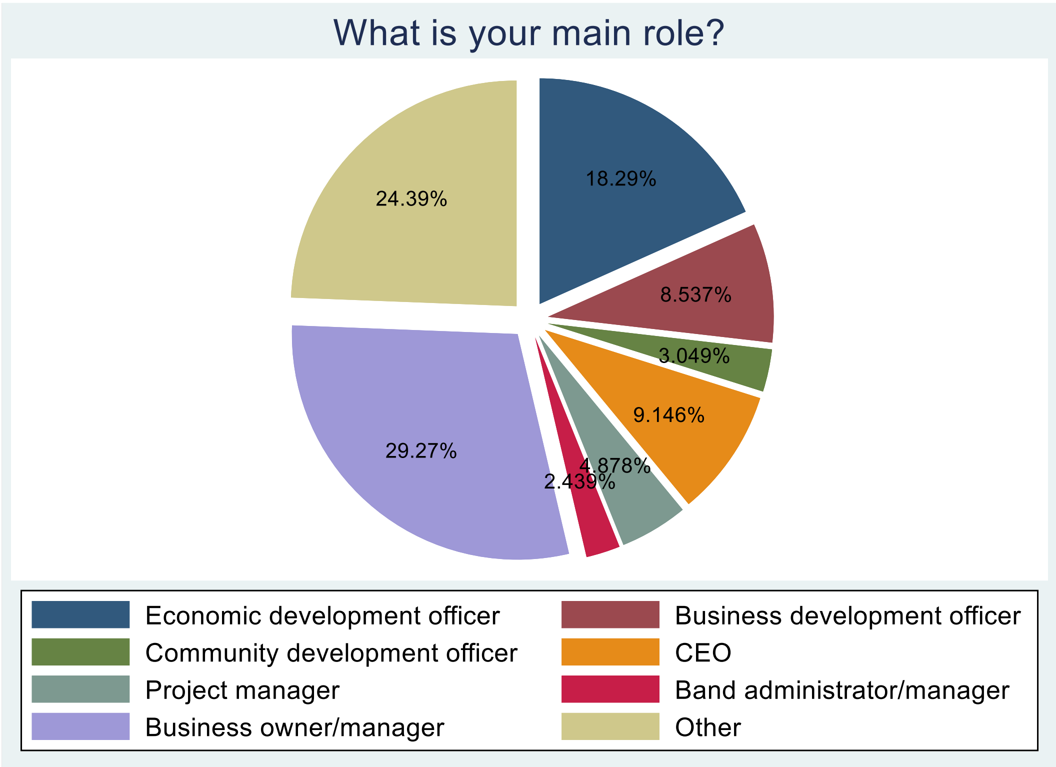
Table 1.3: What is your age?

Age	Frequency	Percent
Under 45	55	33.74
45-54	50	30.67
55 or over	58	35.58
Total	163	100

Regarding the main roles of respondents (Figure 1.4), the five most prevalent roles were:
1. Business Owner/Manager,
2. Economic Development Officer (EDO),
3. CEO,
4. Business Development Officer, and
5. Land Manager.

Additionally, when asked about the percentage of time dedicated to economic development activities, responses varied widely. They ranged from 0%, reported by two respondents, to 100%, reported by 34 respondents. On average, respondents dedicated 68.31% of their time to economic development activities.

Figure 1.4: What is your main role?



As Figure 1.6 shows, 76% of respondents resided in communities with fewer than 5,000 people. More than half of these communities (58.28%) are rural, as indicated in Figure 1.7. Figure 1.8 provides a regional distribution of our respondents.

Figure 1.6.: What is the total population of your community (on/off reserve)?

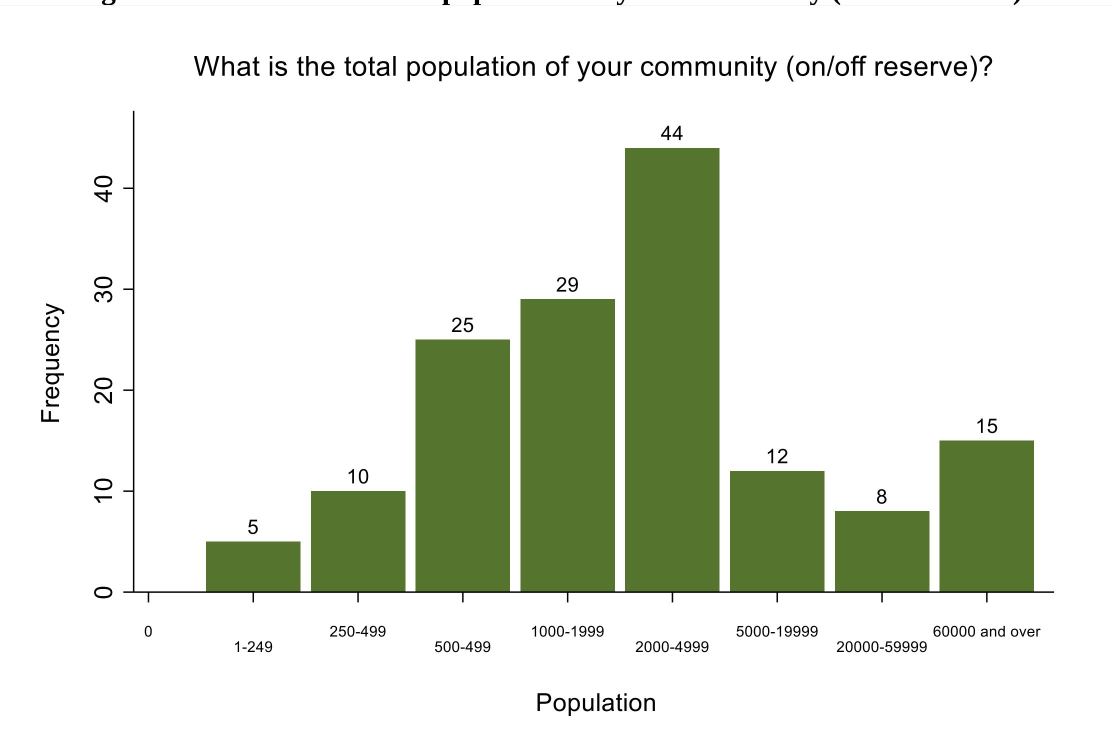


Figure 1.7: Would you consider your community to be…?

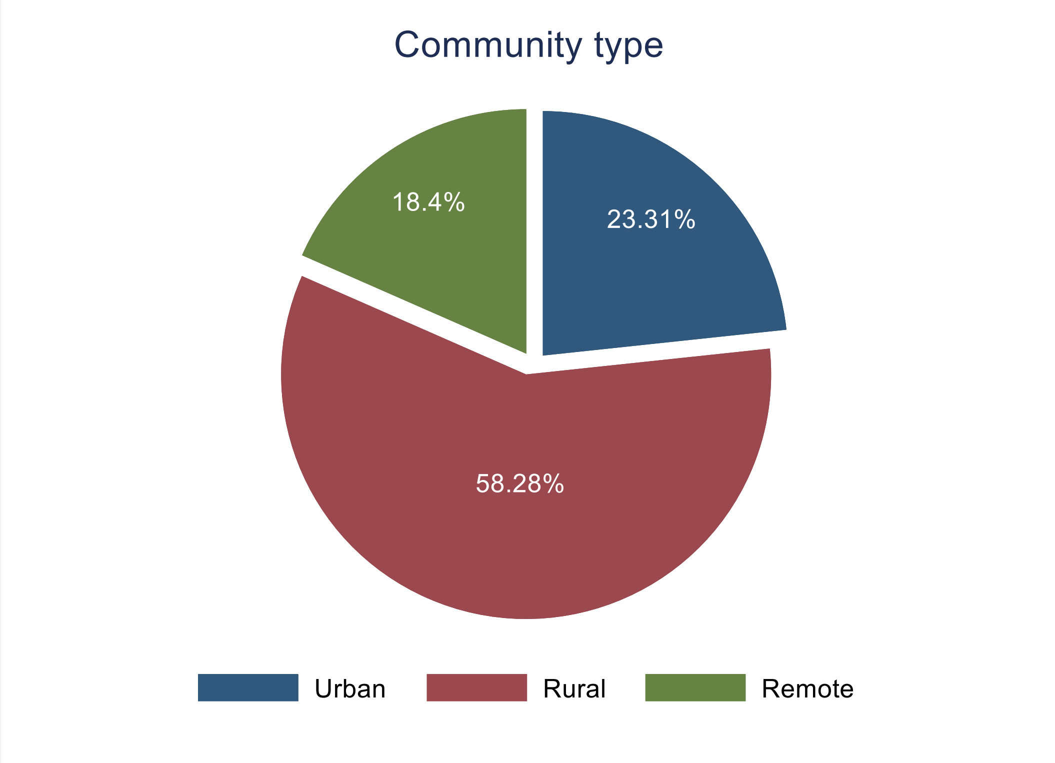
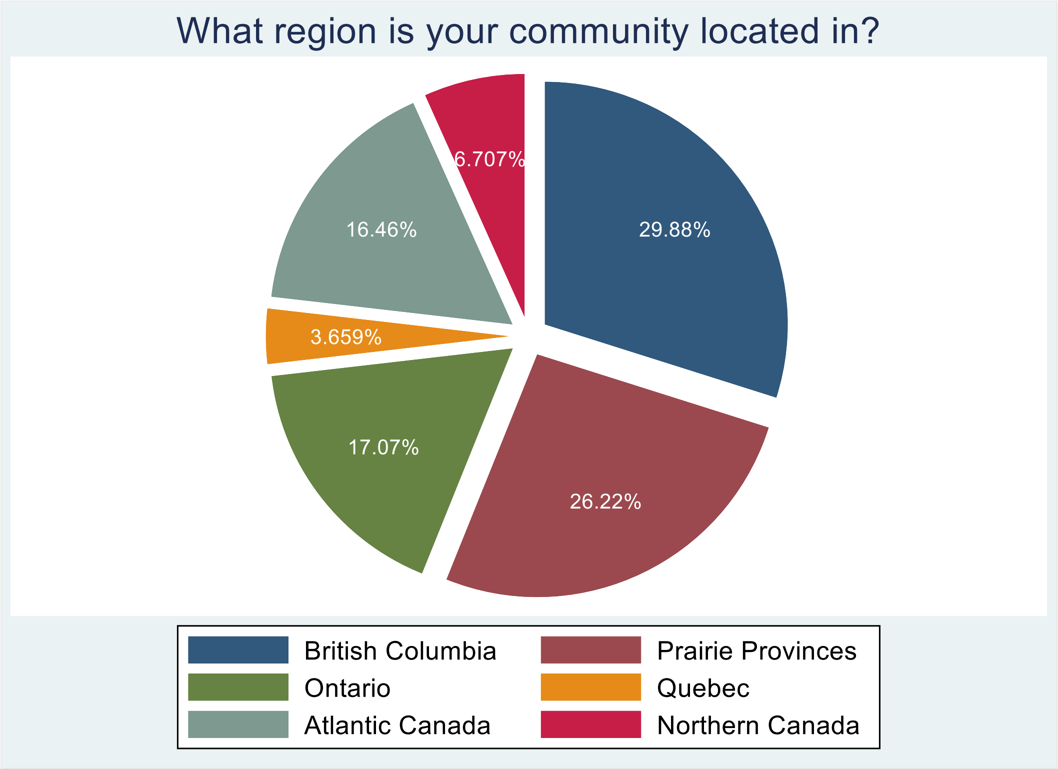


Figure 1.8: What region is your community located in?



Building on the demographic insights of Section 1, let us now turn our attention to the business and economic landscape of these Indigenous communities and the support mechanisms available for their economic development.

Section 2: Business/Economic Characteristics and Supports

The second section of the survey explored the economic characteristics of the respondents' communities and the support systems available to promote business growth and economic development. Understanding the resources, supports, and economic dynamics within these communities is crucial for devising strategies to enhance procurement opportunities for Indigenous businesses.

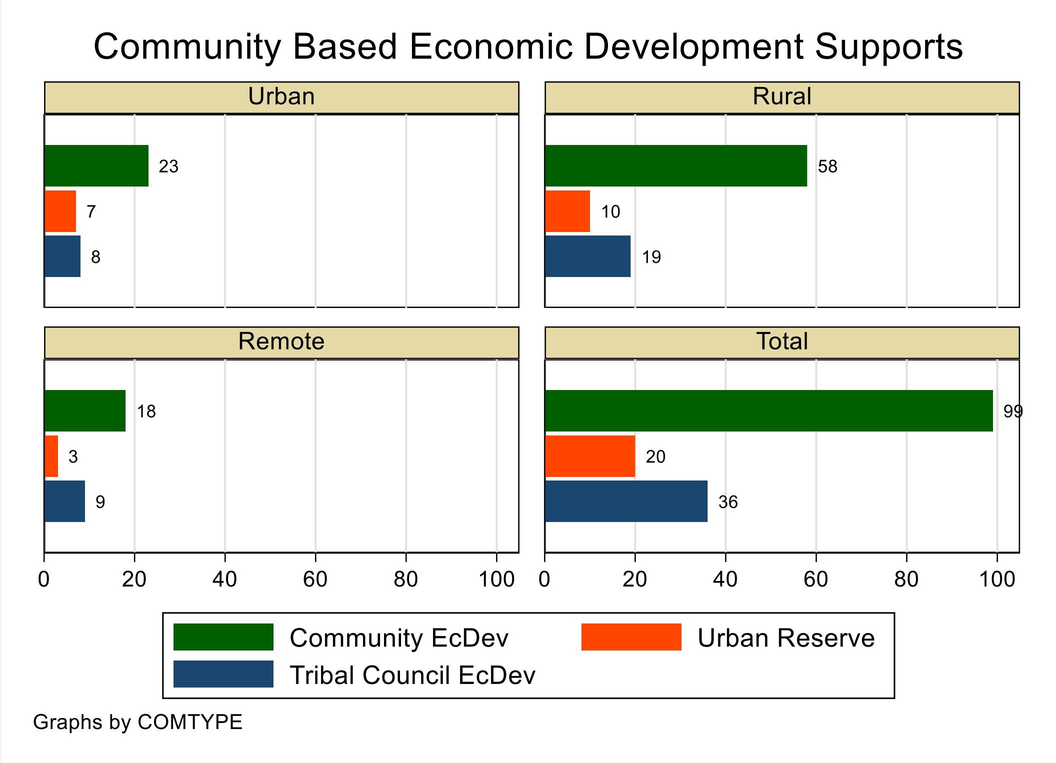
2.1. Leadership in Economic Development

We first explored the presence of designated individuals responsible for economic development within the communities. Of the 162 responders, an overwhelming 87.65% (n=142) indicated that their community has at least one person with explicit responsibility for economic development. This shows a strong commitment to economic growth within these communities.

2.2. Community-Based Supports for Economic Development

We then inquired about the specific supports in place within the community to foster economic development.

Figure 2.2: Community Based Economic Development Supports by community type



N= 163 where Urban = 38, Rural = 95 and Remote = 30

Among the 163 respondents, 60.74% (n=99) had access to a community economic development organization, 12.27% (n=20) reported the presence of an urban reserve to support economic development, and 22.09% (n=36) mentioned the support of a Tribal council economic development organization (See Figure 2.2 – Total). These community-based supports are vital for nurturing businesses, attracting investment, and spurring economic growth.

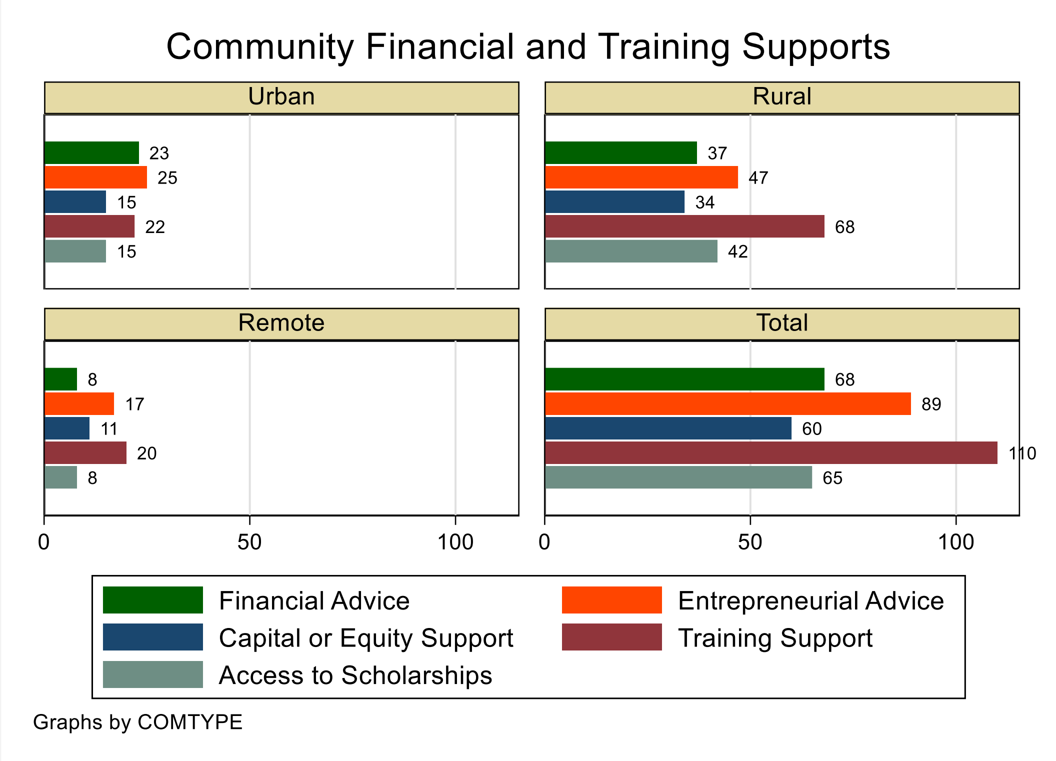
We examined differences in economic development supports by categorizing them according to community type. Across all community types, 60% of respondents reported access to community economic development organizations. In urban areas, 18% of respondents had access to urban reserves, compared to 10.5% of rural respondents. Across all community types, Tribal Council Economic Development organizations were the least accessible.

An important question relates to the accessibility of key economic development supports.

2.3. Specific Community Supports for Economic Development

We also sought to understand the specific tools and resources that communities have established to encourage economic development. Figure 2.3a provides an overview of the support services respondents had access to. Employee training and skills development emerged as the most accessible support, highlighting a focus on workforce development within these communities. This was followed by entrepreneurial advice, which is crucial for guiding new and existing businesses towards success.

Figure 2.3a: Community Financial & Training Supports by Community Type

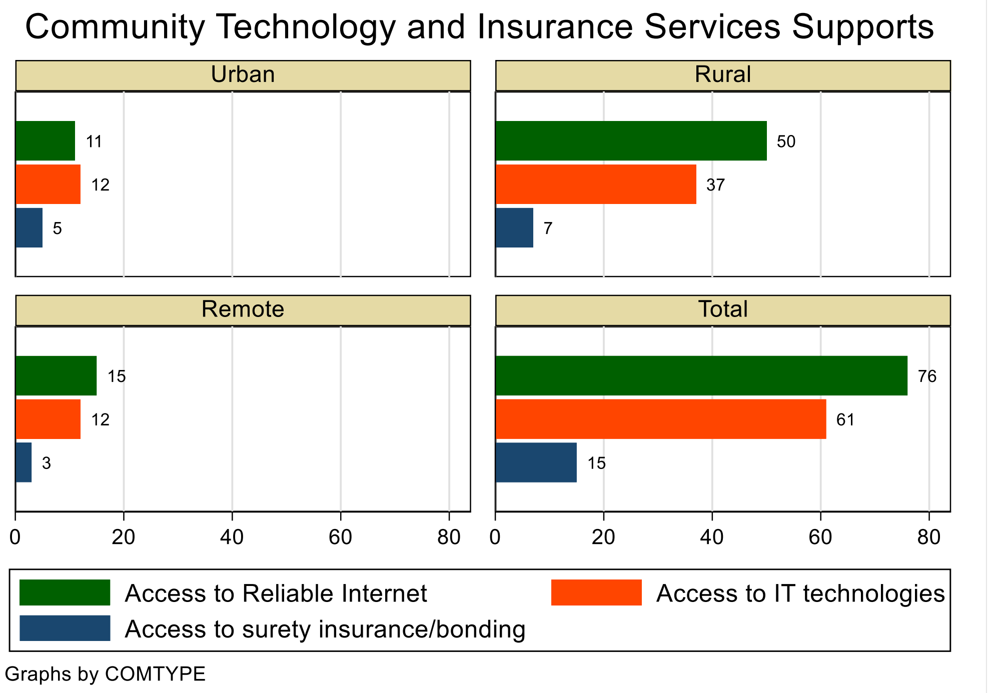


N= 163 where Urban = 38, Rural = 95 and Remote = 30

On the other hand, certain essential services were less accessible to respondents. Capital and equity support, scholarships, and financial advice were among the least accessible services. These areas represent potential gaps in support that may need to be addressed to further enhance economic development in Indigenous communities.

Figure 2.3b presents respondents' access to technology and insurance supports. Although reliable internet had the greatest accessibility of the three supports examined, less than half of respondents (46.6%) had access to reliable internet. Respondents in urban communities, where connectivity is typically more robust, had the least access (29%).

Figure 2.3b: Community Technology & Insurance Services by Community Type

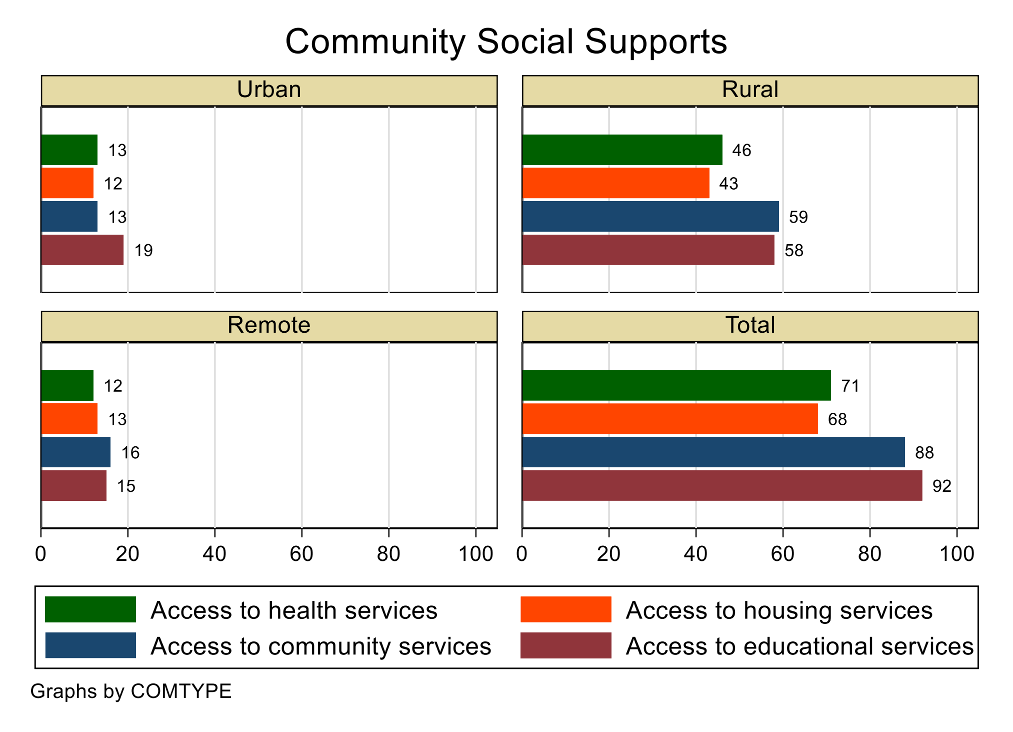


The availability of surety insurance/bonding, which is crucial for businesses seeking government contracts or participating in large-scale projects, was exceedingly low. Only 9% of respondents reported having access to such services, with urban communities faring slightly better at 13%, compared to 7% in rural and 10% in remote communities. This lack of access may hinder the ability of Indigenous businesses to bid on and secure valuable contracts, thus limiting their potential for growth.

These findings underscore the need for targeted efforts to expand access to technology and insurance supports across all Indigenous communities, regardless of their geographical location. Addressing these disparities is crucial for creating a level playing field and empowering Indigenous businesses to participate fully in the economy.

Social supports play a vital role in promoting economic development by enhancing the overall well-being of community members and enabling them to actively participate in economic activities. Figure 2.3c presents an overview of the availability of various social supports in respondents' communities.

Figure 2.3c: Community Social Supports by Community Type



N= 163 where Urban = 38, Rural = 95 and Remote = 30

The findings reveal that community and educational services are relatively more accessible. However, there are some disparities in the availability of health and housing services.

2.4. Purchasing and Marketing Power

Harnessing the power of purchasing and marketing is a valuable tool for economic empowerment and addressing the unique needs of Indigenous communities. This approach not only stimulates local economic activity but also fosters community cohesion and self-reliance.

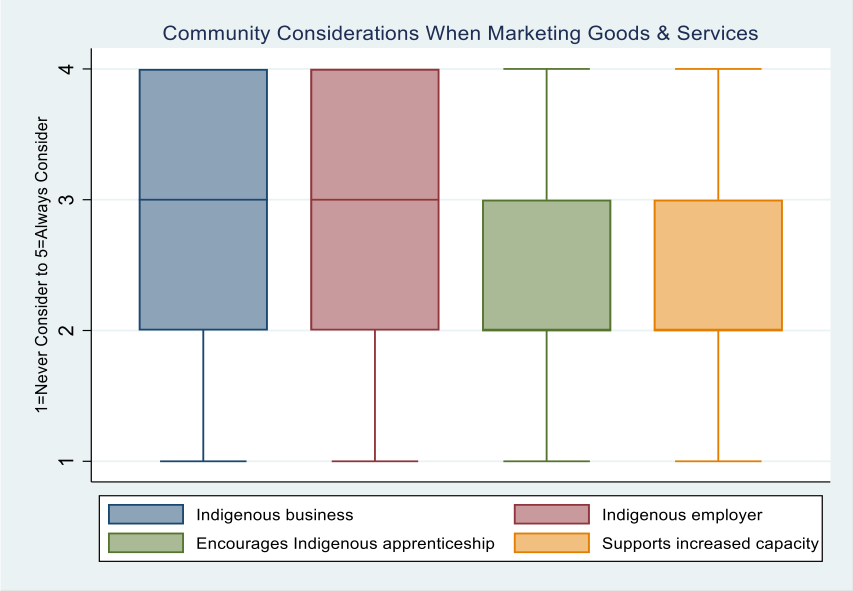
As shown in Figure 2.4, respondents frequently consider the supplier's support of local businesses when making purchasing decisions for goods.

Figure 2.4: Use of Purchasing Power

This practice is a testament to the inherent understanding within these communities of the importance of investing in and empowering local businesses. By choosing local suppliers, communities can create a cycle of support and mutual growth that reinforces local economies, creates jobs, and strengthens community ties.

Survey results indicate that respondents frequently highlight their status as Indigenous-owned businesses and employers of Indigenous individuals as part of their marketing strategies for goods and services (See Figure 2.5).

Figure 2.5: Use of Marketing Power



2.6. – 2.9 Type of Indigenous Business

Indigenous businesses can take various forms, including community-owned, privately-owned, on-reserve, and off-reserve. For community-owned businesses, most respondents (over 50%) reported being in communities with fewer than 10 on-reserve and off-reserve community-owned businesses, as shown in Tables 2.6 and 2.7, respectively.

Table 2.6: On-reserve community-owned businesses

Number On-reserve Community-owned	Frequency	Percent
None	23	14.56
Less than 10	87	55.06
11 to 50	38	24.05
Greater than 50	10	6.33
Total	158	100

Table 2.7: Off-reserve community-owned businesses

Number Off-reserve Community-owned	Frequency	Percent
None	32	20.38
Less than 10	80	50.96
11 to 50	29	18.47
Greater than 50	16	10.19
Total	157	100

Regarding privately-owned businesses, most respondents were in communities with fewer than 10 on-reserve and off-reserve privately-owned businesses, as indicated in Tables 2.8 and 2.9, respectively.

Table 2.8: On-reserve privately-owned businesses

Number On-reserve Privately-owned	Frequency	Percent
None	25	16.13
Less than 10	80	51.61
11 to 50	40	25.81
Greater than 50	10	6.45
Total	155	100

Table 2.9: Off-reserve privately-owned businesses

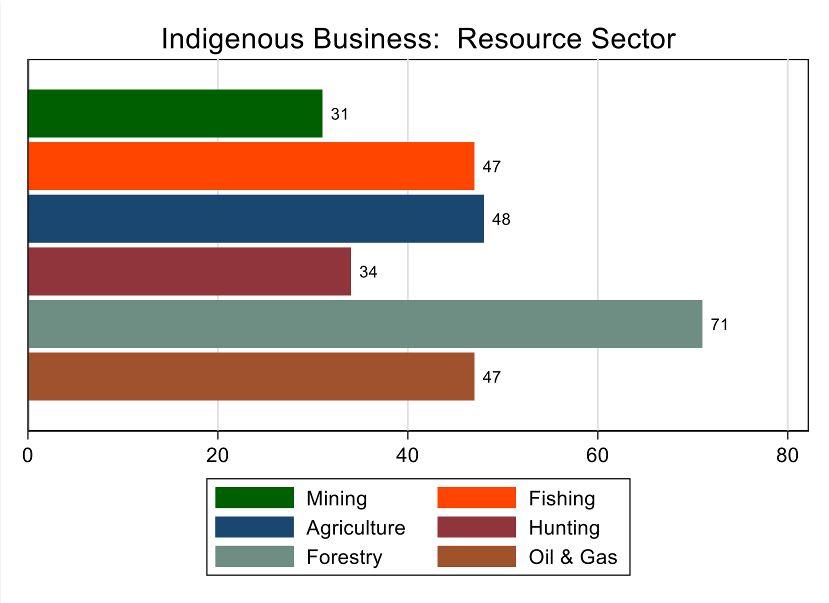
Number off-reserve privately-owned	Frequency	Percent
None	19	12.18
Less than 10	74	47.44
11 to 50	39	25.00
Greater than 50	24	15.38
Total	156	100

2.10 *Industry Sector*

Next, we examine the industries represented by community and privately-owned businesses in both on- and off-reserve settings, as shown in Figures 2.10a to 2.10e. The industry sectors are divided into five major groups for presentation purposes: the resource sector; manufacturing, construction & transportation; utilities, technology & green energy; retail services; and professional services. The survey results reveal insights into the sectors where Indigenous businesses are active.

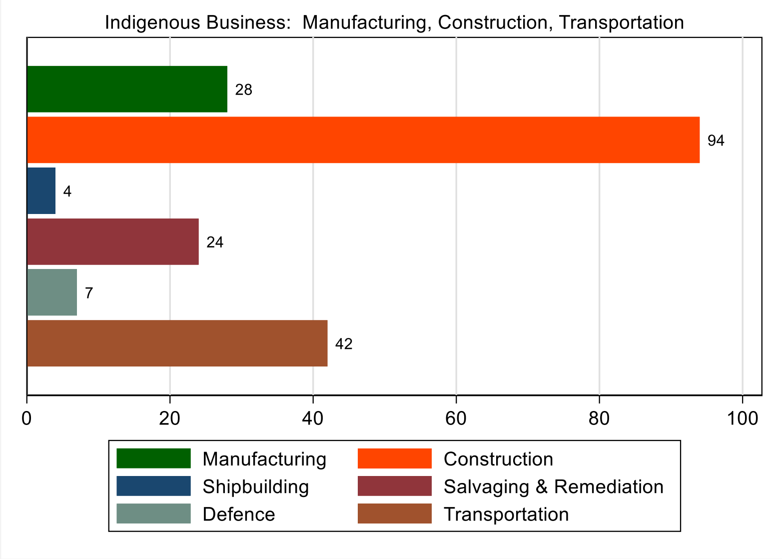
The top three resource sectors (See Figure 2.10a) are forestry, agriculture and tied for third place, fishing, and oil & gas.

Figure 2.10a: Businesses in Resource Sector



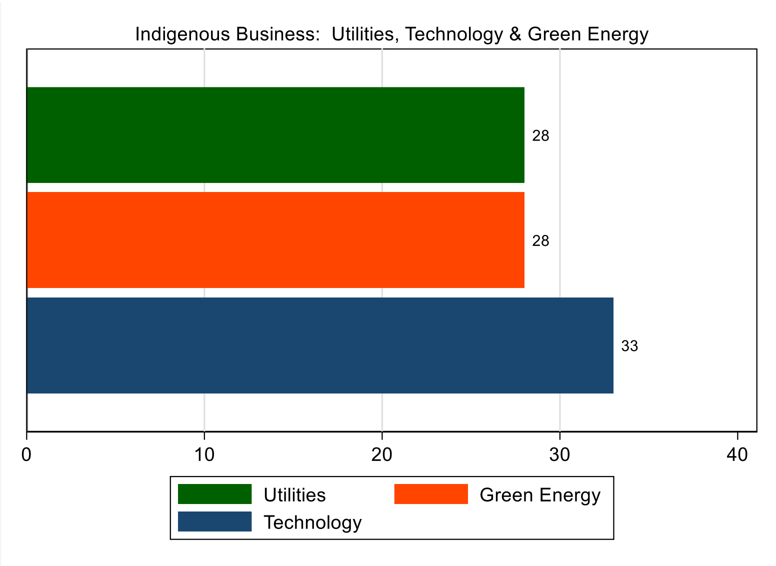
Construction and transportation sectors are predominant for Indigenous businesses, as depicted in Figure 2.10b.

Figure 2.10b: Businesses in Manufacturing, Construction & Transportation Sectors



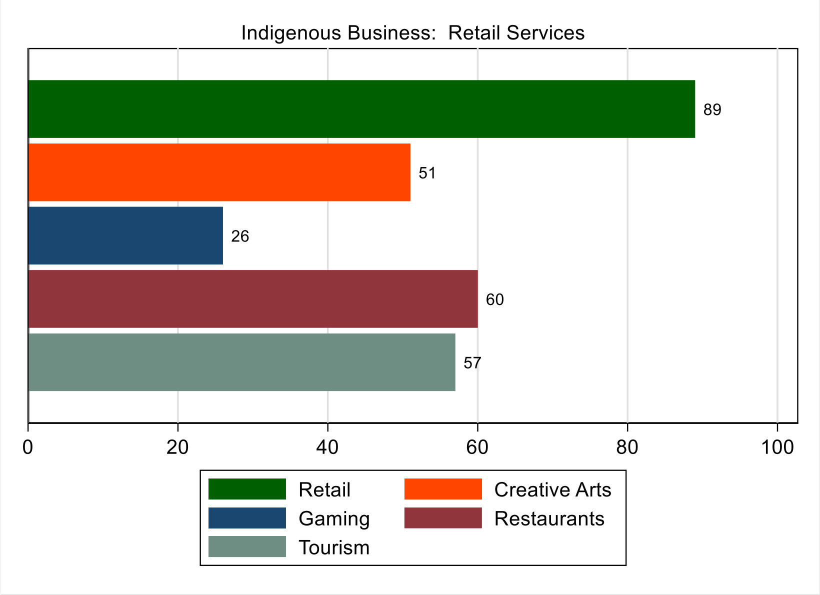
This observation aligns with the broader construction and transportation needs in Canada, presenting substantial opportunities for Indigenous businesses. In the utilities, technology, and green energy sectors, there is notable Indigenous participation in the green energy and utility sectors, as shown in Figure 2.10c. This participation is encouraging, as green energy is gaining prominence with the global shift towards sustainable and renewable energy sources.

Figure 2.10c: Businesses in Utilities, Technology & Green Energy Sectors



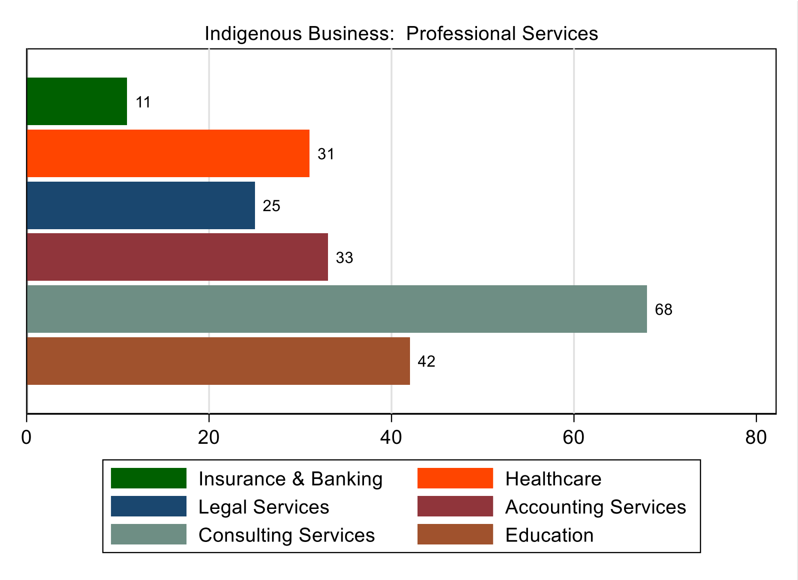
Retail-oriented services, including retail establishments such as gas stations, restaurants, and tourism sectors, are prominently featured among responses, as indicated in Figure 2.10d. These sectors provide essential services for communities and play a vital role in local economic development.

Figure 2.10d: Businesses in Retail Services



Additionally, professional services, including consulting, education, and accounting, are highlighted sectors for Indigenous businesses, as illustrated in Figure 2.10e.

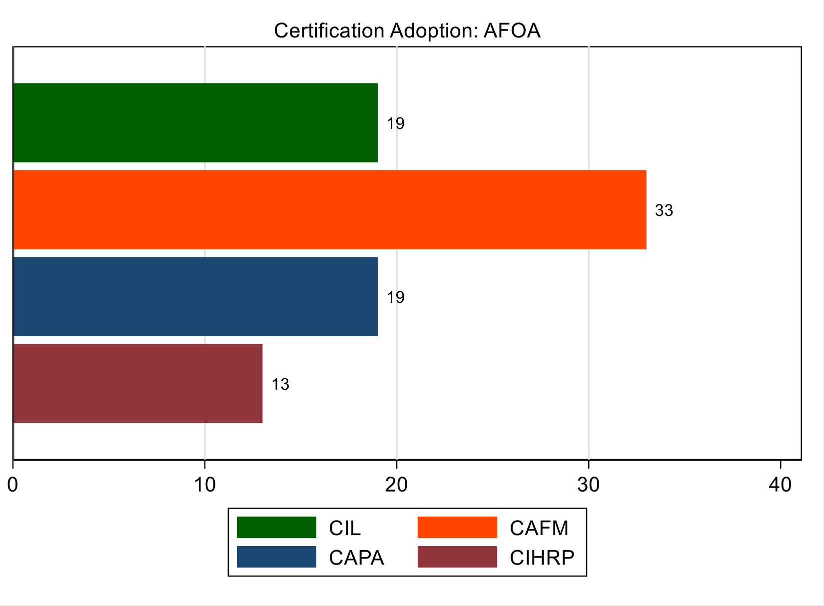
Figure 2.10e: Businesses in Professional Services



2.11 Certification Adoption

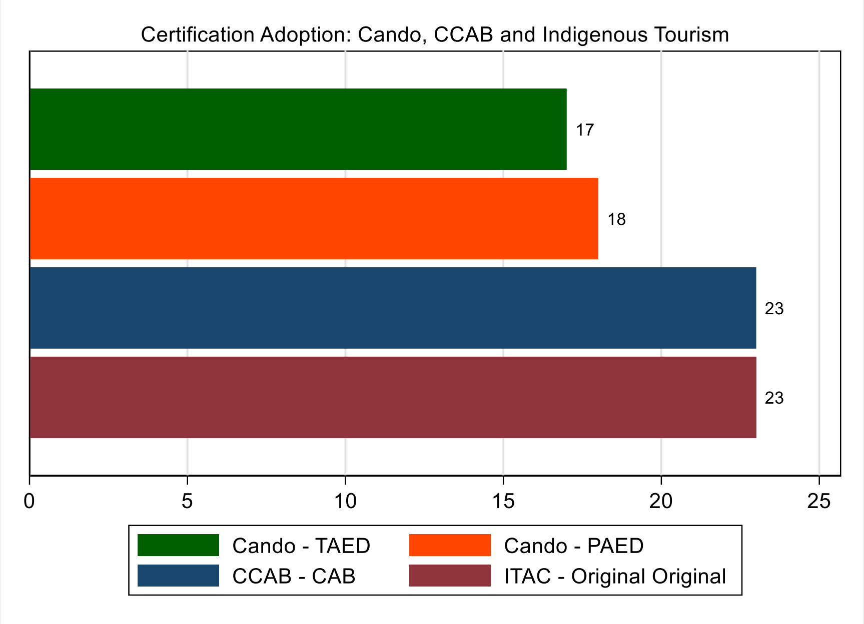
In competitive markets, certifications can help businesses highlight their abilities when bidding for private and public contracts. We asked survey respondents whether businesses in their communities had adopted certifications. Figures 2.11a through 2.11d provide an overview of the certifications adopted by respondents. Overall, certification adoption is relatively low. According to respondents, the certifications with the highest adoption rates include the AFOA's Certified Aboriginal Financial Manager (CAFM), Cando's Technician Aboriginal Economic Developer (TAED) and Professional Aboriginal Economic Developer (PAED) certificates, FMB's Financial Management System Certificate, and NALMA's Professional Lands Management Certification (PLMCP).

Figure 2.11a: Adoption of AFOA Certifications



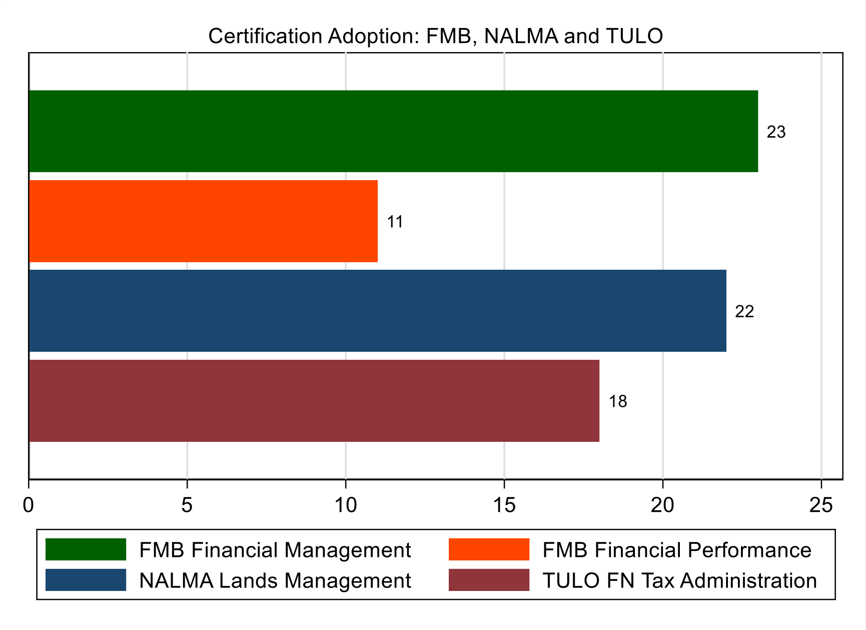
AFOA: Certified Indigenous Leadership (CIL)
AFOA: Certified Aboriginal Financial Manager (CAFM)
AFOA: Certified Aboriginal Professional Administrator (CAPA)
AFOA: Certified Indigenous Human Resources Professional (CIHRP)

Figure 2.11b: Adoption of Cando, CCAB and Indigenous Tourism Certifications



Cando: Technician Aboriginal Economic Developer (TAED) Certificate
Cando: Professional Aboriginal Economic Developer (PAED) Certificate
CCAB: Certified Aboriginal Business (CAB)
Indigenous Tourism Association of Canada (ITAC): Original

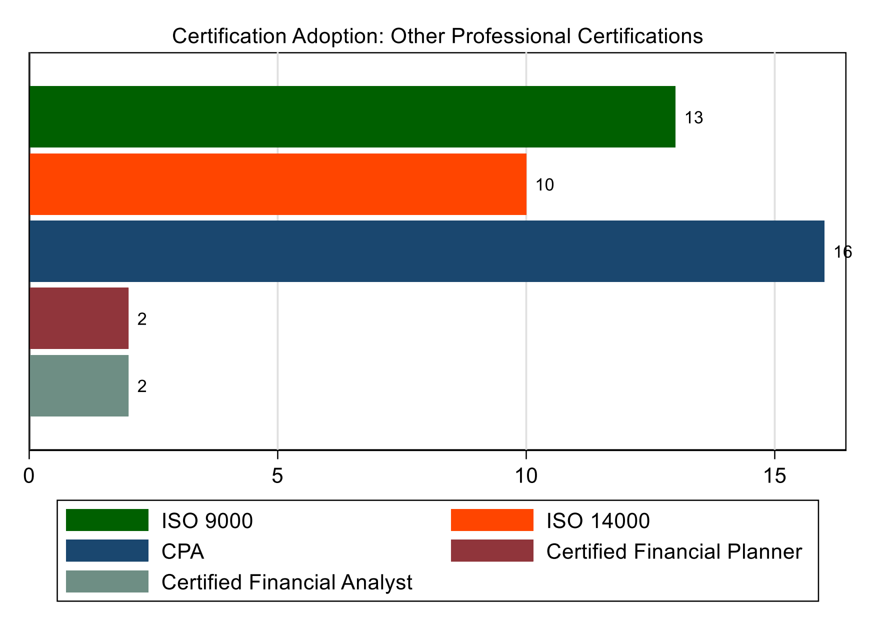
Figure 2.11c: Adoption of FMB, NALMA and TULO Certifications



FMB: Financial Management System Certificate
FMB: Financial Performance Certificate
NALMA: Professional Lands Management Certification (PLMCP)
TULO: First Nation Tax Administration Certificate

Regarding other professional certifications (as shown in Figure 2.11d), only the Chartered Professional Accountant (CPA) certification had more than 15 adopters.

Figure 2.11d: Adoption of Other Professional Certifications



ISO: ISO 9000 Quality management certification

ISO: ISO 14000 Environmental management certification
CPA Canada: Chartered professional accountant (CPA) certification
FP Canada: Certified Financial Planner (CFP)
CFA Institute: Certified Financial Analysis

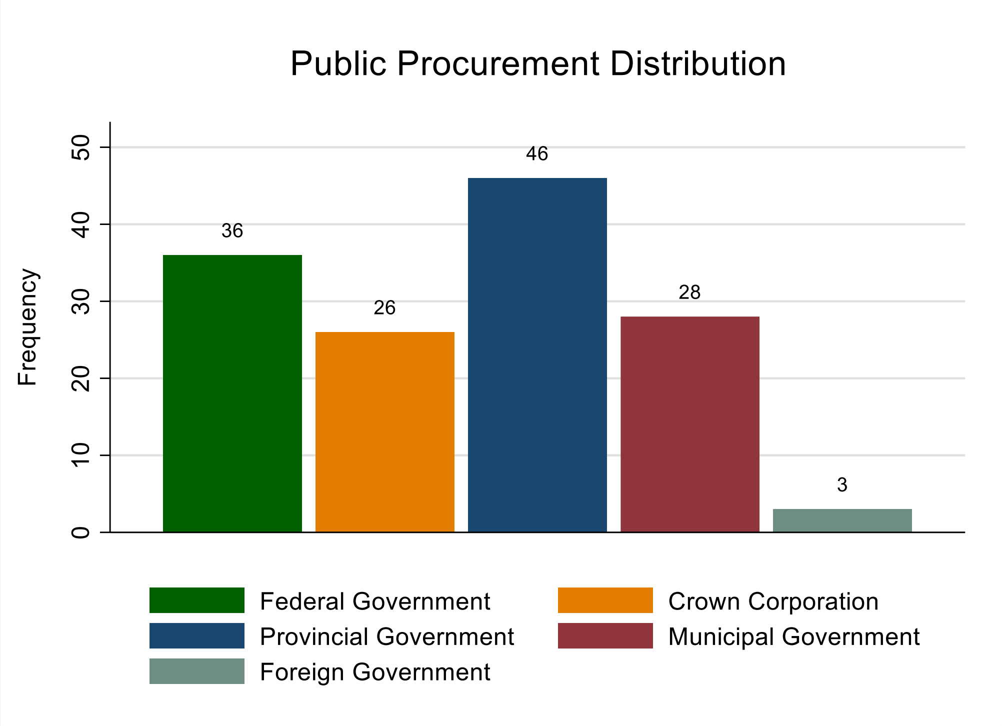
The findings of this section of the survey provide valuable insights into the business and economic characteristics of the Indigenous business leaders surveyed and available community supports. They reveal a strong commitment to economic growth within these communities. However, disparities exist in the accessibility of certain essential services such as capital and equity support, scholarships, and financial advice, which may impede further economic development. This survey highlights the need for targeted efforts to expand access to technology and insurance supports across all Indigenous communities.

Section 3: Public Procurement Experiences

This section examines respondents' experiences with public procurement. Figure 3.1 displays the type of public procurement respondents (N=163) have engaged in. In descending order, the types of procurement are:

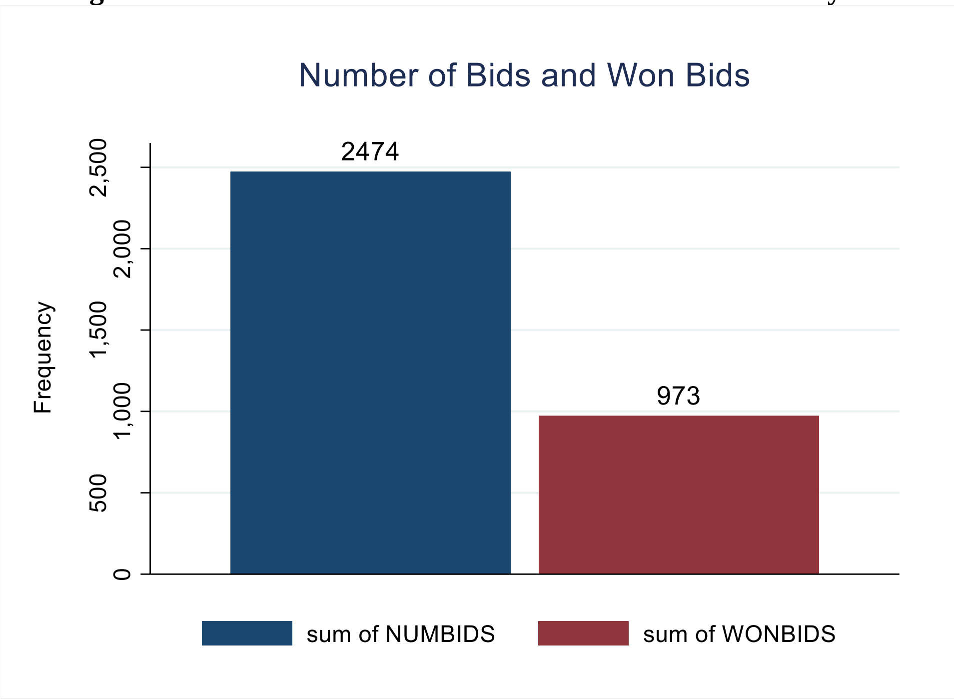
1. Provincial
2. Federal
3. Municipal
4. Crown Corporation
5. Foreign

Figure 3.1: Have you every bid, either alone or jointly with another organization, on a contract for…



Survey respondents were queried about their bid submission and success rates over the past five years. Out of 163 respondents, 90 provided information about submitted bids, while 84 disclosed the number of bids they had won.

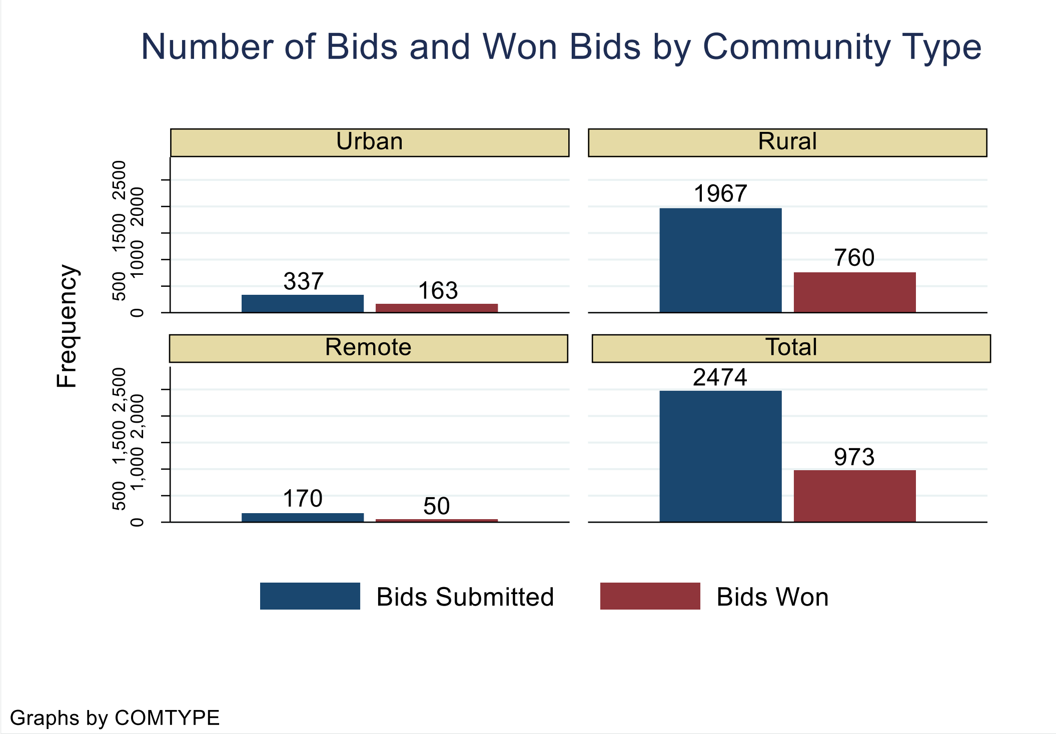
Figure 3.2: Number of Bids submitted and Won in the last 5 years



As shown in Figure 3.2, respondents collectively submitted 2,474 bids, of which 973 were successful, translating to a success rate of 39%.

To investigate potential variations in success rates across different community types, bids and winning bids were categorized into urban, rural, and remote communities. Figure 3.3 illustrates these findings, revealing disparities among community types. Urban communities had a success rate of 48.4% (163/337), while rural communities had a success rate of 38.6% (760/1967) and remote communities a rate of 29.4% (50/170).

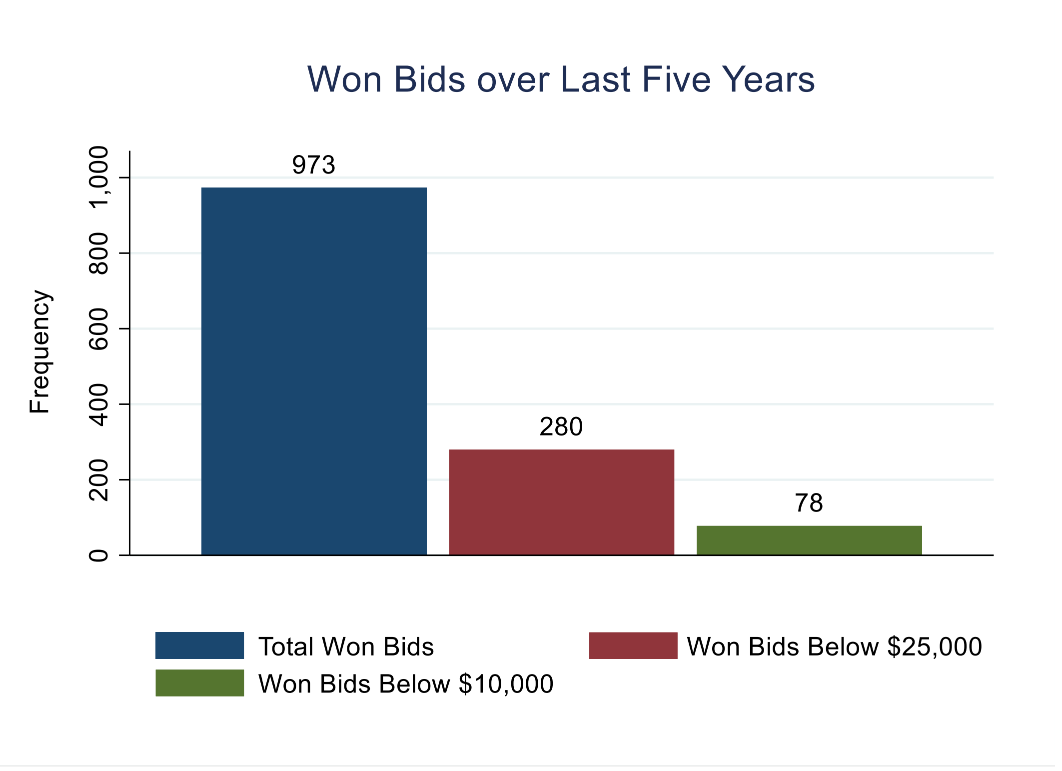
Figure 3.3: Number of Bids submitted and Won in the last 5 years by Community Type



One factor that may contribute to the higher success rate in urban areas is the greater access to financial advice and entrepreneurial/start-up support, as identified in our survey, compared to rural and remote communities.

To evaluate the features of successful bids, respondents were queried about the number of winning contracts valued below $25,000 and $10,000, as well as the estimated total dollar value of contracts they had received over the past five years.

Figure 3.4: Won Bids over Last Five Years



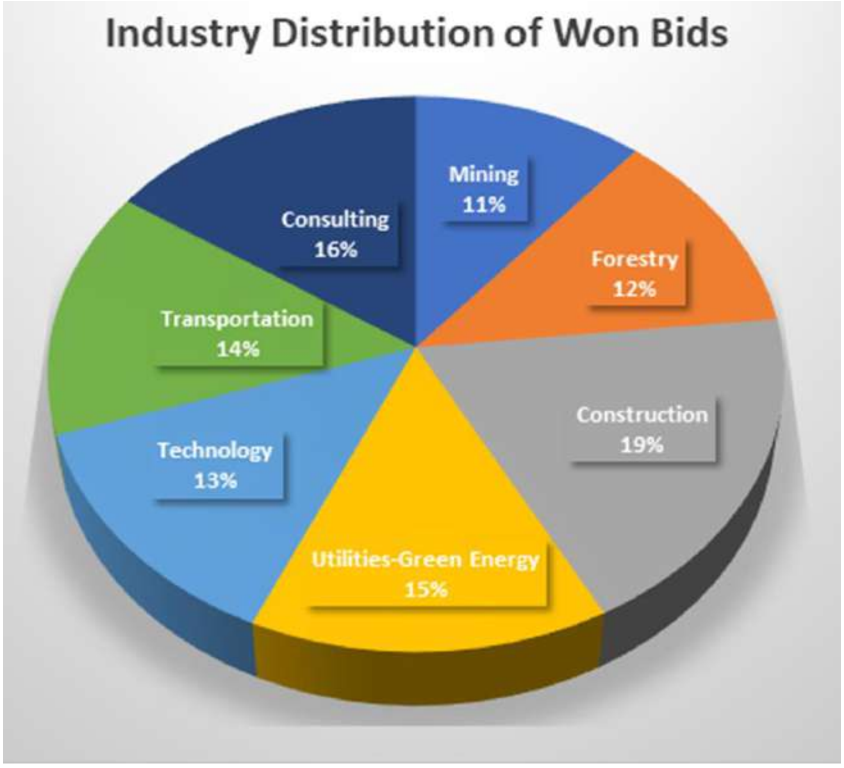
Over the last five years, survey respondents (n=84) reported that 71.2% (693/973) won bids were above $25,000, 28.8% (280/973) won bids were below $25,000, and 8.02% (78/973) won bids were below $10,000.

Regarding the approximate total dollar value of contracts received over the last 5 years, the reported range of winning bids went from $6,500 to $250 million. This to say that we have some regional superstars in rural communities.

To identify the industry sectors represented by the winning public procurement contracts, respondents were asked to specify the industries of their successful bids. Figure 3.5 shows the industries with 10 or more winning bids. Industries with 10 or more successful bids include:

1. Construction
2. Consulting
3. Transportation
4. Utilities – Green Energy
5. Technology
6. Forestry
7. Mining

Figure 3.5. Industry sectors representing more than 10 winning government procurement contracts



In an effort to gain insight into the factors contributing to the successful procurement of contracts, respondents were asked to identify the elements they believed were key to their winning bids. This valuable information not only sheds light on the strategies employed by successful Indigenous businesses but also provides useful guidance for future participants in public procurement.

Respondents identified several key factors contributing to their success in winning procurement contracts. In order of importance, the success factors are (See Figure 3.6):

1. Being an Indigenous-owned business
2. Offering high-quality products or services
3. Competitive pricing
4. Territorial knowledge
5. Application of traditional knowledge
6. Knowledge of risks associated with their offerings
7. Undergoing cultural training

Figure 3.6: Winning Contract Success Factors

Respondents emphasized that several factors were crucial to the success of their Indigenous businesses. These included the value of traditional knowledge, the importance of reconciliation, a deep understanding and knowledge of the natural environment and their land, resilience, creativity, and the strength of their kinship connections. They regarded these elements as very or extremely important to their success.

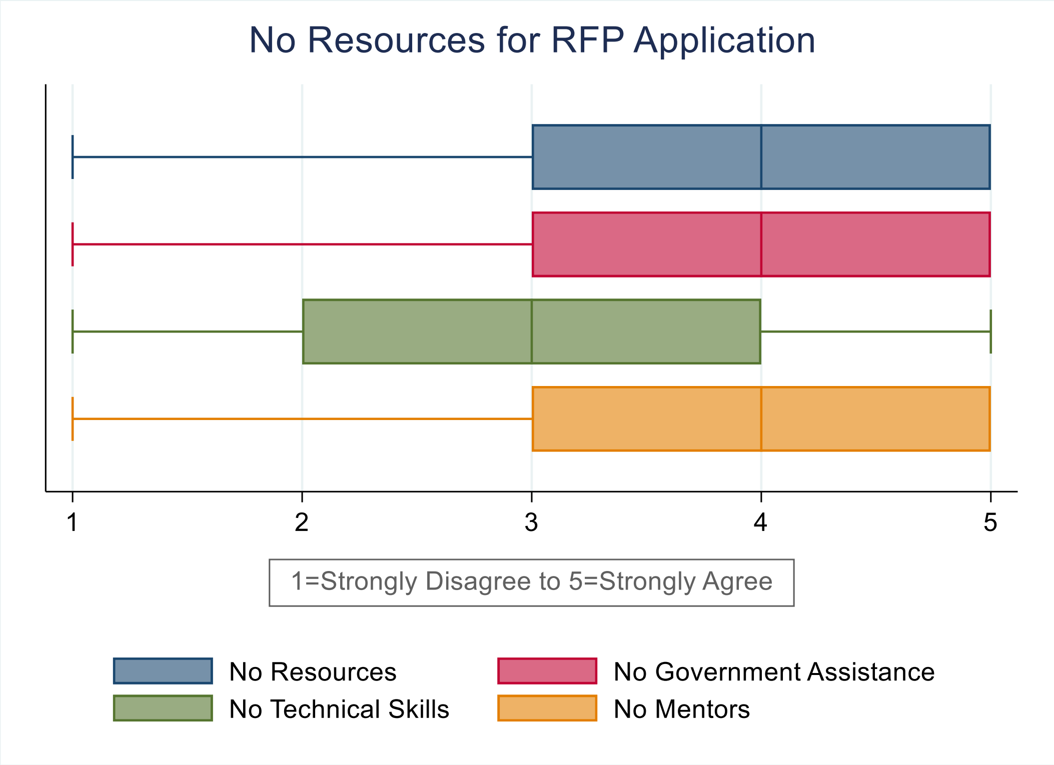
Constraints to Participation in Procurement

Despite the strengths of Indigenous businesses, challenges in procurement remain. This is reflected in the fact that 61% of procurement bids were unsuccessful. In this section, we examine the factors contributing to this outcome.

In our survey, we inquired about the extent to which respondents agreed or disagreed with a set of statements regarding obstacles to accessing government (federal, provincial, and municipal) procurement contracts. Most respondents stated that government procurement contracts were too difficult to win. The findings reveal two prominent challenges. First, there is a significant agreement among respondents that a lack of resources poses a barrier to their participation in the Request for Proposals (RFP) process. Second, respondents identified issues with the specifications in RFPs as another major obstacle. These two factors combined indicate that there are both resource constraints and procedural difficulties hindering Indigenous businesses' access to government procurement contracts.

Survey respondents identified a range of obstacles encountered when trying to access government procurement contracts, as detailed in Figure 3.8a.

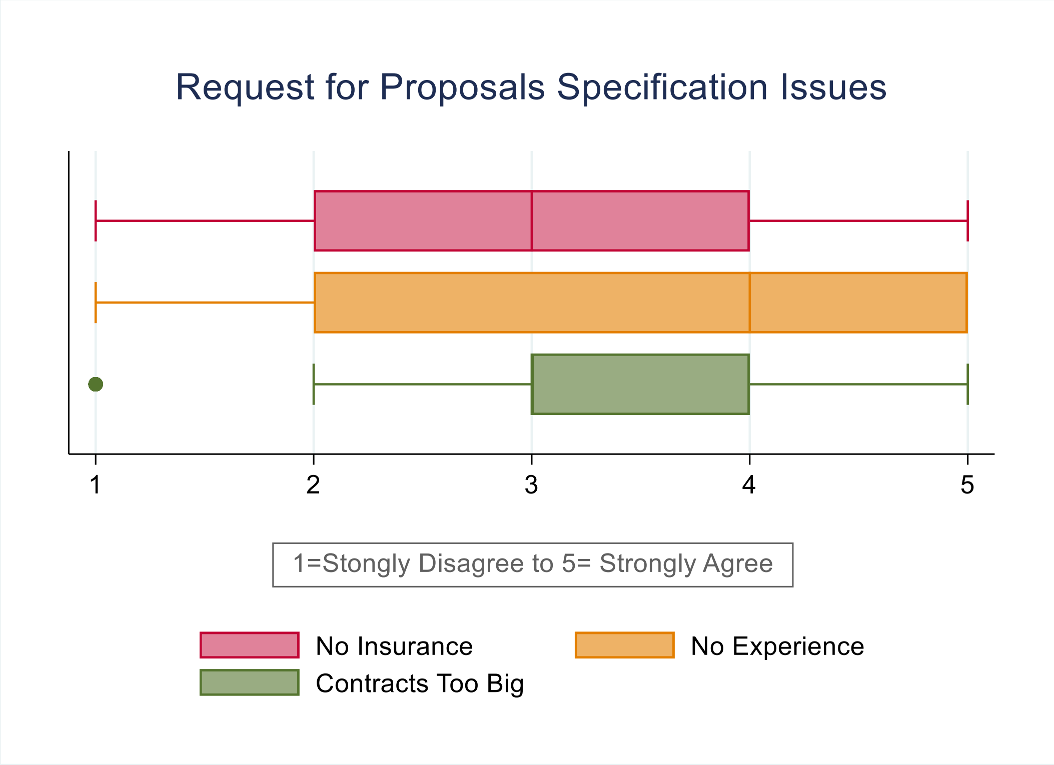
Figure 3.8a: Constraints to Participation in Procurement - Lack of Resources



Respondents strongly indicated that they faced challenges in terms of resource availability, technical skills, and mentorship. They often lacked the necessary resources and capabilities to apply for these contracts and were confronted with a shortage of technical skills essential for the application process. Moreover, many reported an absence of mentors to guide them through the procurement process, as well as a lack of government assistance networks, compounding the difficulties faced by Indigenous businesses in accessing government procurement opportunities.

In Figure 3.8b, respondents highlighted several specific constraints related to the Request for Proposal (RFP) specifications that hindered their ability to successfully apply for government procurement contracts.

Figure 3.8b: Constraints to Participation in Procurement - RFP Specification Issues



The most prominent issues identified were insurance, experience, and contract size. Many respondents indicated that they lacked the required insurance to apply for such contracts, adding an extra layer of complexity to the application process. Furthermore, the experience required by government RFPs posed a significant barrier for some respondents, as they often did not meet the qualifications outlined in the specifications. Finally, the sheer size of government procurement contracts was cited as a considerable obstacle, as many respondents felt that the contracts were too large for them to feasibly secure.

Section 3 of the survey reveals a variety of experiences, opportunities, and challenges faced by Indigenous businesses in public procurement. While provincial and federal procurement contracts are the most frequently pursued, we note disparities in success rates across community types, with urban areas boasting the highest success. Insights into bid value indicate that a considerable proportion of winning contracts are valued above $25,000, with a range of industries represented among successful bids, notably construction and consulting. Factors such as Indigenous ownership, offering high-quality products or services, competitive pricing, and territorial knowledge are perceived to contribute to success in public procurement. Yet, Indigenous businesses face obstacles in accessing government procurement contracts, particularly regarding resource constraints, technical skills, and mentorship. Other prominent constraints are tied to RFP specifications, including insurance, experience, and contract size. The survey points towards areas for potential support and development to facilitate Indigenous businesses' successful engagement in public procurement.

Conclusions

The survey results illustrate the unique opportunities presented by the federal government's requirement to allocate a minimum of 5% of the total value of contracts to Indigenous businesses. However, the findings also highlight several critical challenges that must be addressed to fully harness this potential.

Our investigation into the types of procurement contracts awarded to Indigenous businesses, their value, and the successes and obstacles encountered during the bidding and winning processes reveals a substantial gap between the existing capacities of Indigenous businesses and the requirements of Indigenous procurement.

Addressing this gap necessitates government policies and initiatives specifically designed to align the capacities of Indigenous businesses with the demands of Indigenous procurement. Targeted interventions are crucial for helping Indigenous businesses effectively position themselves within public procurement processes.

Moreover, our results underscore the importance of facilitating knowledge exchange among Indigenous businesses involved in procurement. Sharing experiences and expertise can empower these businesses to navigate the complexities of procurement processes and develop the necessary skills and capacities for effective participation.

Finally, a key takeaway from our survey is the need for greater information and coordination in public procurement. Indigenous businesses require access to timely and accurate information on upcoming procurement opportunities, coupled with support for developing strategies for procurement readiness and scaling.

The opportunities presented by the federal government's Indigenous procurement policy are substantial, but concerted action is essential to ensure that Indigenous businesses can successfully seize these opportunities. By addressing the challenges identified in this survey, we can create a supportive environment that fosters the growth and success of Indigenous businesses in public procurement.

The insights from the 2023 Indigenous Procurement Survey have shaped a roadmap for success. This valuable feedback informs the following calls to action.

Calls to Action

1. **Enhance Indigenous Business Capacities**: Government agencies at all levels should develop and implement targeted policies and initiatives to align Indigenous businesses' capacities with procurement requirements. This could include providing financial support, technical training, and mentorship programs to help Indigenous businesses develop the necessary skills and resources to effectively participate in procurement opportunities.
2. **Facilitate Knowledge Exchange:** Create a platform where Indigenous businesses involved in procurement can share their experiences and best practices. This can be achieved through community engagement initiatives, workshops, and online forums. Facilitating knowledge exchange will help Indigenous businesses learn from each other, improve their bidding processes, and overcome shared challenges.
3. **Provide Timely Information on Procurement Opportunities**: Government agencies and procurement officers should provide Indigenous businesses with timely and accurate information about upcoming procurement opportunities. This can be achieved by creating an online portal that lists available contracts and allows businesses to sign up for notifications about new opportunities.
4. **Modify RFP Specifications**: Procurement officers should consider revising Request for Proposal (RFP) specifications to make them more accessible to Indigenous businesses. This includes reducing the requirements for insurance or experience levels, or breaking down large contracts into smaller, more manageable sizes for Indigenous businesses.
5. **Develop Indigenous Procurement Policy Guidelines**: Government agencies must create clear and easily accessible Indigenous procurement policy guidelines for procurement officers. These guidelines should provide explicit instructions on how to include Indigenous businesses in procurement processes to ensure equitable distribution of contract opportunities.
6. **Provide Training and Technical Assistance**: Indigenous businesses often cite lack of technical skills and mentorship as significant barriers to accessing procurement contracts. Government agencies should partner with Indigenous organizations and business development groups to provide training programs and technical assistance for Indigenous entrepreneurs seeking to participate in procurement activities.
7. **Track and Monitor Progress**: Government agencies should regularly track and monitor the progress of Indigenous procurement policy implementation. This includes establishing clear performance metrics and conducting regular evaluations to assess the impact of policies and initiatives on increasing Indigenous business participation in procurement activities.

In conclusion, addressing the challenges identified in this survey requires collective efforts from all stakeholders, including government agencies, procurement officers, and Indigenous businesses. By working together, we can create a supportive environment that fosters the growth and success of Indigenous businesses in public procurement, ensuring that the benefits of public procurement are equitably distributed across Indigenous communities.

TRANSFORMING INDIGENOUS PROCUREMENT

2023 CANDO SURVEY

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