**Simplified Reporting Initiative (SRI)**

**Questions and Answers**

Q.1. *How did the* ***Simplified Reporting/Annual Report Initiative develop****?*

A.1. It has long been recognized that First Nations and other organizations that receive funding from the Government of Canada are faced with complex reporting requirements, some of which are of questionable usefulness to them or to the organizations seeking the reports.

The causes of this reporting burden are long-standing. The growth of contribution programs from multiple departments, each pursuing its own idea of how best to report to Parliament and Canadians for results achieved with the funds they manage, has led in turn to an increase in reporting. Further, some information is redundant but has not been dropped when new requirements arise.

These problems were highlighted in three key reports: the [2002 report by the Office of the Auditor General](http://www.oag-bvg.gc.ca/internet/docs/20021201ce.pdf) on streamlining First Nations reporting to Federal Organizations; the [2006 Independent Panel on Grants and Contributions](http://publications.gc.ca/collections/Collection/BT22-109-2007E.pdf), which tackles the issues for the whole of government; and the [June 2011 report by the Office of the Auditor General on services to First Nations](http://www.oag-bvg.gc.ca/internet/english/parl_oag_201106_04_e_35372.html). The Government has taken action to respond to these reports. Through the comprehensive work of the Simplified Reporting Initiative, INAC senior management is working with multiple sectors, regions and First Nations to address many of the above issues.

Q.2. *In 2014 and 2015, INAC consulted with First Nations to develop a new reporting approach that would address key issues that contribute to the reporting burden on recipients. What were the* ***results/findings of these consultations****?*

A.2. During these consultations, First Nations highlighted a number of key issues:

* the sheer amount of information requested by the Department that First Nations must submit is a problem;
* reports don’t appear to be used by Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC);
* the various types of reports and reporting mechanisms (e.g. electronic, paper-based, PDFs, etc.), makes reporting difficult to manage;
* report due dates that are at various times throughout the year, make it difficult to manage reporting schedules; and
* reports that ask for case-by-case or private information on individuals. The private information should be owned, controlled and possessed by the communities.

Q.3. *Has there been any* ***progress on the SRI*** *since consultations were held with First Nations in 2014/2015?*

A.3. With guidance from consultations and internal data collection review processes some progress has been made. First, the Department has expanded access to a web-based portal where First Nations can complete their reporting requirements online.

Second, the Department has been working to streamline reporting requirements. While streamlining has occurred, we understand that we have much more to accomplish with you as our partners. The following is a list of activities that we have been working on.

* + The ***number of Data Collection Instruments (DCIs)*** has been reduced by 22% between 2013/14 and 2017/2018.
  + The ***number of DCI data fields*** has been reduced by 12% between 2013/2014 and 2017/2018.
  + ***Ad hoc reports*** have been eliminated and must go through the reporting guide process.
  + ***Predictable reporting dates*** have been achieved for the majority of DCIs (a few exceptions remain):
    - **Quarterly – 15th** of the month following the quarter
    - **Annual – May 31st**
    - All reporting that is possible through the portal contains the same content as the reporting guide. Please contact your regional administrator for any questions.
  + We worked with leads within the Chief Financial Officer’s team, to streamline the portal access form so that it you only have to complete one form instead of three.
  + Leads across all Sectors and regions continue to work towards connecting, improving and streamlining forms, tools, processes and initiatives to simplify reporting for First Nations.

Q.4. *What is the* ***INAC Portal****?*

A.4. The INAC portal is a web-based system where users can access forms to review and submit online. The INAC Portal solution involves the development of an enterprise-wide reporting system that integrates existing systems (Education Information Management System, Child and Family Services Information Management System, Integrated Capital Management System, etc.,), modifies the existing departmental portal to handle reporting requirements, and leverages technology that already exists, building on the confidence in the system.

Q.5. ***How does this differ*** *from the current approach of the reporting guide?*

A.5. Currently only EIS allows for direct recipient reporting to the portal. All other DCIs are completed (mostly through pdf’s) and submitted to the regional offices. These DCIs are then entered into the Grants and Contributions Information Management System (GCIMS). The SRI is piloting the electronic completion and direct reporting of almost all DCIs via the INAC Portal.

For reports that are included in the Simplified Reporting Initiative, you are able to access forms to view and submit online.  If you currently collect data in a different way (already use systems), you will have the option to provide this data to your regional INAC contact, who will then upload the data into the system (please see Q.10 and A.10). The online system is now accessible and regional staff will continue to work with users to provide system access, training and improvements.

The forms will be prefilled as much as possible, in order to save time. You may save an incomplete form, and return to complete it at another time. Once data has been submitted into the portal, you will be able to view previously completed entries. The department will also be working with pilot participants to determine what types of data analytics (tables, etc.) would be most useful for First Nation communities in the future.

Q.6. *What is* ***not included*** *in current reporting for this pilot?*

A.6. Proposals, applications and work plans are currently not included as part of this pilot; there are also some DCI’s that may be uploaded, but do not have an online fillable form; as well as three other DCI’s that cannot be uploaded or completed through one of the supporting systems in the portal. The three DCI’s that cannot be completed through the portal are:

* Northern Contaminated Sites Program Report – DCI#7914452
* Nutrition North Canada Report – DCI#7914464
* Child and Family Services Maintenance Report – DCI#455917

Q.7. *When will the* ***other DCI’s be available through the portal****?*

A.7. We are working to make the remaining DCIs available through the portal in 2017-2018.

We are also determining when the proposals, applications and work plans may be part of the reporting portal. Pilot participants will receive updates on this.

*Please let your regional INAC contacts know what works, and what doesn’t*, and provide suggestions as to what you would like to see to support your reporting needs.

Q.8. *How will First Nations that are participating in the pilot* ***access the portal****?*

A.8. First Nation pilot recipients will identify users that require access to the portal. INAC regional coordinators will then assist users to in gain access to the portal and to the various online reporting obligations. Users who have been granted access to the portal will be able to use their unique username and password to sign in and view their report forms. The Department will only grant access to individuals who have been identified by the First Nation as having permission to view the contents of reports, and complete and submit reports on behalf of the First Nation.

Q.9. *How will users know that* ***reports are completed and submitted*** *through the portal and received by INAC?*

A.9. The portal will track the status of First Nations’ reporting. The submitter may save partially submitted work and proceed at a later date. Once ready, the submitter provides completed content and submits this as a final entry. Quality assurance for all processes remains the same as current processes in place for DCI review and approval. These processes are different for each program. Please contact your regional administrator for any queries.

*Q.10.*  *Can* ***DCI information be imported*** *into the portal from a spreadsheet?*

A.10. Currently there is no functionality in the portal to do this.

It is important to note is that a user will enter the portal to then access the various systems to complete the various reporting obligations (DCIs). Each system has a different way of managing its data.

For **Nominal Roll**, **Annual Registry of Post-Secondary Students and High-Cost Special Education**, recipients have *3 options for submitting their reports to INAC*. They are:

1. Complete the report directly online (in EIS using the recipient's previous year's rolled over data)

2. Submit the report form into EIS via the INAC Services Portal

3. Upload an XML file from their School Information System (SIS) into EIS

For the **Education proposal-based programs**, users can retrieve the blank Proposal (also known as a PAW (Proposal Application Work plan) and Report forms directly from EIS via the 'Download a Blank Form' page.

Currently, recipients are unable to submit completed proposals directly into EIS. The proposals are sent to the INAC Regional Office by way of a secure file exchange or using an encrypted USB key. INAC staff validates the data to ensure all mandatory data fields are completed and then the proposal is saved in EIS.

The recipient can obtain a pre-populated report in EIS, or request that this be done by the INAC Regional Office. This saves a significant amount of time for users as up to 75% of the information is captured on the report thereby reducing the need to re-type data.

The explanation below explains the management of the data for the **Annual Report Database (ARD)**, which contains 13 DCI’s for 2016-2017. Please note that we have tried to make the portal access seamless, so that users don’t need to worry about the systems that support each DCI.

There are **two ways to populate a DCI in ARD** – by entering the information into the online form, or by submitting a file in a format specified by ARD.

The file-based option was created for use when DCI data has been entered into a third-party computer system. For example, an agency might be capturing data in a non-INAC computer system for several recipients. One of the systems within the portal, the Annual Report Database (ARD) supports a three-step process for submitting the data collected by that third party system to ARD:

1. The owner of the third party system asks the ARD regional administrator for the required templates, one for each type of DCI (report) they need to submit. The admin accesses a function in ARD that provides the requested DCIs in a file, and the administrator sends the template file to the requester.
2. The third-party system’s technical staff extracts the DCI data and uses it to populate the provided templates. This process requires a technical resource who understands the XSD format and requirements. The result is a single file containing all the DCI submissions extracted from the system. There can be any number of DCI report types, and many instances of each.  
   The third-party system’s owner then sends the file to the regional administrator.
3. The regional administrator uses another function in ARD to read and process the file. Each individual DCI is processed exactly as it would be if a user had entered the data and clicked Submit. Any entries with errors (content or format) are placed in an error file, which the administrator returns to the submitter for correction.

While the system does not provide for input of DCIs in spreadsheet form, you can get the data out of ARD for analysis purposes, whether it pertains to a single DCI or an aggregation of data across DCIs. To do this, your INAC regional IT resource should request read-only access to the database. Once that has been done, the INAC IT resource can do SQL queries to address your information needs.

*Q.11. How will submitted* ***reports be stored and managed****?*

A.11. Since the portal is linked to the department’s current data management systems, all reports submitted through the portal will be managed by these systems. All reports will also be securely stored in the Department’s Grants and Contributions Information Management System (GCIMS).\*

\* For more information on GCIMS, visit:

<https://www.aadnc-aandc.gc.ca/eng/1100100010038/1100100010039>

*Q.12. When does the* ***pilot officially begin*** *and what will be required of participants at that time?*

A.12. The official launch date of the Pilot is May 2017. First Nation pilot participants will be notified when they may access the Portal and begin inputting data to meet their reporting requirements.

The pilot will cover reporting for activities undertaken during 2016-2017 and 2017-2018.

The INAC regional coordinators will provide participating First Nations with information and training sessions/materials for portal use. During these sessions, participants will have the opportunity to ask questions, raise concerns, and provide the department with feedback on the progress of the SRI and make suggestions for improvement.

Regional coordinators will ask for the names and contact information of individuals who are approved to act as Portal users on behalf of their First Nation. Portal users must be permitted by the First Nation to read, complete, and submit the contents of the First Nation’s reports, which may contain sensitive information.

*Q.13. What* ***support will pilot participants have*** *during the pilot?*

A.13. The Department is committed to ensuring pilot participants are supported throughout the pilot period. A technical support team will be available to answer questions and address any issues that users may encounter while reporting through the online portal. INAC regional coordinators will hold training sessions and will provide support to First Nation participants on an ongoing basis once the project has been fully launched, and as requested by participants. The Department’s Regional Offices will continue to provide support to First Nation pilot participants on completing their reporting requirements. Questions concerning the content of reports, what a specific report is asking for, and reporting deadlines can be answered by your regional pilot coordinators.

*Q.14. What happened to the* ***First Nation led workshops*** *to discuss the data that is important from a First Nations perspective?*

A.14. A number of developments have occurred since we proposed these workshops. The Government of Canada’s implementation of the Departmental Results Framework and the work underway on the New Fiscal Relationship as well as efforts by First Nation organizations looking at data governance issues all stand to have a significant impact on what and how data is collected. The Chief Finances, Results and Delivery Officer Sector will be proposing options for a shared/mutual outcome-based accountability framework to demonstrate results to citizens, First Nations communities, government, and Parliament in closing socio-economic disparities and inequalities. These initiatives will lead the direction of reporting in partnership with First Nations moving forwards.

*Q.15. How does this work* ***align to OCAP*** *(Ownership, Control, Access and Possession)?*

A.15. At this time, the data that INAC collects is not considered OCAP compliant. We are working with the leads at INAC and Treasury Board, as well as Indigenous data experts, to work on the Open Government Plan for Canada to ensure that Indigenous-led solutions are embedded in the commitments: <http://open.canada.ca/en/consultations/canadas-new-plan-open-government-2016-2018>