



FACILITATING DIFFICULT CONVERSATIONS

Equipping Indigenous EDOs and Leaders

TOOLBOX & GUIDE

FOR DISCUSSION AND EDUCATIONAL PURPOSES ONLY



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Acronym	Meaning
Cando	Council for the Advancement of Native Development Officers
CCIB	Canadian Council for Indigenous Business
CIRNAC	Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada
CRA	Canada Revenue Agency
EDO	Economic Development Officer
GEDS	Government Electronic Directory Services
GOC	Government of Canada
GST	Goods and Services Tax
HST	Harmonized Sales Tax
ISC	Indigenous Services Canada
ISED	Innovation, Science and Economic Development Canada
ITQ	Invitation to Qualify
KPI	Key Performance Indicator
MOA	Memorandum of Agreement
MOU	Memorandum of Understanding
PAC	Procurement Assistance Canada
PSIB	Procurement Strategy for Indigenous Business
PSPC	Public Services and Procurement Canada
RFP	Request for Proposal
RFQ	Request for Quotation
SA	Supply Arrangement
SME	Small and Medium Enterprise
TRC	Truth and Reconciliation Commission
UNDRIP	United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples



CONTEXT MATTERS

The content of this toolbox makes references to colonial history, trauma, and systemic inequities.

Before tackling the topic of difficult conversations, it is important to acknowledge the context in which these conversations happen. Centuries of colonial policies, displacement, and systemic exclusion and erasure have created lasting impacts on Indigenous peoples: the generational trauma caused by residential schools, loss of land, and suppression of culture and governance systems continues to affect individuals, families, and communities today.

When an Indigenous person enters a conversation with representatives of the Government of Canada, the legacy of inequality in terms of power, authority, and decision-making is present in the room with them. Recognizing this history is the first step, and naming this power imbalance is part of being honest about what shapes those conversations. Only with this awareness can we move toward meaningful, respectful, and solutions-oriented dialogue.

RECOGNITION & CARE

The Medicine Wheel teaches well-being as having four distinct parts: **physical, mental, emotional, and spiritual**. Unfortunately, colonial systems have harmed Indigenous peoples across all of these areas.

Recognizing those impacts also means being aware that there may be times when your well-being is affected while carrying out hard conversations. Given the nature of this toolbox, some of its content may also be a reminder of painful history and lived experience. If at any point while consulting this toolbox you feel affected, please take the time you need to take care of yourself and reach out to support as needed.

Respecting yourself during the process of reading and learning from this toolbox is crucial – that, too, is a part of the teachings of the Medicine Wheel.



TOOLBOX GUIDE

Facilitating Difficult Conversations Toolbox

Equipping Indigenous EDOs and Leaders

Introduction

The Government of Canada (GOC) purchases over \$30 billion in goods and services annually, with Public Services and Procurement Canada (PSPC) supporting federal departments and agencies in their daily operations as their central purchasing agent, real property manager, treasurer, accountant, pay and pension administrator, integrity advisor, common service provider and linguistic authority.

Government contracts offer a vital opportunity for economic advancement within Indigenous communities, and as the Canadian government places an emphasis on Indigenous-specific content in its procurement practices, Indigenous businesses have a unique chance to participate in federal projects. However, the complexities of these contracts can be overwhelming for businesses that are new to government interactions, or that are facing systemic power imbalances, especially in the face of an unsuccessful bid.

The Difficult Conversations Toolbox was created to support Indigenous Economic Development Officers (EDOs), community leaders and Indigenous businesses in navigating these challenges. Developed by Cando, this toolkit offers a structured approach and skills to manage difficult discussions, transform unsuccessful bids into constructive learning experiences, and build trust and Reconciliation with government representatives.

Leveraging the power of truth-telling, transparency, and respect for traditional practices - in alignment with Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC) and the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) - this toolkit aims to empower Indigenous EDOs and businesses to engage assertively in the procurement process, regardless of obstacles, and to view each experience as a pathway to greater achievement. It provides strategies for preparing for discussions with government officials, managing expectations, addressing power imbalances, and fostering constructive dialogue. When negotiations break down, EDOs must facilitate difficult conversations to reconnect, reestablish a vision, reach a decision, and act. The toolkit supports EDOs and business leaders in cultivating long-term relationships with government stakeholders and ensuring sustainable outcomes, and can help provide significant value in the following areas:

- Enhancing economic Reconciliation via open communication and truth-sharing.
- Fostering trust between Indigenous communities and the GOC.

Equipping stakeholders with strategies for conflict resolution, negotiation, and expectation management.

- Facilitating sustainable, mutually beneficial collaborations with the GOC.

How to use this Toolbox

This Toolbox serves as a practical and accessible resource for EDOs, community leaders, and government representatives facilitating difficult conversations while promoting trust, equity, and reconciliation. It is designed to empower users to confidently engage with its resources, adapting them to their specific contexts to enhance trust, collaboration, and meaningful outcomes, and provides a structured learning path designed to guide users in navigating complex conversations for the ultimate purpose of building on their skills, ultimately leading to more successful outcomes when submitting bids and proposals. Flexible context is provided in the tools for the users to adapt the content to their needs and specific scenarios.



Each of the tools is self-contained and although they can stand on their own, they follow a logical progression and are interconnected for a comprehensive learning path.

It is recommended that users first review this Toolbox Guide and access specific tools as needed:

Tool #1: Acceptance

Tool #2: Planning

Tool #3: Engagement

Tool #4: Follow-Up

Tool #5: Strategies for Difficult Conversations

As noted throughout this Toolbox, there are several sources of additional information and support available to users, often referenced under “Resources” that may also be contacted, including Cando itself, for further guidance and support.

Identifying needs

To get started, the steps below may be used as a practical tool to assess the situation efficiently:

- **Reflecting on challenges** and prioritizing tools based on goals.
- **Focusing** on scenarios that require more equitable collaboration, like addressing navigating community engagement to ensure fairness, for example.
- **Focusing** on the most relevant tools based on **immediate needs and goals**. Examples: if preparing for a negotiation, using *Tool # 2: Planning* will ensure a collaborative approach. When delivering or receiving difficult news, *Tool # 5: Strategies for Difficult Conversations* may prove helpful.
- **Prioritizing core principles:** *Tool #1: Acceptance* is designed to establish mindset and perspective, which are key when faced with any difficult or uncomfortable situation as well as Tool #3 with Engagement.
- **Progressing to action-oriented tools:** the sequence can be followed for a structured application, Tool #4 could be the next step.
- **Using the templates and guides** provided to customize approaches for various scenarios.
- **Leveraging best practices:** Industry best practices and Indigenous protocols and values are incorporated into the tools: blending them into the approach ensures respect for the diverse perspectives of all involved.

Embedding Indigenous and Two-Eyed Seeing perspectives

Grounding a professional approach in Indigenous values can truly empower the user to navigate tricky situations confidently. There is strength and power in embodying traditional ways of knowing and doing and leveraging knowledge in the way hard conversations are being navigated. Fostering such a mindset can strengthen relationship-building, as the focus is not solely on the result but on the relationships being created and maintained. The importance of building relationships with government bureaucrats beyond individual contracts is crucial and an opportunity for getting future opportunities, ensuring mutually beneficial outcomes and fostering respect.

Reflecting on outcomes

While going through the process of submitting more bids and proposals, returning to specific sections to assess the impact and identify lessons learned will be important. The present Toolbox can be used as a living resource for growth that evolves based on needs, fostering ongoing capacity-building as new challenges arise and skills develop.



The Difficult Conversations Toolbox provides a robust foundation for Indigenous EDOs, businesses and leaders to improve negotiation skills, deepen understanding of the procurement processes, and create productive, respectful conversations with government officials. By leveraging these tools, users can turn challenges into opportunities for growth, Reconciliation, and long-term success. Feedback and experiences can also be incorporated into the use of the toolbox to continuously adapt and improve the user's approaches to communication and collaboration, with the long-term goal of fostering trust and building stronger, more resilient partnerships between Indigenous communities and government representatives.



TOOL #1 - Acceptance

While an unsuccessful bid can be disheartening, it also provides an opportunity for growth and learning. Understanding the reasons for this unsuccessful submission will allow you to refine business practices, strengthen relationships, and leverage available support resources. This way, businesses and communities can better position themselves and ensure future procurement opportunities are seized successfully. By seeking and embracing feedback, addressing mismanaged expectations, and fostering constructive conversations, EDOs can ensure a path forward that promotes resilience, trust, and economic reconciliation. Integrating holistic and practical strategies ensures that the strengths of all perspectives are leveraged to ultimately create a more balanced approach to communication and problem-solving.

What happens after an unsuccessful bid or proposal

Submitting an unsuccessful bid to the GOC can be a challenging experience for EDOs, businesses and communities, who have faced and still face systemic barriers. Learning to accept and process an initial rejection constructively and identifying the learning opportunities is crucial to the learning process.

The content covered by this tool is:

- Acknowledging and processing emotions: Learning to recognize and accept feelings of disappointment, frustration, or disheartenment.
- Maintaining perspective: Although disappointing, an unsuccessful proposal is a part of the competitive process.
- Adopting a growth mindset: Viewing the situation as an opportunity to learn and improve, focusing on the positive aspects and the lessons learned.
- Cultural resilience: Embracing values and knowledge as a source of strength and resilience.
- Moving forward: Developing constructive responses by seeking feedback and creating an action plan for improvement.

Acknowledging feelings

Putting together a bid or proposal involves considerable amounts of work, and feeling disappointed, frustrated, or even disheartened is a possibility when those efforts don't end up with a successful outcome. The first step for dealing with such a situation is to acknowledge one's feelings on the matter, and to allow these emotions to be experienced without judgment. Recognizing those feelings is crucial for processing them and moving forward, and so is stepping back and reflecting on the setback to help gain a sense of perspective. This sets the foundation for getting prepared to tackle the situation with a clear and focused mind.

An unsuccessful endeavour will often feel personal although it is not. Business proposals are assessed against specific criteria and requirements in a fiercely competitive process, so many proposals, however strong, may not be accepted. An unsuccessful submission does not equate to failure but rather is a chance to learn.

Lessons learned

To avoid resenting the process, it may help to focus on the positive aspects of the experience, consider what skills and knowledge were acquired during the proposal process and how it has contributed to growth: every experience offers valuable lessons as well as opportunities to learn and to improve focus on what can be gained from the experience. Discussing the situation with mentors or community Elders can also provide support and valuable insight.

Moving forward

Acknowledging feelings towards an uncomfortable situation and shifting perspective to what lessons can be learned will influence preparedness to respond constructively to the setback. Using the insights gained



from this process, the proposal can be refined, and future opportunities can be approached with renewed determination. Moving forward after an unsuccessful submission involves recognizing that the result is not a personal attack and using it as a stepping stone for growth and improvement. The experience can prove insightful when reassessing goals for an upcoming proposal and help with staying focused and motivated. After the initial disappointment is absorbed, seeking feedback is essential to move forward with the proposal. Feedback is a crucial element which can provide valuable insights for future improvements, but also to convey commitment to improving proposals. Carefully analyzing the feedback is a must to identify those specific areas where the proposal can be improved: In doing so, the gaps can then be identified and filled to better align with the requirements.

- Requesting more feedback to understand the reasons for rejection.
- Analyzing the feedback to identify specific areas for improvement.
- Showing commitment to improving proposals based on feedback.

Once feedback has been analyzed, creating and implementing a plan of action to address it improves the chances for future opportunities to be seized. A lot that can be learned with each bid and submission, and there are several avenues that can be taken to increase chances of success, such as conducting thorough research and overall better understanding how to improve in demonstrating the criteria according to what was being evaluated. Detailed information and useful resources are available in the Planning and Engagement Tools.

Assessing Capacity

Understanding the full extent of a community's strengths and resources is essential when identifying the opportunities with highest potential for success. Taking the time to fully understand where community capabilities exist will lead to properly leveraging those capabilities, a key asset for anyone aiming to secure Canadian government contracts.

EDOs play a crucial role as business development experts in the community, and as such, having an excellent understanding of the community's capabilities is key. Once a comprehensive understanding of the community's strengths and resources is acquired, a truly productive dialogue with the government can be established, as a strong connection between the community and its businesses is foundational to successful participation in the bidding process.

Tailoring Proposals: Understanding the strengths and resources of the community is not just informative but also empowering. It provides a strategic advantage that allows for the crafting of proposals that highlight these capabilities, ultimately making bids more competitive. Clearly showcasing how contract requirements can efficiently be met by existing capacity ensures a competitive edge.

Resource Allocation: Understanding what a community can offer is crucial when allocating resources effectively, ensuring efficient delivery on the contract and meeting government expectations. These responsibilities and commitments are not to be taken lightly; they are key to successful contract fulfillment.

Building Confidence: Demonstrating a profound understanding of community capabilities is not just about competence, it's about building trust: It helps gain the trust of government officials, showing a realistic and practical approach to fulfilling the contract.

Capacity Building: Identifying the gaps in community capacity can help in the planning of capacity building and can be achieved through comprehensive community assessments, stakeholder consultations, or benchmarking against similar communities.



Economic Development: Successful bids can lead to job creation, skills development, and increased economic activity within the community.

Sustainable Growth: Understanding and properly using community capabilities ensures that growth is sustainable: It helps to avoid overextension and ensures that the community can maintain and build on its successes.

EDOs ensure that local businesses are made aware and properly prepared for procurement opportunities, so when businesses are engaged early on and their capabilities are clearly understood, they can be matched to suitable contract opportunities, which enhances both the quality and competitiveness of bids, and ensures that awarded contracts generate direct benefits for the community, empowering everyone involved. By acting as facilitators of communication and collaboration between community leadership, local businesses, and procurement agencies, EDOs help build community readiness to meet government needs.

TOOL #2 - Planning Difficult Conversations : Structuring conversations to align with objectives and needs

Although they can be unpleasant, difficult conversations are an integral part of the reality of any EDO or business owner. Whether it's for complex negotiations, solving conflicts between stakeholders, or sensitive discussions around community projects, those uncomfortable conversations, when tackled appropriately, can turn into productive ones: with good planning and a strategic approach, they usually lead to growth and constructive results.

THE “WHY”: Approaching Difficult Conversations

Engaging in difficult conversations is paramount. Why? The simple exercise of having this conversation, in a controlled manner and with intent, is a tremendous learning opportunity and an occasion to strengthen -or mend - important relationships.

Engaging in challenging discussions with openness and respect enhances credibility. When issues are being confronted head-on, the other party is usually more inclined to trust their discussion partner's integrity and leadership capabilities. Transparent communication cultivates a sense of safety, allowing everyone involved to feel acknowledged and valued, which reinforces relationships over time.

Difficult conversations address important issues, fostering long-term success. Difficult conversations frequently address essential topics such as contract stipulations, project delays, or resource distribution, all of which can influence the success of long-term initiatives. Tackling these matters proactively helps to avert misalignment, dissatisfaction, and larger conflicts in the future. Effectively managing challenges opens doors for future collaboration and ensures more seamless partnerships, especially when dealing with intricate issues like funding or procurement.

Engaging in the conflict resolution process is a vector for Healing. Historical traumas, including unfulfilled promises, discrimination, and untrustworthy actions and behaviour from institutions have led Indigenous communities to feelings of distrust. An EDO's involvement in conflict resolution, and the way these conflicts are addressed, are crucial: by addressing issues with empathy, understanding, and mutual respect, the outcome can potentially have a lasting positive effect for everyone involved.

Open conversations on hard topics create alignment with community values. Discussions grounded in openness and respect resonate with the principles of community healing, shared responsibility, and consensus-building, values traditionally shared among Indigenous peoples. By embodying these values,



an EDO can ensure that decisions and actions are aligned with the community's priorities, working towards its advancement.

THE "HOW": Gathering relevant information and anticipating challenges.

It's important to approach difficult conversations with care, intentionality, and strategic thought. These conversations are essential not only for managing immediate issues but also for building long-term relationships based on trust, respect, and mutual understanding. A difficult conversation should always be approached with preparation and intent, for the best possible outcome. To get ready, the following steps can be followed:

1- Defining Objectives

Clarifying the outcomes of the conversation and aligning them with community goals: Prior to engaging in the discussion, goals should clearly be outlined. Whether it involves resolving a dispute, conveying difficult information, or aligning expectations, having a goal-oriented approach helps maintain the focus of the conversation.

- What are the desired outcomes for this conversation?
- How do these results align with community goals?
- What are the outcomes to avoid?
- What are the possible solutions or compromises?

Once the objectives of the conversation are clear, the next step is to prepare the information needed to drive the conversation in a strategic and outcome-driven way.

2- Preparing Background Information

Collect relevant information: understand the issues, backgrounds, and different perspectives. Being well informed allows to provide clear explanations, address misunderstandings, and propose solutions backed by factual information. This exercise will help in anticipating possible challenges and objections. While preparing this information, clarifying facts and distinguishing emotions from objective information will pave the way for the next step of the preparation, which is to practise empathy.

3- Practising Empathy

Consider all perspectives and take the time to understand and consider the needs, expectations, and potential concerns of the other party. Both stakeholders may have identical objectives but may simply not hold readily available solutions that would allow to reach them. On the other hand, if the desired outcome is drastically different for the parties, a non-confrontational and empathetic approach will help in reestablishing some level of trust and indicate to the other party that they are being heard – which can go a long way when defensiveness comes into play. Establishing an empathetic mindset allows to enter the conversation with an open mind, moving away from confrontation and towards collaborative conflict resolution.

4- Structuring the interaction: Cultural considerations and creating inclusive plans

Incorporate cultural practices into the planning of conversations: In many Indigenous cultures, Elders play a central role in conflict resolution and decision-making. If appropriate, involve Elders - seek their guidance in planning the conversation and in obtaining input when clarifying desired outcomes. When planning a conversation in a culturally aligned way, EDOs may find that they feel more in control of the process and conversation, which helps in cases of perceived or factual power imbalances.

When tackling the planning process, leveraging the use of consensus-building techniques also contributes to an equal distribution of power. Rather than pushing for a quick resolution, engage in conversations that allow for community consensus-building. This process may take time, but it ensures that all voices are heard and respected, fostering long-term success.



5- Time Management and Prioritization

When schedules are tight and time is lacking, preparation must become more efficient. EDOs are often expected to plan and lead conversations with little time to prepare, and it's important to quickly clarify the conversation's main objective, focus on the facts, and prioritize outcomes that align with community needs. In these times, clarity, empathy, and a structured outline go further than over-preparedness. To support EDOs in these instances, Cando's Technical Writing Toolbox offers time-saving templates, tips on using artificial intelligence, and productivity techniques that help EDOs work smarter and more efficiently.

Using the time management and optimization tips and tools of Cando's Technical Writing Toolbox may save an EDO some precious time and still allow for difficult conversations to be kept purposeful and goal-oriented, despite limited time available for preparation.



Practical tool: Using Collaborative Agenda-Building Techniques

Collaboratively developing an agenda when planning to participate in a difficult conversation is an approach that helps ensure that all stakeholders have a voice, and that the discussion remains constructive. Here are some key techniques that can be integrated into the planning process.



If the situation requires other steps to be taken afterwards, it will prove useful to develop an action plan with clear responsibilities and deadlines and ensure a follow up right after the meeting to maintain momentum and prevent tensions from resurfacing. Using these techniques foster a climate of trust and



engagement, ensuring difficult conversations remain professional and efficient, even when preparing for very complex discussions.



Building a Network of Assistance

Building relationships with relevant stakeholders is important for maximizing exposure and awareness of future opportunities. Several organizations exist for the specific purpose of supporting capacity-building for EDOs and communities. Connecting with these organizations for training, certification, and networking opportunities is a tried-and-true strategy. By taking advantage of these resources, not only can EDOs and businesses reflect and improve their future bids but also connect with the right people and networks for long-term success.

Indigenous Business Directories: Many governments and private organizations maintain directories that list Indigenous-owned businesses, often offering specialized networking events or matchmaking services to facilitate connections. These directories are great for identifying new opportunities for collaboration, joint ventures, or future government contracts.

Government Matchmaking Services: Some governments offer matchmaking services that connect Indigenous businesses with procurement officers, program managers, and decision-makers. These services often host matchmaking events or trade missions where businesses can pitch their services or learn about upcoming opportunities.

Indigenous Business Networks: Participate in networks or trade organizations that support Indigenous entrepreneurs, such as the *Canadian Council for Indigenous Business (CCIB)* or similar entities in other regions. These networks often provide access to a wide range of resources, events, and mentorship programs designed to support business growth and government procurement.

Conferences and Expos: Attend Indigenous business expos, conferences, and procurement events, which can help expand your network and make valuable contacts. Many of these events also feature workshops and sessions focused on navigating government procurement.

Having a network of connections and resources both inside and outside of the community contributes to success of EDOs as navigators and steer their community in the direction of success and economic growth.

Resources:

- Indigenous Business Directory of Canada.
- Government matchmaking programs available on regional or national government websites.
- Professional organizations like the Indigenous Procurement Network.

The Canadian government has specific frameworks in place for Indigenous procurement, such as:

- Procurement Strategy for Indigenous Business (PSIB): A federal initiative designed to increase Indigenous participation in government contracting.
- Directive on Government Contracts, Including Real Property Leases, in the Nunavut Settlement Area: If applicable, ensure alignment with land claims agreements.

By offering these resources, you help businesses not only reflect and improve their future bids but also connect with the right people and networks for long-term success.

Cando Offerings

Several resources are available to EDOs offering information and advice. For instance, an organization like Cando can help EDOs and their communities on several levels, delivering webinars, information and advice, and providing access to invaluable resources and tools.



Training and Certification: Cando offers professional development programs, including certification for EDOs.

Education and Workshops: Cando organizes workshops, webinars, and conferences that cover a wide range of topics related to economic development.

Networking Opportunities: Cando facilitates connections between EDOs, Indigenous leaders, academics, and corporate and government representatives.

Resource Development: Cando provides access to various tools, guides, and resources that can assist EDOs in their work. This includes information on funding opportunities, economic development strategies, and community planning.

Partnerships and Collaboration: Cando works to create partnerships with other organizations and stakeholders to enhance the support available to Indigenous communities.

University Initiatives

In addition, establishing relationships with universities offering Indigenous-led research projects and support is an excellent strategy. Some universities offer strategic partnerships:

University of British Columbia (UBC) - Indigenous Research Support Initiative (IRSI): IRSI provides support for Indigenous-led research projects and partnerships, offering resources and guidance to enhance community-based economic development.

University of Saskatchewan - Indigenous Research Initiative: This initiative supports Indigenous research projects and partnerships, providing resources and guidance to enhance community-based economic development.

University of Victoria - Indigenous Research Support Network (IRSN): IRSN offers support for Indigenous-led research, including funding opportunities, partnership development, and community engagement.

York University - Centre for Indigenous Knowledges and Languages: This centre supports Indigenous research and partnerships, focusing on community-based projects.

McMaster University - Indigenous Research Institute: This institute provides resources and support for Indigenous-led research projects, fostering partnerships and community-based economic development.

Learning Through Social Media

Social media has become an important tool for economic development and can help EDOs or community leaders attract investment and promote economic growth. Mastering social media can also be an efficient way of engaging with the community. EDOs in Canada can effectively use social media to both learn and to promote their communities by following these strategies:

- **Joining relevant groups and discussion forums:** Participating in groups on platforms like LinkedIn and Facebook where professionals share knowledge, resources, and opportunities is a good way to learn and expand one's network.
- **Attending webinars:** Many organizations, such as Cando and Indigenous Works, offer free webinars and live sessions on social media platforms.
- **Actively engaging:** Social media can help engage with the community and foster a sense of collaboration. Social media can also help attract investors and businesses, and promote economic growth.

Finding and Collaborating with Partners

By planning ahead, EDOs can actively identify possible partners for collaboration, keeping in mind that partnerships can help bring prosperity to the community through direct jobs and skill development. Economic partnerships can bring financial resources that might otherwise be inaccessible. They should



be attuned to what is happening in their territories. Connecting with existing resources and steering projects in the right direction is an integral part of an EDO's job, as identifying partners for collaboration is crucial for bidding on Canadian government contracts.

- **Enhanced Capabilities:** Collaborating with partners can bring in additional skills, expertise, and resources that will enhance bids and make them more competitive and capable of meeting complex contract requirements.
- **Shared Risk and Responsibility:** Partnerships allow for the sharing of risks and responsibilities by distributing financial and operational risks among the partners.
- **Access to Networks:** Partners often bring their own networks and connections, which can open new opportunities.
- **Credibility and Trust:** Partnerships with reputable organizations can enhance credibility. This can be particularly important when bidding on government contracts, as it demonstrates reliability and a proven track record.
- **Economic Development:** Collaborations can lead to broader economic benefits for the community.

Continuous Improvement

Continuous improvement is supported by several elements, including mastering community capabilities, seeking feedback for improvement, and working on efficiency in order to free up time and resources to invest in one's training and development – all the while, navigating constant challenges where time and resources are concerned.

Mastering Community Capabilities

Focusing on becoming an expert resource when it comes to knowing and leveraging the community's strengths and resources will help when developing competitive proposals, which in turn will build confidence with government agencies.

A regular and rigorous updating of the community capacity database is an important part of preparation and planning. To achieve this in a useful way, it is essential to establish a structured process for collecting and analyzing information. This may include consultations with community members, periodic surveys, and collaboration with local leaders and partner organizations. Creating an effective tracking system, such as an accessible and easy-to-update digital platform, helps ensure that data remains relevant and actionable. In addition, the formation of a team dedicated to strategic intelligence and the management of this information ensures that the available resources are constantly updated. By mastering these assets and developing a deep understanding of the community's strengths, it becomes possible to develop competitive and strategic proposals. This builds credibility with government agencies and potential partners, while building trust that promotes the success of local initiatives. Assessing capacity is covered in Tool 1 of this Difficult Conversations Toolbox, Acceptance.

Seeking Feedback

After submitting a bid, successful or not, it's essential to maintain engagement with the government agencies or entities, and for a successful debrief, the following strategies can be used:

- Be involved in any Requests for Information or Site Visits
- Ask questions during the process
- Requesting feedback directly: Asking for a debriefing session with the officials involved in the bidding process can be done through a formal letter or email. A constructive debrief allows to acquire an understanding of where the bid may have fallen short and how it can be improved in the future.



- **Reviewing Evaluation Criteria:** Focus on how your proposal aligned with the evaluation criteria. If there was a mismatch, inquire about specific areas of improvement. Did your bid meet the technical specifications? Was the pricing competitive? Were the timelines reasonable? Understanding these aspects will help you adjust in future bids.
- **Learn from Strengths and Weaknesses:** Identify which elements of your bid were strong and which ones could use improvement. This can be about your proposal's structure, clarity, or the value proposition you presented.
- **Clarify Mistakes:** If there were any misunderstandings or errors, seek clarification. Government officials may point out things you missed or didn't present well. Government representatives would only be able to speak to your specific bid.
- **Focus on the Future:** Use the debrief as an opportunity to express your continued interest in future opportunities with the agency. This demonstrates your willingness to improve and stay engaged in future processes.

Ongoing Training and Development: The Role of PAC

Procurement Assistance Canada (PAC), a division within Public Services and Procurement Canada (PSPC), offers specialized support to Indigenous businesses aiming to engage in federal procurement. Their services can be a valuable way to improve future bids, enhance your understanding of the procurement process, and access further opportunities. Here are specific steps on how one could use PAC's services for training and capacity development purposes:

Guidance on Federal Procurement Processes

Understanding Procedures: PAC provides comprehensive information on how the federal procurement system operates, including the steps involved in bidding for government contracts.

Navigating Opportunities: They assist businesses in identifying and accessing federal contracting opportunities, ensuring that Indigenous enterprises are aware of and can compete for relevant contracts.

Workshops and Seminars

Educational Sessions: PAC organizes free seminars and workshops designed to educate Indigenous business owners about the procurement process, enhancing their ability to participate effectively.

One-on-One Coaching

Personalized Support: PAC offers coaching services tailored to individual business needs, helping owners understand how to navigate the federal procurement system and improve their competitiveness.

Registration Assistance

While PAC can provide general information about the Indigenous Business Directory, Indigenous Services Canada (ISC) is the lead department for IBD registration and should be the primary point of contact for guidance on this process. PAC can, however, assist businesses with registration in SAP Ariba and CanadaBuys.

Information on Set-Aside Contracts

Exclusive Opportunities: PAC informs businesses about set-aside opportunities, which are exclusive to Indigenous suppliers, providing a competitive advantage in certain procurement areas.

Policy and Program Updates

Keeping Informed: PAC shares information with Indigenous businesses on policies and programs that may affect their participation in federal procurement., including the mandatory minimum 5% contracting requirement for Indigenous businesses

Networking Opportunities



Connecting with Stakeholders: PAC facilitates connections between Indigenous businesses and key stakeholders in the federal procurement community, fostering relationships that can lead to business opportunities.

Navigating difficult conversations with government representatives after an unsuccessful bid or when trying to secure government contracts requires a strategic approach. For EDOs, acquiring specific skills and adopting best practices can help ensure these discussions are productive and increase the chances of success in future procurements. Difficult conversations, while tricky, can become opportunities for growth and positive change if managed well. By taking a structured approach, surrounding themselves with a support network, and investing in their personal development, EDOs can lead productive discussions that benefit the community as a whole. There is most certainly a learning curve, but in embracing it, there is nothing but opportunity to grow and refine the approach to federal procurement. Sustained efforts on that level are sure to provide results in increased business capacity and understanding, more successful bids, and long-term success in the procurement system.



TOOL #3 - Engagement: Strategies to Foster Respectful, Constructive Dialogue

Techniques for Effective Engagement

Active listening and reframing techniques

Active listening is an essential skill to ensure fruitful exchanges. The first step to ensure active listening may sound obvious but requires intent: carefully listening without interrupting. Then once this information is received, it is helpful to repeat it back to the person and rephrase to ensure understanding. Afterwards, asking open-ended questions will encourage dialogue and avoid any misunderstandings, creating a climate of respect and collaboration. As a guide, referring to this step-by-step process will provide a frame within which to start practising:

- 1- Practice active silence to allow for the full expression of ideas.
- 2- Reformulate the interlocutor's words to validate understanding.
- 3- Ask open-ended questions to deepen the discussion.
- 4- Demonstrate empathy by acknowledging everyone's perspectives and concerns

Blending Indigenous storytelling with modern facilitation methods

Indigenous storytelling is a powerful tool for sharing knowledge and strengthening community connections. By combining this traditional approach with modern facilitation techniques, such as in structured dialogue or talking circles, it is possible to create an inclusive and respectful engagement framework. Some examples include:

- Using stories and lived experiences to illustrate issues and inspire solutions
- Encourage participants to share their perspectives through personal stories.
- Embed talking circles to allow a fair and authentic conversation

Building Trust: The Two-Eyed Vision Approach

The Two-Eyed Seeing approach combines Indigenous and Western knowledge to adopt a balanced and inclusive perspective. This approach promotes recognition and respect for different ways of perceiving and solving challenges.

The integration of Indigenous approaches into conversations is based on respect for and recognition of the richness of traditional knowledge, on the same level than Western methods. It is essential to adopt a co-learning posture, where each party makes a valuable contribution and benefits from knowledge sharing. Fostering open and respectful dialogue creates a space where diversity of experiences and perspectives is valued, thereby strengthening mutual understanding, making it possible to overcome differences and build bridges between knowledge, rather than opposing methodologies. By identifying common goals, participants are encouraged to collaborate constructively, building on each other's strengths. By integrating these principles, an inclusive and equitable environment is created, where everyone feels listened to, recognized and involved in a mutually enriching process.

Leveraging common goals to foster collaboration

The identification of shared objectives makes it possible to federate efforts and strengthen cohesion between stakeholders. This facilitates the establishment of sustainable partnerships that benefit



everyone. Highlighting those common goals will create a shared vision, which will move any conversation away from a confrontational encounter, and towards collaboration. The Stronger Together framework and toolkit, developed in the context of the First Nations–Municipal Community Economic Development Initiative (CEDI) - a joint project of the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) and Cando – offers step-by-step guidance on how First Nations and municipalities can find new ways to work together for mutual prosperity. This framework can offer precious additional guidance on how to foster strong, collaborative relationships. Find out more [HERE](#).

Navigating Debriefs

Leveraging the Debrief Process

Navigating the debriefing process effectively helps to obtain useful insights for future bids. Knowing how to craft specific questions that generate valuable feedback is what will get the most out of the feedback session, and focusing on key areas such as compliance, value proposition, and technical aspects will constitute a strong foundation on which to base all upcoming proposals.

Setting the Tone

A good debriefing is based on a climate of respect and openness. It is important to set clear expectations about the objectives of the discussion and to encourage transparent communication. By approaching the conversation with a blend of wisdom and professional negotiation techniques, the EDO sets the stage for better outcomes and strengthened relationships in the future. To establish a framework conducive to a constructive exchange:

- Use respectful language ensuring the tone remains collaborative rather than adversarial.
- Demonstrate patience and active listening to fully understand the reasons behind the rejection and the perspectives of government officials.
- Seek solutions collaboratively, leveraging principles of community-building, relationship-maintenance, and shared learning.
- Reaffirm the relationship to ensure that future interactions are constructive and based on mutual respect.

How to Conduct a Successful Debrief Call

Be Prepared: Going into the debrief call, clearly understand your proposal and any feedback you have received. If you are unclear about anything, note it down precisely. Being prepared for the meeting will allow you to ask targeted questions and get the most out of the conversation.

Be Open and Receptive: Keep an open mind and a willingness to learn during the debrief call. Do not get defensive about the feedback. Instead, think of it as positive feedback that can assist you in bettering your proposals.

Ask Specific Questions: During the debrief, ask straightforward questions about the assessment and the evaluation criteria.

Key Questions to Ask to Elicit Feedback

Specific Criteria:

- Can you explain how our proposal was evaluated against criteria?
- Were there any specific areas where our proposal fell short?



Comparative Analysis:

- How did our proposal compare to those that were successful?
- Were there any particular strengths in the successful proposals that we could incorporate into ours?*

*Note: The questions relate to comparative analysis and may not be answerable by federal government representatives, as debriefs are specific to the applicant's own bid. Some other levels of government may be able to respond to these."

Technical and Financial Aspects:

- Were there any technical aspects of our proposal that were lacking?
- Was our pricing strategy competitive? If not, how could it be improved?

Clarity and Presentation:

- Were there any parts of our proposal unclear or confusing?
- How can we improve the clarity and presentation of our proposal?

Compliance and Requirements:

- Did our proposal meet all the regulatory and compliance requirements?
- Are there any specific compliance issues we need to address?

***Future Opportunities:**

- Are there any upcoming opportunities you think would be a good fit for our community?
- Can you suggest other departments or agencies interested in our project?

*Note: Government officials conducting debriefs may have limited scope beyond their specific area of contracting and may not be able to respond to broader questions about other departments or upcoming opportunities. Businesses can refine their profile on CanadaBuys to receive notifications for well-suited opportunities.

Take Notes: Take detailed notes about the feedback and the suggestions made during the debrief call. These notes will be helpful when revising your proposal or preparing for future bids.

Follow-up: Following the debrief call, send the procurement officer a thank-you email thanking them for taking the time to provide feedback. The email will show professionalism and keep the relationship active.

Use Insights: Use what you learned during the debrief to make fundamental proposal changes. The debrief call may be one of the most important learning exercises you can have during the procurement process.

Power-Balancing Strategies

In some cases, there will be a perceived or a real imbalance in conversations when dealing with Institutional power, like in dealings with government agencies or large corporations. To minimize discomfort, focus on equality and shared goals during the conversation. In interactions with government institutions or businesses, it is essential to restore some balance of power by affirming the value of Indigenous perspectives and building on strategic partnerships.

When possible, advocating for an Indigenous liaison or third-party observer during debriefs will ensure fair representation and re-establish some balance. In addition, maintaining a collaborative rather than adversarial tone, e.g., "Our goal is to better understand and align with government priorities." can shift a defensive conversation to a constructive one.

Conflict Resolution Techniques

Communication norms differ greatly from one culture to another and are based on different values as well. For example, non-verbal cues and considerations for hierarchy may have significantly different roles



in conversations for parties whose cultures are also different. Adapting the approach and managing expectations accordingly will be important. Some ways that bureaucratic resistance and power imbalances can be addressed include the following:

Be honest and transparent and speak truthfully and tactfully: Honesty should always be the priority. If a mistake, delay, or issue is being faced, acknowledging it openly instead of avoiding the topic is the way to go.

Manage Expectations: Ensure that both parties have a clear understanding of what's possible. If there are limitations, explain them openly to prevent future misunderstandings or frustrations.

- Encourage non-violent communication and mediation.
- Avoid direct confrontations and favor a collaborative approach.
- Seek mutually beneficial solutions by identifying acceptable trade-offs.
- Reframe resistance as an opportunity for mutual learning.

Navigating debriefs and conversations with government officials effectively ensures that the power imbalance does not undermine the community's voice, putting the emphasis is on healing, learning, and collective growth, all central to Indigenous ways of working through conflict and challenges. After the conversation, reflecting on the feedback with a renewed commitment to improving future bids will increase motivation and determination, and of course, improvement of any future work



Resources: Practical Exercises

The use of scenarios and role-playing improves communication and negotiation skills: These are effective tools to strengthen engagement, negotiation and conflict resolution skills. Now that the theoretical aspect of engaging effectively has been covered, it will prove helpful to practice these techniques. To get the most out of these exercises, each scenario should be context and clear objectives, so that participants understand what is at stake in the exercise.

Roles can be assigned randomly or based on the skills and experience of the participants. An observer or facilitator may be assigned to take notes and provide constructive feedback at the end of each scenario. A second exercise where the roles are reversed may also help foster empathy and Two-eyed seeing. Ensure to encourage collective feedback where everyone shares their impressions and what they have learned.

Role-playing scenarios to practice engagement

Scenario 1: Meeting with a government representative

Background: Meeting with an official to discuss potential funding for an economic development project. Two participants play the roles of the government representative and the community spokesperson. An observer notes the strengths and areas for improvement.

Objectives:

- Clearly present the project and its benefits to the community.
- Anticipate the representative's concerns and respond constructively.
- Adopt a collaborative approach to foster a relationship of trust.

Scenario 2: Negotiation with an economic partner

Background: Discussion with a company that wants to exploit a natural resource on a traditional territory to negotiate terms that respect Indigenous rights and benefit the community. Two people play the roles of the community and the company. A facilitator observes and proposes strategic adjustments after the exercise.

Objectives:

- Set clear expectations and advocate for community interests.
- Find common ground by incorporating Indigenous principles of respect and reciprocity.
- Manage tensions while maintaining an open dialogue.

Scenario 3: Community mediation

Background: A disagreement arises between two groups over the use of a shared space. A mediator intervenes to facilitate the resolution of the conflict. Three participants in total play, including one mediator.

Objectives:

- Apply a mediation approach based on listening and finding mutually beneficial solutions.
- Encourage the expression of emotions and needs in a respectful setting.
- Propose a compromise acceptable to both parties.



Debrief Call Scenario – Implementing engagement principles

Participants: EDO & Government Official (Procurement Officer)

Opening

EDO: (Respectfully)

- “Thank you for taking the time to meet with me today. I value the opportunity to discuss the recent bid that was submitted and understand more about the reasons for its rejection. We hope this conversation can provide insight into the process and help us grow stronger in future opportunities. In our community, we believe that every interaction offers a chance for learning and collaboration. I look forward to your guidance.”

Government Official: (Acknowledging)

- “Thank you for coming. I appreciate your openness to feedback. Our team thoroughly reviewed the bid, and we found that while the submission had strong points, there were certain areas that didn’t fully align with the technical requirements we outlined. I can walk you through the specifics.”

Phase 1: Active Listening and Reflection

In this phase, the EDO should actively listen and show they are fully engaged and respectful of the government official’s perspective.

EDO:

“I understand, and I appreciate the detailed feedback you’re providing. I’m here to listen and learn, so please, share with me where we can improve. I also want to acknowledge that consultation and input are at the heart of decision-making, so I’m interested in hearing what was missed from our side.”

Phase 2: Seeking Clarity and Expressing Community Values

The EDO should then seek clarification, integrating Indigenous values of respect for the relationship and building understanding.

EDO:

- “I’d like to ask for more details regarding the technical requirements. Were there particular aspects of our proposal that didn’t fully reflect the government’s priorities, or was it a matter of compliance? In our community, we often take the time to reflect on where we can do better. Our approach is not to dwell on mistakes but to take them as learning opportunities and adapt.”

Government Official: (Explaining the issues)

- “There were concerns about the pricing structure and the timeline, which seemed a bit optimistic considering the scope of work. Additionally, we had some questions about the technical specifications in your project proposal.”

Phase 3: Reflection, Acknowledgment, and Reaffirming Commitment to Relationship

The EDO acknowledges the feedback, expresses empathy, and emphasizes the long-term relationship they are building.

EDO:

- “Thank you for sharing that with me. I can see how our pricing and timeline might have seemed too ambitious. I want to assure you that our community is committed to delivering high-quality work within reasonable expectations. We will take a closer look at those aspects and adjust accordingly. What’s important to us is that we continue to build a relationship with your team based on trust and mutual respect. Could we discuss what areas would be most beneficial for us to focus on as we prepare for future opportunities?”



Phase 4: Proposing Collaboration and Resolution

Indigenous approaches to resolution often involve collaborative efforts to find a solution that benefits all parties. In this phase, the EDO proposes next steps that involve collaboration and considerations for ensuring future success.

EDO:

"I'd like to explore whether there are upcoming opportunities that might align better with our capabilities. Would it be possible to work together on refining our future proposals? I believe that we can bring a new perspective to these projects. Perhaps we can also connect with others in your department to ensure we're on the right track next time."

Government Official:

"That sounds like a good plan. We can certainly connect you with the relevant department to help refine the scope of future projects. Let's also look at setting up a meeting to discuss potential areas for collaboration moving forward."

Phase 5: Closing and Maintaining Connection

To end the call on a good, positive note that sets a clear expectation on maintaining contact, the EDO closes the conversation by reiterating the value of the relationship and commitment to ongoing improvement.

EDO:

"Thank you so much for taking this time with me and for your guidance, it's very helpful. This feedback will definitely help us improve and strengthen our proposal processes. I look forward to working more closely with your team in the future, and I believe we can find great success together. I appreciate the collaboration you've shown us and hopefully we will have a positive outcome soon."



Drafting a professional email

Clear and effective written communication is essential for building and maintaining positive working relationships. Learning how to structure an email professionally, how to clearly express expectations and how to be courteous in your exchanges contributes to successful communication. For additional tips on how to draft professional communications in an efficient manner, consult Cando's Technical Writing Toolbox, which contains insightful guidance and time-saving strategies and tools.

Subject Line: Be clear and specific (e.g., "Request for Detailed Feedback on [Project Name]"). Beginning an email with a clear subject line will help the recipient identify and prioritize it easily. For example, a subject line such as 'Request for Detailed Feedback on [Project Name]' summarizes the purpose of the email and what is expected from the person receiving it. People might miss the email if the subject line is not specific enough : it needs to relate directly to the email's content.

Direct Contact: Whenever possible, address the email to a particular person or agency to personalize it and as a demonstration of respect. Direct contact and personal greetings demonstrate respect and establishes a professional tone. Next, thank the recipient for their time and consideration of your proposal and acknowledge their effort. Remember, your email will feel less personal if you address it to a general title or department rather than a specific person. Please do your research, find the name of the person who reviewed your proposal, and address the email to them.

- Address the email to a specific person or agency.
- Start with a personalized greeting
- Express gratitude for the time and consideration given to your proposal.

Requesting Feedback: When composing an email, the tone must remain positive and respectful. Asking for feedback on why the proposal was not selected is a key part of the email. A request for feedback shows commitment to improvement and values the procurement officer's insight, demonstrating openness to improving future submissions. The request for more information shows willingness to make good on proposal gaps to align them with government requirements, while staying neutral to any negative outcome.

Continued Commitment: Highlighting the community's commitment to the project and its alignment with the agency's goals and priorities reinforces the project's importance and strengthens a perception of dedication to making necessary improvements.

Follow-up Meeting: Requesting a follow-up meeting or call creates a chance for discussion, which can often be more effective than written feedback. Suggesting a debrief meeting will allow further talks on the input and allow for immediate clarification on anything that remains unclear. It shows that you are willing to talk about possible revisions and that you are eager to be guided on how to comply with the requirements of the government.

Make it Personal and Short: Be sure to include your contact information for further communication. Providing contact information, including your email address and phone number, shows that you are open and ready to continue conversations. Do not overload your email with information. Too much information or irrelevant details can overwhelm the recipient. Refine your message and make it to the point. Finishing the email with a thank you note adds to your professionalism and helps create a better deal with the person. However, informal language and a casual tone can be seen as unprofessional. Maintain a formal, respectful tone.



Use AI Ethically : Artificial Intelligence, or AI, is a precious ally and a time-saving resource. However, it is crucial to learn how to use it responsibly so as to keep credibility, professionalism, and the EDO's expertise at the forefront. When using only AI to develop emails, key details can be missed, making your audience feel undeserving of your attention. For more on productivity methods such as AI and how to leverage them, Cando's Technical Writing Toolbox is a well of information and efficiency techniques.



TOOL 4 - Follow-Up After Difficult Conversations

Post-Conversation Actions: Document agreements, timelines, responsibilities

After a difficult discussion, it is crucial to formalize the commitments made to ensure effective follow-up. Documenting agreements helps to avoid ambiguity and clarify expectations for each party involved. It is recommended that clear timelines and responsibilities be established to ensure that commitments are translated into concrete actions. This approach enhances transparency and promotes effective implementation of the decisions taken.

Follow Up and Commit to Action

A difficult conversation should not remain unaddressed. It is essential to define clear next steps so that each party understands their responsibilities and the actions to be taken. A summary of key points and mutual commitments, ideally in writing, helps to ensure a shared understanding and avoid any misunderstandings.

Regular follow-up is also a key step. Checking the progress of the commitments made demonstrates a real willingness to resolve the issues raised and to move the situation forward in a constructive manner. This helps to rebuild trust and ensure that the conversation leads to concrete results. During these follow-ups, it is important to remain open to adjustments and feedback from the other party, to adapt to the changing context.

Finally, it is essential to view these conversations as part of an ongoing dialogue rather than as isolated events. Remaining available for future exchanges helps to strengthen relationships and prevent tensions from building up in the future. Being open to listening and feedback promotes more fluid and constructive communication in the long run.

Documenting agreements helps to avoid ambiguity and clarify expectations for each party involved. To do this, it is recommended to:

- Take detailed notes of decisions made, responsibilities assigned, and deadlines set.
- Send a written summary to participants, if necessary, to ensure that everyone shares the same understanding of the commitments.
- Set a follow-up schedule with regular checkpoints to assess the implementation of the agreed actions.

Define clear next steps

At the end of the conversation, it is essential that all parties understand their responsibilities and the actions to be taken. A summary of key points and mutual commitments, ideally in writing, ensures shared understanding and avoids misunderstandings. Tip: To strengthen engagement, ask each party to express how they understand their role and responsibilities. This active reformulation avoids misinterpretations. Carry out regular follow-up to check the progress of the commitments made demonstrates a real desire to improve the situation and to ensure a constructive dialogue.

- Organize follow-up meetings to assess progress and adjust actions as necessary.
- Create a space for open dialogue, where everyone can express the challenges encountered and propose adjustments.
- Recognize efforts and progress, even minimal, to maintain motivation and encourage a positive climate.
- Use tracking tools, such as a shared progress board or regular check-ins, helps keep track of actions taken and ensure commitments are being met.



Relationship-Building: Conduct regular follow-ups, use culturally informed methods to sustain trust: monitoring is not limited to practical engagements, it also plays a key role in strengthening relationships. The use of culturally appropriate methods, such as talking circles or mediation practices inspired by Indigenous traditions, can help maintain trust and deepen the bonds between the parties. These approaches promote respectful and inclusive communication, which is essential for overcoming differences and building lasting relationships. During follow-ups, asking open-ended questions such as "How do you feel about the situation?" or "Are there any points we should approach differently?" encourages constructive and ongoing communication.

Difficult conversations should be seen as an evolutionary process rather than isolated events. Remaining available for future exchanges builds trust and promotes better long-term conflict management. Setting up regular meetings, even outside of tense times, helps maintain fluid communication and avoid the build-up of unspoken frustrations.

- Value active listening to show that every perspective is respected.
- Encourage face-to-face discussions, when possible, as they allow for a better understanding of emotions and intentions.
- Practice humility and patience, recognizing that some tensions may need time to resolve.

Continuous improvement approach: Finally, a continuous improvement approach must be integrated into these exchanges. It is important to take a step back from past conversations, analyze their results, and adapt communication strategies accordingly. Incorporating feedback from the community and stakeholders helps to improve conflict resolution methods and enhance the effectiveness of dialogue. By taking a proactive and scalable approach, it becomes possible to turn difficult conversations into opportunities for growth and enhanced collaboration. To avoid repeating the same challenges, it is essential to adopt this continuous improvement approach.

- Analyze the results of past conversations to identify strategies that worked well and those that need to be adjusted.
- Gather feedback from the community and stakeholders to refine conflict management methods.
- Training in communication and negotiation, to better manage future exchanges and reduce the frequency of tensions.

Keeping a written account of difficult conversations and their aftermath can help identify recurring patterns and refine your approaches to better handle these situations in the future.

Leveraging Feedback for Improvement

Feedback is a valuable resource for adjusting strategies and perfecting proposals. Each feedback received, whether positive or constructive, must be carefully analyzed to identify areas for improvement. In government tenders or collaborations with the private sector, it is essential to solicit feedback after each bid, even if it is successful. This approach makes it possible to gradually refine the offers, to adapt the strategies and to better understand the expectations of the contractors. Continuous improvement is based on this ability to transform feedback into concrete actions.

A thorough understanding of markets, government policies, and customer needs is also essential to building an effective procurement strategy. By staying informed about industry developments and regulatory requirements, companies can anticipate trends, adjust their positioning, and strengthen their competitiveness. This in-depth knowledge also makes it possible to identify new opportunities and to better structure offers to meet buyers' expectations.



If All Else Fails

When conversations prove unproductive when discussing with a single individual, exploring further options within a government organization may be necessary. Some procurement-related issues may also have a formal grievance or escalation process that can be followed. In such a situation, turning to the government's electronic directory service (GEDS) can be an effective strategy. Below are a series of simple steps to follow to efficiently navigate through administrative barriers and find the right contacts.

Locating the Directory

The Government Electronic Directory Services (GEDS) provides a directory of public servants across Canada. Information in this directory is supplied by individual GOC departments and agencies and updated the data administrators within each department.

Understanding the Structure

Canada's government procurement services are structured through different levels, including Public Services and Procurement Canada (PSPC), Departmental procurement offices, and Crown corporations involved in procurement. The system allows searches by categories and helps pinpoint which individual or team is best suited to address issues, whether it's related to purchasing, contracting, or tendering.

Searching by Role or Function

Other individuals might be involved in the same area of concern. Finding a person or team responsible for that particular area and who handles similar cases is easy with the possibility to filter the search by role, division, or service area, which can help you find someone in a more senior position or within a different team who might be able to resolve the issue.

Contacting the Right Person

Once the correct contact is found, email is often the best way to reach out, as it allows to track the communication history. Send a clear and concise message outlining your issue, ensuring your email is:

- 1- Specific about your case or reference number
- 2- Polite, and states the issue clearly
- 3- Clear in requesting a course of action or escalation if needed

Escalation Procedure

If you're unable to get a resolution with the initial individual or department, find out if there is an escalation procedure. Many organizations provide a protocol for escalating issues to higher authorities. This might involve contacting a supervisor, a manager, or an ombudsperson who can address your concern from a higher level. reach someone with more authority or a specialized role, search for positions like procurement officers, contracting specialists, or program managers.

Keeping a Record of Communication

Document all your interactions, including emails, phone calls, and any formal requests. This helps in maintaining a trail of the conversation and can be useful if you need to refer back to it for further escalation or legal purposes.

Requesting a Formal Response

If necessary, ask for a formal response, especially if your inquiry requires specific action or has been delayed. A formal response often includes the necessary steps for resolving your issue and provides clarity on timelines or the process involved.

Utilizing Social Media

Many government agencies, including those in procurement, now have social media accounts or public communications teams that handle inquiries. These teams can sometimes expedite responses. Check



the agency's website or GEDS 2.0 directory for any listed social media handles (Twitter, LinkedIn, etc.) that are used for procurement-related inquiries.

Sustainable Long-Term Strategy

Access to public procurement should not be seen as a one-off opportunity, but rather as a lever for sustainable growth. It is essential to develop a long-term strategy to gradually integrate the government procurement process into business development. This approach not only allows you to gain experience, but also to optimize each future submission based on the lessons learned from previous attempts.

Setting realistic goals is another key to success. Rather than immediately targeting large contracts, it is more strategic to start with tenders adapted to current capabilities. As the company gains experience and refines its processes, it will be able to bid on more ambitious contracts. This gradual progression helps build a company's credibility and ensures sustainable success in government procurement.

Taking a long-term approach is crucial to ensuring sustainable success and an effective engagement strategy is one that incorporates continuous improvement, adaptation to market changes and constant investment in skills. Rather than considering each opportunity as an isolated objective, it is preferable to establish a global and evolving vision that allows to gradually strengthen positioning.

By implementing these engagement strategies and increasing their visibility, Indigenous businesses and communities can build strong relationships, seize opportunities, and foster inclusive and sustainable economic growth. The key to success lies in the ability to adapt, learn and innovate while valuing traditional and contemporary know-how.

Leveraging Opportunities for Indigenous Businesses

5% Federal Procurement Target

The GOC has put a mandatory minimum target in place for federal departments and agencies to award a minimum of 5% of the total value of contracts to Indigenous businesses and included specific initiatives:

- Indigenous Business Directory: Indigenous businesses can sign up in the Indigenous Business Directory, positioning themselves to qualify for these contracts.
- Procurement Strategy for Indigenous Business (PSIB): This strategy contains information about set-asides which could allow for some contracts to be exclusively available to Indigenous businesses.
- Government Support & Resources: Numerous government resources are available to assist Indigenous businesses through the procurement process, increasing their opportunity for securing contracts.

Learning about Government Expectations : The role of Procurement Assistance Canada (PAC)

While departments may leverage Public Services and Procurement Canada (PSPC) to issue and manage sourcing events for goods and services; a specific part of PSPC called Procurement Assistance Canada (PAC) is a responsive and support-oriented resource for answering general questions regarding federal procurement opportunities, processes, and systems on a non-opportunity-driven timeline. With a mandate to make the procurement process easier for small to medium sized and diverse businesses, they have pre-packaged materials to help your community businesses do more with the GOC directly or understand the contractual mechanisms that they put in place with larger suppliers that would look to facilitate local Indigenous business, employment, or training participation on federal procurement opportunities. For more information and resources, visit PAC [here](#).

The Different Types of Government Contracts



The government offers different kinds of procurement contracts and understanding that can help EDOs navigate the bidding process better and begin with modest goals. Below, take a closer look at the three types of government contracts:

Low-Dollar Value Contracts:

- Definition: Contracts for the purchase of goods with a value under \$25,000, services under \$40,000, and construction under \$100,000 (With limited exceptions).
- Process: These contracts are usually awarded through direct vendors from the existing vendors without a formal tendering process. They are meant to be relatively easier and faster to award.
- Advantages: Good entry point for smaller businesses to build relationships with government buyers and gain experience with government procurement.

Standing Offer Contracts:

- Definition: A standing offer is an agreement with a supplier to supply goods or services at specific prices, under predetermined terms and conditions, as and when required. It is not a contract until a standing offer has been accepted, through a "call-up."*
- Process: Standing offers are appropriate for recurring needs in which the government has a reasonable expectation that a demand will arise, but does not know the precise quantities or timing. They help to clean up the buying process for regularly bought items.
- Advantages: They save time and administrative costs because the terms have already been negotiated, and orders can be made quickly as needs arise.

Request for Proposals (RFPs)

- Definition: An RFP is a more formal solicitation used when the contract is large, or the government has a more complex need and the contract award cannot be decided based on the lowest price alone.
- Process: The suppliers provide a detailed proposal describing their approach, capabilities and pricing. The assessment is of several factors including technical capability, experience and cost.
- Advantages: RFPs typically facilitate more creative, customized solutions that consider the complete value and effectiveness of the proposal.

Different types of contracts cater to different needs and provide specific opportunities for EDOs to involve themselves with government procurement processes. There are several key differences and knowing them can usefully inform your strategy and preparation.

Building Long-Term Success

Research and Preparation

To maximize the chances of success in obtaining government contracts, it is essential to carry out rigorous preparation. The first step is to target contracts that align with the community's strengths and capabilities. Rather than bidding on every opportunity available, identify those where you have a competitive advantage, whether it's specific expertise, unique resources, or a skilled workforce. Registering a business in the Indigenous Business Directory is also a strategic lever. This registry provides greater visibility and access to exclusive opportunities reserved for Indigenous businesses. In addition, it is crucial to get familiar with the Procurement Strategy for Indigenous Business (PSIB) and other support programs. These resources provide valuable information on government procurement requirements and offer tools to help businesses bid effectively.

Bid Submission and Follow-Up

Once a contract has been targeted, it is imperative to submit a complete and well-structured offer. All requested documents must be provided accurately to avoid disqualification for non-compliance. It is also



recommended to highlight the distinctive strengths of the community and demonstrate why the business is the best candidate to execute the project.

If a submission is not successful, it does not mean a definitive failure, but rather a learning opportunity. Actively seeking feedback from government helps identify areas for improvement for future submissions. In addition, it is beneficial to build relationships with procurement officers and government officials. Maintaining these contacts allows you to be informed of new opportunities in advance and to adapt your submission strategies accordingly.

Increasing Visibility and Networking

Investing in training and skills development is a key lever for strengthening the competitiveness of Indigenous businesses and communities. By improving the expertise of workers and entrepreneurs, these initiatives not only provide access to more opportunities, but also more effectively meet the demands of public and private procurement. Targeted training programs, mentoring with industry experts, and access to tailored resources support sustainable upskilling. These efforts help position Indigenous businesses as partners of choice in large-scale projects.

Promoting Economic Reconciliation

Inclusive and fair business practices play a key role in economic reconciliation. Highlighting the contributions of Indigenous businesses to economic development promotes greater recognition of their expertise and ability to innovate. This approach also makes it possible to strengthen collaborations with public and private partners committed to a social responsibility approach. Economic reconciliation is not limited to the integration of Indigenous businesses into markets, but also aims to build trade relationships based on respect, reciprocity and the creation of shared value.

Why Bidding Matters

For any organization, bidding on government procurement contracts can be highly advantageous, even when you don't get the contract. The bidding process is a lesson that guides and teaches EDOs about the requirements, standards, and needs of government contracts, which could help with future bids.

The more often you present a bid, the more apt you are to learn from the experience. The ultimate goal is to see the number of rejected bids decrease and instead have more projects accepted. Remember, success in bidding often comes with persistence and continued learning.

- **Encourages Visibility and Networking:** Taking part in any bidding process means more visibility amongst government circles and other businesses. It can lead to networking opportunities and partnerships, fostering a sense of connection and community.
- **Feedback and Improvement:** The feedback received after a bid — whether successful or not — can be invaluable in improving future bids. Such constructive critiques not only highlight the need for improvement but also empower and motivate the bidders to do better next time.
- **Economic Reconciliation:** Participation in government procurement processes is not just about business; it's about advancing the broader objective of economic reconciliation. It's a tangible way to show the community's investment in being part of the mainstream economy and can help promote policies and procurement practices that keep it more inclusive.
- **Capability Building:** Preparing and submitting the bids builds internal capacity within the community and with EDOs. These involve improving skills in project management, financial planning and strategic thinking.
- **Snagging Future Opportunities:** It's important to note that even if the current bid is unsuccessful, it can pave the way for future opportunities. Government officials may remember who has bid before, which could influence decisions on future contracts or other opportunities.



Targeting low-dollar value contracts (under \$25,000 for Goods, under \$40,000 for Services)

Low-dollar value contracts, i.e., contracts under \$25,000 for Goods, under \$40,000 for services, represent an excellent opportunity for Indigenous businesses and communities to enter the government procurement market. These contracts are often more accessible, as they require fewer bureaucratic processes than large-scale tenders. In addition, they build a history of collaboration with government agencies, making it easier to win larger contracts in the future.

Research departments needing services using government directories

A strategic approach is to actively seek out departments and agencies with specific service and product needs. The use of government directories and public procurement platforms makes it possible to effectively target the most relevant opportunities. Some best practices include:

- Consulting official platforms such as the Indigenous Business Directory and government tendering sites to identify open contracts.
- Analyzing departmental purchasing trends to understand which services or products are frequently sought.
- Contacting procurement officers directly to obtain information on recurring needs and upcoming opportunities.

By being proactive in seeking opportunities and developing relationships with decision-makers, it becomes easier to access these contracts and optimize your chances of success.

Highlighting unique offerings (e.g., experience, environmentally friendly products)

Standing out from the competition is key to maximizing the chances of getting a contract. Indigenous businesses can highlight several distinctive assets to strengthen their attractiveness:

- Expertise and experience: Highlight past achievements and specific skills that add value to government projects.
- Sustainable and responsible practices: More and more organizations are choosing suppliers who are committed to green and socially responsible initiatives. Highlighting the positive environmental impact of the products and services offered can be an important competitive advantage.
- Cultural and community approach: Some offerings may stand out by incorporating traditional know-how or adopting collaborative practices that respect Indigenous values.

By highlighting these differentiators, companies can demonstrate that they offer much more than just a product or service: they offer a unique added value that is aligned with government priorities.



TOOL 5 - Strategies for Difficult Conversations : Delivering bad news, addressing issues, and maintaining trust in challenging situations.

Difficult conversations are inevitable in a professional and community environment. Whether it's delivering bad news, managing conflict, or discussing sensitive topics, the way these discussions are conducted has a direct impact on trust, collaboration, and long-term relationship success. Open, respectful and structured communication is essential to maintain connections while addressing issues in a constructive manner.

Effective strategies for these conversations include preparing upfront, adopting an active listening posture, and finding mutually beneficial solutions. In addition, the integration of Indigenous approaches, such as talking circles and community mediation, can build understanding and promote harmonious resolutions. The emphasis should always be on open communication, cultural sensitivity, and community-first approaches to resolve issues and build stronger relationships. EDOs can effectively use their resources to navigate government procurement processes, engage in productive negotiations, and build strong, lasting relationships with government officials. The following scenarios are designed to help participants practice handling these situations with professionalism, empathy, and clarity. Keeping in mind the knowledge acquired so far, here is a reminder of essential best practices:

- Empathy and active listening: validating emotions and acknowledging concerns.
- Clarity and transparency: Communicating decisions with clear reasoning.
- Cultural integration: Using traditional practices to establish trust.
- Collaborative problem-solving: Involving stakeholders in seeking solutions.

Scenarios

1. Contract Negotiations
2. Feedback and Performance Reviews
3. Cultural Sensitivity and Respect
4. Dispute Resolution
5. Resource Allocation
6. Project Delays
7. Ethical Concerns
8. Partnership Expectations
9. Funding and Financial Support
10. Regrets Conversations
11. Community Engagement



Scenario 1. Contract Negotiations

You are in discussions with a potential partner, but the proposed contract terms are not aligned with your organization's expectations. You should voice your concerns and offer adjustments without compromising the relationship.

Objective: Find common ground by maintaining a respectful tone and putting common interests first.

Pointer: Approach with collaboration in mind, focusing on shared goals. Use cultural protocols to establish trust and rapport early.

Strategy: Frame discussions around mutual benefits and long-term partnerships. Be transparent about community priorities and limitations.

Key Consideration: Emphasize the importance of relationship-building in negotiations, not just the terms of the contract.

Scenario 2. Feedback and Performance Reviews

You need to give feedback to an employee or team member whose performance is not meeting expectations.

Objective: Provide constructive feedback by highlighting the positive points and identifying areas for improvement without discouraging the person.

Pointer: Approach with care and respect, recognizing the individual's contribution while offering constructive feedback.

Strategy: Balance positive feedback with areas of improvement, ensuring clarity in expectations for future performance. Incorporate feedback from both sides to create an open dialogue.

Key Consideration: Integrate community values such as humility and learning, ensuring feedback is a tool for growth rather than critique.



Scenario 3. Cultural Sensitivity and Respect

A colleague or partner made a comment that was insensitive to an Indigenous cultural reality. You want to address the situation without causing tension.

Objective: To raise awareness and encourage open dialogue on respect for cultural perspectives.

Pointer: Prioritize active listening and understanding of cultural values to avoid assumptions or misunderstandings.

Strategy: Educate others on Indigenous customs and practices while acknowledging and addressing any previous cultural missteps. Use culturally appropriate language and conduct.

Key Consideration: Always center respect for the diverse cultural backgrounds of community members and stakeholders.

Scenario 4. Dispute Resolution

Two members of your team disagree on a work approach, and the tension affects collaboration. You need to intervene to facilitate communication.

Objective: To use mediation techniques to re-establish a productive dialogue and find a compromise

Pointer: Focus on finding common ground through dialogue, with an emphasis on healing and maintaining relationships.

Strategy: Use mediation or Elders' guidance where appropriate, seeking consensus rather than competition. Keep discussions respectful and focused on resolving the issue at hand.

Key Consideration: Avoid escalation by ensuring the conversation remains respectful and goal-oriented, recognizing the importance of healing in the process.



Scenario 5. Resource Allocation

You must announce that certain resources (budget, staff, equipment) will be allocated to other priorities, which impacts certain projects.

Objective: To clearly explain the reasons for the decision and explore alternative solutions with the parties involved.

Pointer: Be clear about community priorities, recognizing the impact of decisions on both individuals and the community as a whole.

Strategy: Explain the rationale behind resource allocation decisions, including transparency in how decisions align with community needs and values.

Key Consideration: Involve stakeholders early to ensure fair allocation, respecting the diverse needs of the community.

Scenario 6. Project Delays

A major project is behind schedule, affecting key partners and requiring an adjustment of expectations.

Objective: To inform stakeholders of the delay in a transparent manner and to propose an action plan to minimize the impact.

Pointer: Take ownership of delays and communicate proactively about new timelines, while acknowledging the impact on stakeholders.

Strategy: Be honest about the reasons for delays, offer solutions, and demonstrate accountability. Reinforce the commitment to delivering quality results.

Key Consideration: Maintain open channels for ongoing updates, showing respect for the patience and understanding of all parties involved.



Scenario 7. Ethical Concerns

You notice a practice that is questionable or contrary to your organization's values and should talk to a colleague or superior.

Objective: To express your concerns diplomatically and encourage reflection on professional ethics.

Pointer: Address concerns directly, with a focus on maintaining integrity and ensuring alignment with community values.

Strategy: Encourage open and honest discussion about ethical concerns. Offer a safe space for individuals to voice concerns without fear of retribution.

Key Consideration: Prioritize ethical conduct and transparency in all dealings, ensuring that any unethical behavior is addressed with urgency.

Scenario 8. Partnership Expectations

A strategic partnership does not go as planned, and you need to clarify the commitments of each party.

Objective: Realign expectations and ensure that mutual commitments are met.

Pointer: Set clear, mutual expectations at the outset and revisit them regularly to ensure alignment.

Strategy: Focus on open communication and transparency, reinforcing the commitment to the partnership's success and addressing misalignments early.

Key Consideration: Respect the diverse goals and visions of all partners, and work towards a shared understanding that honors everyone's contributions.



Scenario 9. Funding and Financial Support

You must notify a community organization or project that there will be no funding provided.

Objective: Communicate this decision with empathy and offer other forms of support when possible.

Pointer: Be clear about funding criteria, timelines, and expectations, ensuring that all parties understand the financial implications.

Strategy: Approach financial discussions with openness, demonstrating the long-term impact of investments and the sustainability of projects.

Key Consideration: Acknowledge the historical context of financial support for Indigenous communities, ensuring discussions are rooted in understanding and respect.

Scenario 10. Regrets Conversations

A past decision or action has had negative consequences, and you need to apologize or acknowledge a mistake.

Objective: To take responsibility with sincerity while proposing corrective measures.

Pointer: Be empathetic, acknowledging the disappointment while focusing on future opportunities.

Strategy: Deliver the message clearly and compassionately, ensuring the individual or community understands the reason for the regret and the steps forward.

Key Consideration: Show respect for the emotional impact of the decision and offer avenues for growth and future collaboration.



Scenario 11. Community Engagement

An ongoing project is causing concern or mistrust in the community. You need to address concerns and rebuild trust.

Objective: To encourage open communication, answer questions and demonstrate a commitment to transparency.

Pointer: Engage in open, transparent, and inclusive dialogue, ensuring that community members feel heard and valued.

Strategy: Use culturally appropriate methods to engage the community, such as gatherings or Elders' councils, and ensure that feedback loops are embedded in the process.

Key Consideration: Prioritize building trust through ongoing engagement, demonstrating a commitment to the community's needs and interests.



Meeting Agenda Template

Objective: Ensure a well-organized meeting, where each point is discussed effectively, and actions are clearly defined.

[Meeting Name]

Date and Time: [Insert Date]

Location/Platform: [In-person or online]

Participants: [Name of participants]

Agenda:

Opening and welcome (5 min)

1. Presentation of the objectives of the meeting
2. Quick round table (if needed)

Update on previous points (10 min)

3. Reminder of ongoing decisions and actions
4. Status of assigned tasks

Topics to discuss (30-45 min)

5. Topic 1: [Name and details]
6. Topic 2: [Name and details]
7. Topic 3: [Name and details]

Decisions and Next Steps (10 min)

8. Summary of decisions taken
9. Actions to be taken and who is responsible
10. Timelines and action items

Closing (5 min)

11. Final questions and comments
12. Scheduling a follow-up next meeting

Additional Notes: [Comments or outstanding items]



Action Item Tracker

Objective: Track assigned tasks, assignees, and deadlines to ensure that decisions are implemented.

Action	Responsible	Deadline	Status	Feedback
[E.g.: Writing a Project Status Report]	[Name of person]	[JJ/MM/AAAA]	In progress/Completed	[Add details]
[E.g.: Contact a partner for a collaboration]	[Name of person]	[JJ/MM/AAAA]	Things to do	[Add details]

- When possible, make this tracker available to relevant resources on a collaborative work platform like Microsoft Sharepoint or Google Drive.
- Update this tool after each meeting to ensure proper follow-up.
- Clearly identify priorities and deadlines.
- Make sure that each person is aware of their tasks.



Negotiation Guide

Objective: Structure a negotiation to effectively defend one's interests while finding a compromise that is advantageous to all parties.

Before the negotiation: Preparation

- Research the other party's needs and expectations: Understand their priorities and constraints.
- Define your goals: What are your ideal, acceptable, and minimum outcomes?
- Anticipate objections: Prepare strong arguments and viable alternatives.
- Identify common interests: Find common ground to establish a foundation for collaboration.

During the negotiation: Commitment

- Create a climate of trust: Adopt an open and respectful posture.
- Clearly state your demands: Use facts, figures and concrete examples.
- Practice active listening: Rephrase and ask questions to clarify the other party's expectations.
- Remain flexible: Be prepared to adjust your approach to reach a beneficial agreement.

After the Negotiation: Follow-up

- Document agreements: Write a written summary of agreed points and next steps.
- Follow up regularly: Check the progress of commitments and adjust if necessary.
- Evaluate the experience: Identify what worked well and possible improvements for future negotiations.



Resources

This toolbox could not be complete without a list of resources, tailored specifically for an EDO and focusing on tools, strategies, and best practices for engaging with government officials on procurement, agreements, projects, and debriefings.

Procurement Assistance Canada (PAC)

What it offers: PAC provides resources specifically aimed at helping Indigenous businesses navigate federal procurement processes, including debriefing rejected bids and improving future submissions.

- Key Resources:
 - Indigenous-specific workshops and webinars on government procurement.
 - One-on-one support for navigating the procurement system.
 - Information on Indigenous set-aside contracts and how to leverage them.
- Website: [Procurement Assistance Canada](#)

Indigenous Business Navigator

What it offers: The navigator service can help connect you with programs and services across different Government of Canada departments and agencies.

- Key Resources:
 - Capital
 - Expert advice
 - Help with community economic development planning
 - Other federal business support programs
- Website: [Indigenous Business Navigator](#)

Conflict Resolution Network (CRN)

What it offers: CRN's resources for conflict resolution are rooted in collaboration and mutual respect, making them ideal for Indigenous EDOs looking to foster better relations with government officials.

- Key Resources:
 - Training and resources on conflict resolution and negotiation.
 - Tools for handling difficult conversations, especially with government agencies.
 - Frameworks for healing and building trust during debriefings and negotiations.
- Website: [Conflict Resolution Network](#)

Public Services and Procurement Canada (PSPC)

What it offers: PSPC provides resources to Indigenous businesses, including tools for debriefing after rejected bids and understanding procurement requirements.

- Key Resources:
 - Indigenous supplier guide to federal procurement opportunities.
 - Access to government matchmaking services for Indigenous businesses.
 - Best practices for submitting bids and meeting government expectations.
- Website: Public Services and Procurement Canada

Canadian Federation of Independent Business (CFIB)

What it offers: While primarily focused on small businesses, CFIB provides support and advocacy for Indigenous entrepreneurs looking to navigate government processes and negotiations.

- Key Resources:
 - Tools for managing procurement-related expectations.
 - Workshops and webinars on negotiating with government officials.
 - Advocacy for Indigenous businesses in procurement and policy discussions.
- Website: [Canadian Federation of Independent Business](#)



Strategic Partnerships Initiative (SPI)

What it offers: SPI brings together resources and partners to focus on shared goals and fill any gaps that existing programs can't cover. SPI identifies priority opportunities for investment, guides project planning, and encourages federal departments to team up and work together. This helps create new partnerships and strengthens the government's role in supporting Indigenous economic growth.

- Key Areas

SPI supports investments which foster economic development through activities related to:

- economic readiness and infrastructure development
- businesses expansion and growth
- pre-feasibility and feasibility studies
- environmental diagnostics and evaluations
- community economic development planning
- workforce skills development and training

- Website: [Strategic Partnerships Initiative](#)

National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation (NCTR)

What it offers: NCTR provides educational resources to help Indigenous businesses and government entities engage in more culturally sensitive and productive dialogue.

- Key Resources:

- Educational materials on cultural sensitivity and reconciliation in business and government.
- Tools for navigating misaligned expectations, particularly related to trust and respect.
- Resources for building stronger relationships through understanding Indigenous perspectives.

- Website: [National Centre for Truth and Reconciliation](#)

Canada's Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation Strategy

What it offers: This strategy focuses on supporting Indigenous communities in their negotiations with government, fostering long-term partnerships based on mutual respect.

- Key Resources:

- Frameworks for building collaborative relationships with government entities.
- Policies designed to ensure Indigenous businesses are treated equitably in procurement processes.
- Resources for ensuring transparency and addressing issues of distrust.

Website: [Indigenous Relations and Reconciliation Strategy](#)

