



2026 Interim Resource Management Assistance Program Workshop

2026 Atelier d'information sur le programme d'aide provisoire à la gestion des ressources (IRMA)

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Introduction

L'atelier sur le programme IRMA de janvier 2026 avait pour but de réunir les participants au programme, les partenaires territoriaux et fédéraux et les organismes de cogestion afin de discuter de l'état actuel des choses, de fournir des mises à jour et de recueillir des commentaires pour orienter les futures améliorations. L'événement comprenait des présentations du ministère de l'Environnement et du Changement climatique (MECC) du gouvernement des Territoires du Nord-Ouest (GTNO), de l'Office des terres et des eaux de la vallée du Mackenzie (OTEVM) et de Relations Couronne-Autochtones et Affaires du Nord Canada (RCAANC), suivies d'une discussion approfondie et d'une rétroaction directe des participants.

Le présent résumé de la réunion fournit une vue d'ensemble des présentations, des questions clés soulevées, des réponses du personnel du programme et des prochaines étapes qui ont été définies au cours de l'atelier.

Sommaire

L'atelier 2026 sur le programme IRMA a réuni les gouvernements autochtones membres, les organisations autochtones ainsi que les partenaires territoriaux et fédéraux afin d'examiner les activités du programme, de discuter des défis et de cibler les possibilités d'amélioration. Les participants ont souligné que **le sous-financement chronique**, combiné à **des pressions réglementaires croissantes**, a poussé de nombreuses collectivités au-delà de leur capacité à participer véritablement aux processus de gestion des ressources.

Les principales préoccupations concernaient l'insuffisance du financement par rapport à la charge de travail, la difficulté à maintenir en fonction le personnel qualifié, la lourdeur du fardeau administratif, l'incohérence des lignes directrices, la nécessité d'améliorer la communication et l'importance de mieux reconnaître les connaissances traditionnelles et les activités de mobilisation communautaire. Les participants n'ont cessé de souligner que **les niveaux de financement ne suivent pas le rythme de l'inflation, de l'activité des projets ou des attentes accrues**.

Le MECC, l'OTEVM et RCAANC ont reconnu ces préoccupations et décrit les efforts en cours pour revoir les lignes directrices, rationaliser les exigences administratives, améliorer les communications et dégager des financements supplémentaires. Les participants ont exprimé un vif intérêt pour des rencontres plus régulières, des occasions de renforcement des capacités et des espaces de collaboration pour partager des connaissances pratiques.

Dans l'ensemble, l'atelier a réaffirmé le **rôle essentiel du programme IRMA** dans le soutien à la participation autochtone à la gestion des terres et des ressources et a souligné la nécessité de moderniser les structures de financement afin qu'elles soient adaptées aux pressions réelles exercées sur le terrain.

Introduction

The January 2026 IRMA Workshop was convened to bring IRMA participants, territorial and federal partners, and co-management bodies together to discuss the current state of the IRMA Program, share updates, and gather feedback to guide future program improvements. The session included presentations from GNWT–ECC, the Mackenzie Valley Land and Water Board (MVLWB), and Crown–Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada (CIRNAC), followed by extensive discussion and direct participant feedback.

This meeting summary provides a consolidated overview of the presentations, key issues raised, responses from program staff, and next steps identified during the workshop.

Executive Summary

The 2026 IRMA Workshop brought together participating Indigenous governments, Indigenous organizations, territorial and federal partners to review IRMA program operations, discuss challenges, and identify opportunities for program improvement. Participants emphasized that **historic underfunding**, combined with **increasing regulatory pressure**, has pushed many communities beyond their capacity to meaningfully participate in resource management processes.

Key concerns included inadequate funding relative to workload, difficulty retaining qualified staff, high administrative burden, inconsistent guidelines, the need for improved communication, and the importance of better recognizing Traditional Knowledge and community engagement activities. Participants consistently highlighted that **funding levels have not kept pace with inflation, project activity, or increased expectations**.

GNWT–ECC, MVLWB, and CIRNAC acknowledged these concerns and described ongoing efforts to revise guidelines, streamline administrative requirements, improve communications, and secure additional funding. Participants expressed strong interest in more regular check-ins, capacity-building opportunities, and collaborative spaces to share practical knowledge.

Overall, the workshop reaffirmed the **critical role of the IRMA Program** in supporting Indigenous participation in land and resource management and underscored the need for modernized funding structures that reflect real on-the-ground pressures.

IRMA Overview Presentation

IRMA History, Intent, and Goals

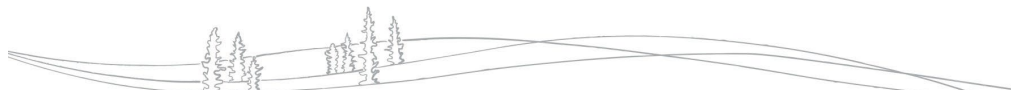
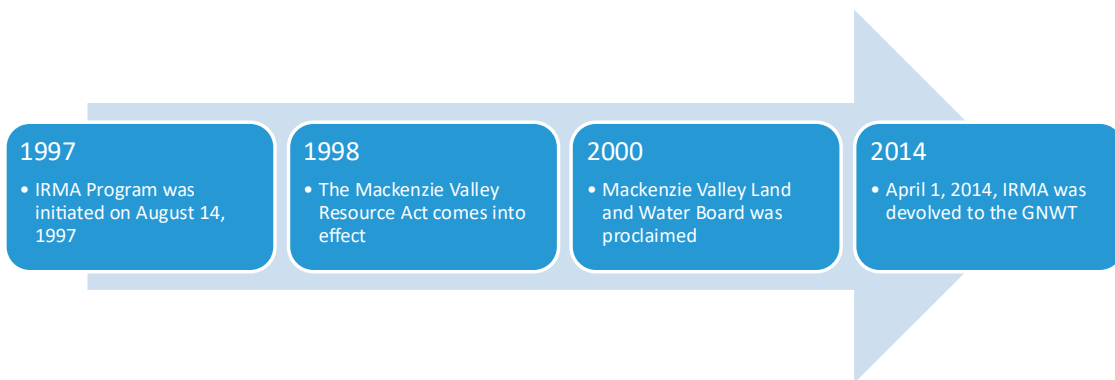
History

The IRMA Program was initiated on August 14, 1997. IRMA was established at a time when the NWT was in transition.

The Mackenzie Valley Resource Act came into effect in 1998, and the Mackenzie Valley Land and Water Board was proclaimed in 2000.

At the same time, previous funding sources were winding down – the Arctic Environmental Strategy had run its course and the Community Resource Management Program expired in 1997.

History



IRMA was originally created by the Department of Indian Affairs and Northern Development (DIAND), which is now Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada.

DIAND provided the initial funding in the 1997/1998 fiscal year, discussions between DIAND and GNWT led to an "agreement to partner and cost share initiative".

The program was jointly operated by the federal government and the GNWT until devolution when the program was transferred to the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, GNWT in 2014.

The annual budget for IRMA is \$1.65 million, with CIRNAC covering 75% and the GNWT 25%.

Intent

The IRMA Program is intended to strengthen the ability of Indigenous governments and Indigenous organizations without land and resource agreements in the NWT to participate in management activities affecting surrounding land use areas.

Program Goals

Goal 1: Environmental assessments of projects or activities with the potential to impact surrounding lands and resources, including involvement with the relevant co-management bodies;

Goal 2: Regulatory processes including land leasing, tourism licensing, forestry licensing, scientific research permitting, land use permitting, water licensing, oil and gas rights issuances and natural resource-related permitting activities;

Goal 3: Enhance the ability to participate in **consultations** and engagement related to resource management policy and legislation; and

Goal 4: Enhance **community capacity development** in specific land and resource management activities.

Guidelines

Eligible Recipients

- Currently 21 organizations participate in the IRMA program.
- The IRMA program is intended for NWT Indigenous governments and Indigenous organizations without land and resource agreements in the NWT. Indigenous governments and Indigenous organizations eligible to access IRMA funding include:
 - NWT Bands, Local First Nations, and Métis Locals; and
 - NWT Regional/Tribal/Territorial organizations (where representation is formally delegated by individual bands or locals within the respective region).

Eligible Expenses

- Salaries or contract costs for full or part-time land and resource management staff;
- Costs of committees or working groups established to provide input to board processes created under the MVRMA;
- Reasonable travel costs associated with eligible activities;
- Community initiated research and capacity enhancement related to program goals;
- Costs of professional expertise and honoraria;
- Community research and costs associated with gathering information relevant to a development or proposed development;
- No more than 15% of base funding, to a maximum of \$10,000 allocated for office expenses related to project implementation. (Funding will be prioritized to project work and not administrative costs.);
- For Resource Pressures Funding and Workshop Funding, an administrative fee up to a maximum of 10%;

Common uses of funding include wages for resource management staff, consultants and legal fees, participation in EA or regulatory processes, workshops and meetings, training, and office supplies.

- Of these costs the two highest uses of funding are for staff wages and consultants.

- Per the above, the IRMA guidelines allow base funding to be used for office expenses up to \$10,000, Indigenous governments and Indigenous organizations often use this maximum.
- Many participants have indicated challenges hiring and retaining qualified staff for their environmental management roles, and often rely on short term contracts and consultants.

Non-Eligible Expenses

- Expenses **not** related to land and resource management activities affecting the recipient's surrounding land use areas;
- Travel to conferences and workshops that are **not** related to resource management activities affecting the recipient's surrounding land use areas;
- Duplication of activities that are funded by other public or private sources; and
- Vehicle repair, or vehicle purchases.

Non-Eligible Expenses will be removed from year-end report. The most common non-eligible expenses initially reported are for vehicle repair and purchase and administrative costs over \$10,000.

Base Funding

- Base Funding is allocated as a set amount for eligible Indigenous governments based on population size of their community.
- Population numbers are derived from the most recent government data available prior to the annual base funding call-out. Should there be a discrepancy regarding population, membership numbers will be considered.
- Political or organizational bodies representing numerous Indigenous governments and Indigenous organizations do not qualify for Base Funding.

Multi-Year Base Funding

- The multi-year funding option allows Indigenous governments and Indigenous organizations to apply for up to three years of Base Funding. Yearly contribution agreements are sent automatically once the previous year end report is approved.
- All funds provided within a given fiscal year still need to be spent within that same fiscal year, even if later fiscal years are part of the same multi-year funding arrangement.

- Under this option there is no requirement to re-apply each year to receive base funding during the timespan of the multi-year agreement.
- Resource Pressures Funding does not qualify for multi-year funding.

Resource Pressure Funding (RPF)

When projects require more intensive study and examination and where it can be clearly demonstrated that the allocated base funding is insufficient for the purpose described, eligible organizations may apply for Resource Pressures Funding (RPF).

How it works:

- Resource Pressures Funding comes from the remaining budget after base funding.
- It is available to applicants that demonstrate a need for additional funding to address current or unforeseen regulatory and environmental assessment pressures.
- ECC distributes RPF from the remaining IRMA budget after Base funding, through two rounds of callouts. The first round is between April-June and the second is around September-October each year.
- Eligible IRMA applicants must apply to be considered for RPF. The applicant must clearly describe how:
 - Base Funding has been insufficient;
 - Land and resource activities impact the applicant's region; and
 - How the additional funding would address current resource pressures in their region.
- The second funding call is intended to allow Indigenous governments and Indigenous organizations access to funding when unforeseen project expenditures are required later in the fiscal year.
- For the second round of funding, the applicant must again clearly describe how the Base Funding and round one Resource Pressure Funding (if received) was insufficient.

Finance & Reporting

- Applicants will receive IRMA funds through a signed contribution agreement.
- Terms and conditions, including accountability and reporting requirements, are outlined within the contribution agreement.

- All funds must be expended by **March 31** of the fiscal year.
- A reporting template is distributed early in the fiscal year and should be completed by the date indicated in the signed contribution agreement.
- Activities and expenditures in the report should reflect the base and resource pressures funding applications.

Important Timelines

Event	Timeframe
Call for Applications – Base Funding	March
Application Deadline – Base Funding	April-June
Call for Applications – RPF	April-June
Proposal Deadline - RPF	April-June
Announcement of RPF	July-Sept
Second Call for Applications - RPF	Oct-Dec
Capacity Building Workshop	Varies depending on availability
Reporting Templates distributed	Jan-Mar
Financial and Written Reporting Deadline	April 15

*This timeline is subject to adjustment following workshop feedback.

Applications

Base Funding Application

The base funding application form contains the following:

- Applicant's information;
- How members will benefit from proposed transfer of funds;
- The number of years of base funding requested (up to three); and
- An outline of the proposed work and objectives, including a description of how the funding will pay for **or** offset:
 - Salaries;
 - Capacity building;
 - Environmental assessment and/or regulatory processes; and
 - Office expenses, materials, and supplies.
- A breakdown of costs should be shown for each year if multi-year funding is requested.

Checklist when filling out application:

- Have you completed all required sections of the application?
- Does your submission follow the proposal criteria and guidelines?
- Have you listed all land and resource activities in your region?
- Did you explain how funds will be used?
- Was there a cost estimate provided?
- Was the quality of your previous year's reporting adequate?
- If there is a discrepancy with your organization's population used in the base funding formula, did you provide a letter stating your concern along with proof of membership numbers?
- Have you considered integrating a collaborative funding approach with Indigenous governments and Indigenous organizations that have overlapping project participation interests? If so, is this opportunity identified in your application?

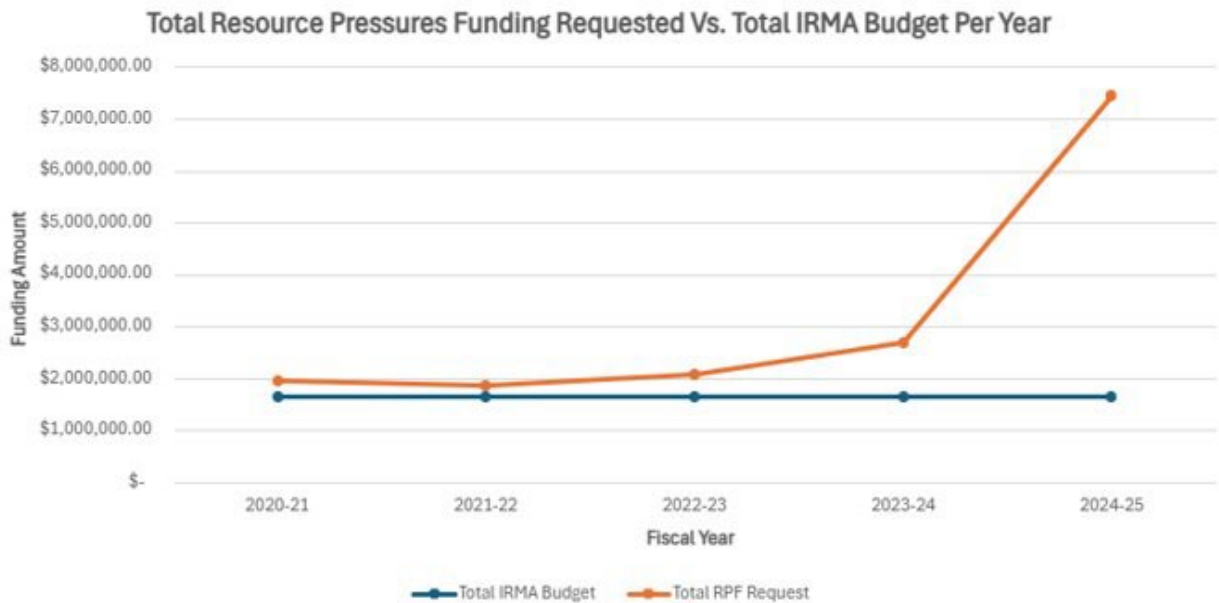
Resource Pressures Funding Application

Checklist when filling out application:

- Have you demonstrated the resource pressures in your region?
- Have you described how your organization will use IRMA Resource Pressures Funding to address the activities you identified?
- Does your Resource Pressures Funding application satisfy all of the criteria in the guidelines?
- Did you demonstrate why Base Funding alone is insufficient?
- Was your funding request justified?
- Have you listed other funding sources for similar work?
- Have you considered whether any resource pressures can be addressed by collaborating and combining funding with other Indigenous governments and Indigenous organizations?

IRMA Budget and Next Steps

IRMA Budget



IRMA Budget:

- \$1,655,000

Base Funding Allocated:

- \$1,100,000

Remaining Funds:

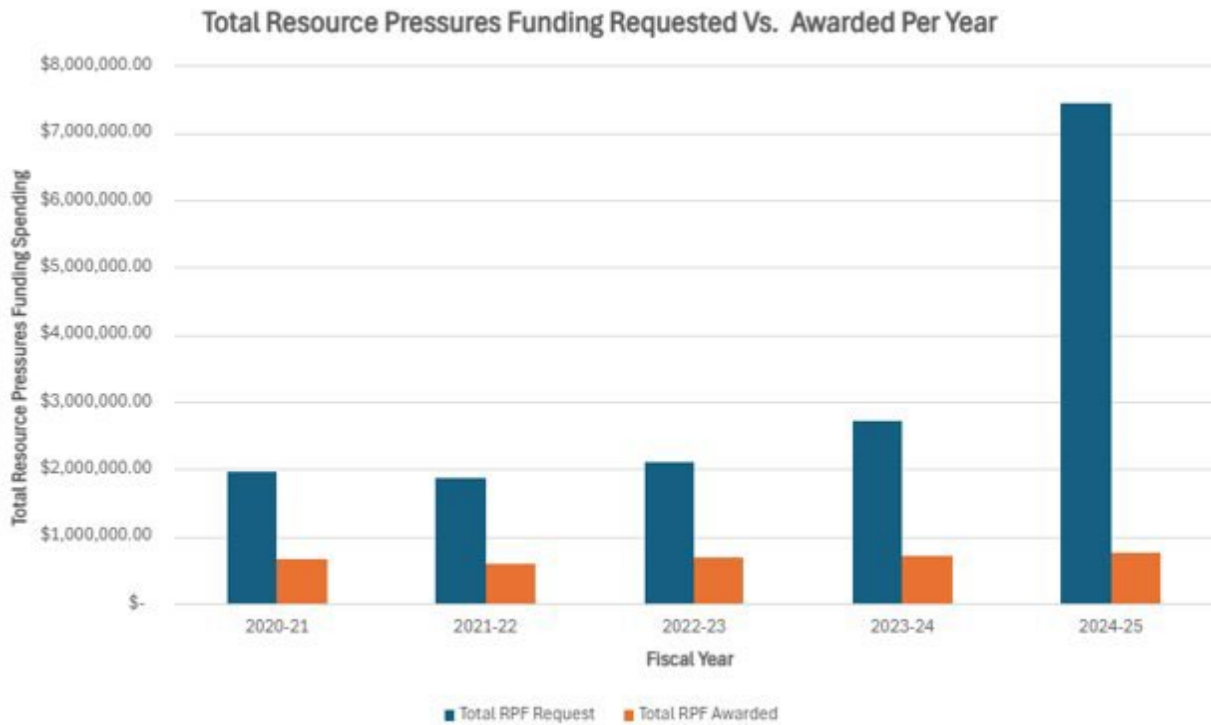
- \$555,000

Resource Pressures Funding Requests

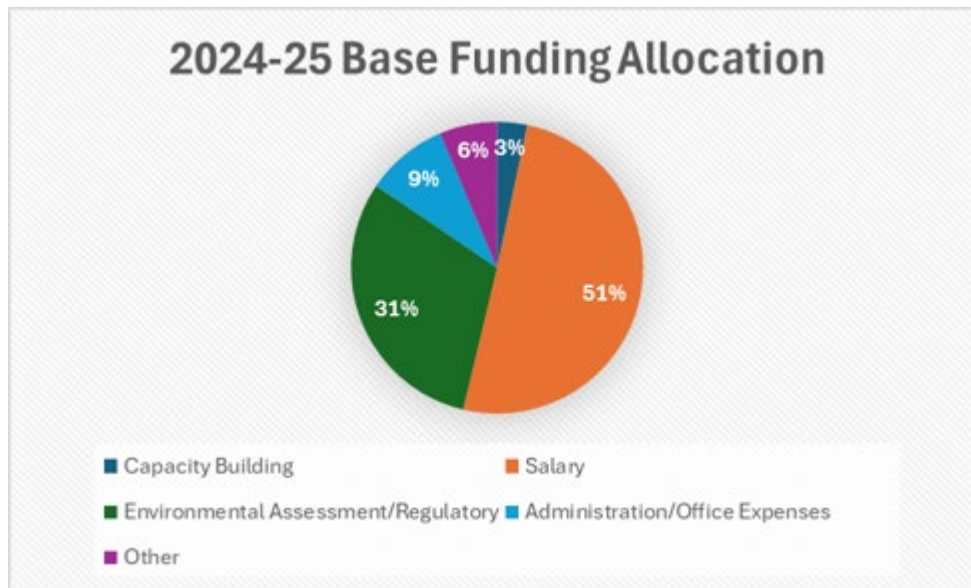
IRMA has faced a few resource pressures when it comes to fulfilling funding requests. Those pressures include:

- The program's budget has not increased since the program was devolved to the GNWT and does not take into account inflation over the past 11 years;

- Strain on Indigenous governments and Indigenous organizations have resulted from increased regulatory activity, mineral exploration and small-scale developments, diamond mines progressing towards closure, and increased government-led infrastructure development;
- The total request for Resource Pressures Funding exceeds the entire annual program budget and this has been the case for over five years; and
- The amount awarded for Resource Pressures fluctuates between \$500-\$700K.



How IRMA Funds Have Been Used



- Common uses of funding include wages for resource management staff, consultants and legal fees, participation in EA or regulatory processes, workshops and meetings, training, and office supplies.
- Of these costs the two highest uses of funding are for staff wages and consultants (Categories in these charts are based on the year-end report template. Within that template consultants fall under Environmental Assessment and Regulatory).

- The IRMA guidelines allow base funding to be used for office expenses up to \$10,000. Indigenous governments and Indigenous organizations often use this maximum. We have heard that rent is a significant component of this cost.
- Many participants have indicated challenges hiring and retaining qualified staff for their environmental management roles, and often rely on short term contracts and consultants.

Upcoming Resource Pressures

We reached out to the land and water boards as well as the NWT & Nunavut Chamber of Mines to find out what projects are anticipated. Below, in alphabetical order, is a listing of an example of larger projects on the horizon. We hope to include information like this with callouts for Resource Pressures Funding.

- Cantung Mine Closure and Reclamation
- Diavik Closure and Remediation
- Ekati Closure and Remediation
- Fort Smith Municipal Type A Licence
- Imperial Oil Environmental Assessments
- Mackenzie Valley Highway
- Mackenzie Valley Winter Road Type A Licence
- Pine Point Mine Developers Assessment Report
- Snap Lake Type A Licence amendment

Program Status and Next Steps

- CIRNAC provided additional funding to Indigenous governments and Indigenous organizations last year and this year through its NRI program.
- IRMA was also identified in recommendations from the 2025 Standing Committee on Economic Development and Environment Report on the Review of Land Use Permitting and Water Licensing Regulatory Framework in the Northwest Territories.

- There was a recommendation from the 2025 Environmental Audit that IRMA funding be increased by an incremental amount in line with an appropriate index, such as inflation, to ensure support for Indigenous governments and Indigenous organizations remains at a consistent level year-over-year.
- GNWT is working on securing additional funding, both from within the GNWT budget and through increased federal funding.
- Moving forward, ECC will hold annual IRMA workshops which will help identify program improvements to support participants, provide an opportunity for education and outreach, and foster more collaboration and dialogue between participants.

Questions & Answers raised during presentation:

Comment: It would be more effective to revise the eligible expenses slides to include two columns that clearly shows the scope of work expected from communities alongside the limited funding available to better illustrate how under resourced communities are.

Comment: Many directly impacted communities particularly within the Akaitcho Territory have experienced extensive project activities and resource extraction for over 23 years, generating substantial revenue. Despite this communities are not adequately resourced to keep up with regulatory process, reporting, and ongoing project activities.

Comment: Traditional Knowledge work should be properly recognised, including Honoria and costs related to gathering and sharing Traditional Knowledge as well as be clearly identified as eligible expenses.

- **Response (GNWT-ECC)** - Traditional Knowledge-related costs can be eligible if clearly connected to consultation and adequately justified in applications.

Comment: Multiple participants stated that Indigenous governments have extremely limited capacity, with some relying on a single staff member to manage regulatory reviews, environmental assessments, consultation responses, reporting, and daily administration. Participants stated that this workload is unrealistic and that meaningful consultation is not possible under short timelines with insufficient staffing.

Comment: Participants described the funding structure as colonial and noted that demand for resource pressure funding far exceeds available funds, which have not increased for many years despite rising development activity.

- **Response (GNWT-ECC)** - Acknowledged that the guidelines are due for an update and will look to include concerns raised.

Mackenzie Valley Land and Water Board Presentation

MVLWB IGO Secondment Program

- Pilot program to help build capacity within Indigenous governments and Indigenous organizations.
- Will bring Indigenous governments and Indigenous organizations staff into the Land and Water Board for three weeks of intensive training.
- Virtual support after in-person is complete.
- Will be further supported by improvements to the Online Review System (ORS) and training materials.
- Currently have funding for 5-6 people.

To Build Capacity Within Indigenous governments and Indigenous organizations

- Main concerns heard from Indigenous governments and organizations include:
 - The sheer number of emails received from LWBS is overwhelming and makes it difficult to prioritize.
 - Need clarity on how to navigate the Registry and Online Review System (ORS).
- Give Indigenous governments and Indigenous organizations staff a better understanding of:
 - Board processes;
 - Where to focus effort (i.e. a permit application versus a permit renewal); and
 - The myriad of plans and reports and their purpose.

Indigenous Governments and Indigenous Organizations Staff Receive Three Weeks of Training in Yellowknife

- Flight, accommodations, and per diems paid by the Board.
- Staff time paid by Indigenous governments and Indigenous organizations.
- Work with Board staff to:
 - Receive training on using the ORS and Registry;

- Training on the various type of plans/reports and their purpose (where to apply limited time for best effect); and
- How to provide effective comments on projects.

Virtual support after in-person support for Indigenous governments and Indigenous organizations is complete

- Work to develop a relationship with board staff so they know who they can call for support.

Improvements to the Online Review System (ORS) and Training Materials

- Staff can help the board identify what changes to the ORS would be beneficial as a reviewer
- Training materials will be developed for future use and to support staff once ORS improvements are complete

We are currently improving the ORS by:

- Increasing the number of filters available to filter out reviews to reduce email notifications; and
- an opt out button, so if you are not interested in a specific project, you can opt out and get no more emails about that project.

Questions & Answers

Comment: Participants described receiving extremely high volumes of emails and notifications, which contributes significantly to stress, anxiety, and burnout.

- **Response (MVLWB)** - Acknowledged the mental health impacts and stated that the program is designed, in part, to help staff prioritize notifications and understand which items require immediate attention versus those that are more administrative.

Comment: Participants raised concerns about applications and notifications being issued on weekends and asked whether weekends are included in consultation timelines.

- **Response (MVLWB)** - Clarified that consultation timelines are calculated based on calendar days, not business days, and stated that some notifications are automated and unavoidable, while acknowledging that this remains a challenge for all parties.

Comment: Applications must often be circulated to multiple councils, which frequently lack the capacity or funding to respond, and lack of response should not be interpreted as approval but as limited capacity to engage.

- **Response (MVLWB)** – Engagement records often reflect outreach attempts. This is an ongoing issue within the system.

Comment: Multiple Participants suggested there should be Regular IRMA program reviews (every 3 or 5 years) as well as multi-day workshops.

Comment: Participants raised concerns about long response delays, unclear application status, and the added strain of reapplying during busy periods due to limited capacity, stating that earlier communication would have been helpful.

- **Response (MVLWB)** – Staffing shortages, turnover, and extended leaves contributed to delays and that applications remain open currently, with follow-up communication expected in the coming weeks.

Question: What is the difference between permit extensions, new permits, and permit renewals?

- **Response (MVLWB)** – Permit extensions may be issued for up to two years at a time and do not allow changes to permit conditions, while new permits and permit renewals reopen all permit conditions for review and potential amendment.

CIRNAC Presentation

Indigenous Participant Funding in the North

CIRNAC Indigenous Participation Funding

There are two main funding programs in CIRNAC that support Indigenous participation in resource management regimes across the three territories:

- Northern Regulatory Initiative (NRI), under the Canadian Critical Minerals Strategy
- Northern Participant Funding Program (NPPF)

The NRI and NPPF are designed to complement each other and support participation in all phases of resource management processes

Recent NWT Funding

Funding from NRI includes:

- Community Readiness
 - Worked with MVLWB and GNWT to support Indigenous capacity building strategies
 - Funded work to advance Indigenous-led studies in the Slave Geological Province
 - Provided funding to assist NWT Indigenous Governments with reviewing Nunavut Land Use Plan
- Funding Approach
 - Collaborated with GNWT to align funding (e.g. complimenting IRMA)
 - Internal discussions continue to find ways to coordinate/simplify/align federal funding
- Regulatory Process
 - Support MVOD and actions
 - Work with GNWT on water regulations amendments
- Information and Data

- Provided funds to MVEIRB to develop a data portal for the Slave Geological Province

Funding from NPPF includes:

- Community Readiness
 - Funded participation in the environmental assessments of the Line 490, Operations projects in Norman Wells, Closure and Reclamation scoping phase
 - Provided non-project specific GBA+ capacity building funding to the Native Women's Association of the Northwest Territories, to enhance the ability of under-represented Indigenous groups and Northerners to participate in future impact assessments
- Regulatory Process
 - Worked with the Mackenzie Valley Land and Water Boards to determine the best use of the program's regulatory funding
 - Provided funding to assist participation in the Diavik Type-A water licence amendment

Supporting Effective and Efficient Regimes

- In Budget 2025, an additional \$25.5M was announced under the Arctic Infrastructure Fund to support efficient and effective regulatory processes in the Yukon, NWT, and Nunavut
- This funding will be used to advance the existing goals of the NRI and NPPF as well as work to support dual-use, northern and Arctic infrastructure & nation-building projects that bolster Canada's economy and security
- All funding programs **support and uphold treaty-based processes** and Indigenous participation, ensuring that Indigenous communities can **participate in, contribute to, and benefit from effective regulatory regimes in the North**

Funding Approach – Next Steps

- Strategy for new funds is being developed
- Funding approach will:
 - Be informed by discussions with partners, the MVOD, and the 2025 NWT Environmental Audit

- Emphasize accessibility
- Seek to complement existing federal and territorial initiatives

For More Information on Program Funding

NRI & AIF

- Funding is typically dispensed through targeted call outs based on discussions with partners on key priorities/ interests (or raised through forums like MVOD).
 - Questions? Reach out to: Initiavedereglementationdunord-Northernregulatoryinitiative@sac-isc.gc.ca
 - Website: [The Northern Regulatory Initiative](#)

NPFP

- The program will coordinate with the Mackenzie Valley Environmental Impact Review Board when a call is launched for a specific phase of an environmental assessment of a major projects.
 - Questions? Reach out to: aidefinanciereparticipants-participantfunding@rcaanc-cirnac.gc.ca
 - Website: [Northern Participant Funding Program](#)

Questions & Answers

Question: How would the new funding be allocated and would it support Indigenous governments in both settled and unsettled land claim areas?

- **Response (CIRNAC)-** Allocations are not yet finalized due to ongoing Treasury Board processes, and that participant feedback will inform decisions.

Comment: Funding should reflect regional development pressure, regulatory workload, and capacity gaps in high-activity areas. Population size does not capture actual workload and, communities remain under-resourced despite long-standing development.

- **Response (CIRNAC)-** Pressure-based factors, alongside baseline funding and regional differences across the territories, are being considered in the funding approach.

Question: Could participant funding be used to support day-to-day regulatory work, considering that current funding is inadequate?

- **Response (CIRNAC)-** This relates to NPFP implementation and would require follow-up with program staff for clarification.

IRMA Program Improvement Discussion

Comment: Travel is essential for engagement, meetings, and resource-related conferences, but the guidelines are unclear and sometimes appear to treat travel as ineligible expenses.

- **Response (GNWT-ECC):** Travel is eligible when linked to resource pressures, acknowledged the inconsistency in the guidelines, and said this will be clarified in future revisions.

Comment: Having applications and year-end reports due during peak periods creates unnecessary strain. It was suggested to separate application deadlines and reporting deadlines by at least one month.

- **Response (GNWT-ECC):** Acknowledged the concern and said they are open to adjusting timelines. Emphasized that the move toward multi-year agreements is partly intended to reduce the annual pressure of repeated applications.

Comment: It would be better to hold two annual workshops, one on preparing applications and another before reporting deadlines.

- **Response (GNWT-ECC):** Agreed, this was a good suggestion, training and guidance are areas we are looking to strengthen.

Comment: Many participants supported multi-year agreements to reduce administrative burden, while stating there is the need for flexibility due to rapidly changing development pressures.

- **Response (GNWT-ECC):** Organizations on multi-year agreements will have annual check-ins to update on new projects or pressures without needing a full re-application.

Question: Engagement activities (community meetings, elders, leadership briefings, travel, facilitation) are a major part of the work but are not clearly or adequately funded. Most of the base funds goes into salaries.

- **Response (GNWT-ECC):** Acknowledged engagement work is often absorbed into salaries, agreed it is not clearly captured, and said this feedback will inform future program revisions.

Comment: Many First Nations cannot attend major resource conferences (PDAC, ROUND UP) due to cost, with existing capacity funding caps being insufficient and often competing with salary needs.

- **Response (GNWT-ECC):** Agreed that this reflects broader underfunding issues and said these concerns are being used to support requests for increased funding.

Comment: One participant reported missing funding opportunities because application notices were sent to outdated or incorrect contacts.

- **Response (GNWT-ECC):** We are committed to requesting three designated contacts per organization and updating distribution lists.

Comment: Calculating funding on population or membership size, as workload is driven by development activity rather than population.

- **Response (GNWT-ECC):** Agreed, the guidelines would be reviewed based on this.

Comment: Participants strongly recommended combining base funding and resource pressure funding into one application.

- **Response (GNWT-ECC):** Program staff acknowledged the burden and said simplification is one of the objectives being considered as part of program changes.

Comment: Participants emphasized that the main problem isn't the application itself, it's that the funding just isn't enough. Communities are already submitting budgets that reflect real needs and then receiving only a portion of what's requested.

- **Response (GNWT-ECC):** We agree this is the core issue. We confirm using application data, unmet needs, and inflation comparisons to push the issue upward, while also looking for changes we can make right away to ease the burden.

Comment: Participants explained that detailed reporting is especially difficult when there are staffing gaps, turnover, onboarding delays, emergencies or unexpected community pressures. With limited funding, additional reporting requirements only increase strain and do not reflect on-the-ground realities.

- **Response (GNWT-ECC):** explained they would be working with Finance to move away from detailed line-by-line year-end financial reporting and toward a more narrative-based report.

Question (GNWT-ECC): asked how often participants would find it useful to have conversations like this moving forward (e.g., annual, bi-annual, or more frequent).

- **Response:** Participants said meeting once every several years is not enough. They expressed strong support for regular, informal check-ins, particularly monthly or periodic meetings focused on sharing information, discussing challenges.

Comment: Participants suggested that regular meetings could be used to share practical knowledge across organizations. Many challenges may be shared and could be solved faster through that.

- **Response (GNWT-ECC):** We could help facilitate informal Teams meetings and suggest a rotating format where one organization could briefly present something they are working on. These sessions would be optional, informal, and focused on collaboration.

Question: What qualifies as “resource management”? Would wildlife, fish, caribou, traditional foods, research, and food security work be classified as eligible? Participants emphasized that these are core resources for their communities and should clearly fall within program scope.

Response (GNWT-ECC): explained that these activities can be eligible if they are clearly tied to:

- a proposed or existing development or regulatory process or gathering information in anticipation of future development or pressures.
- what matters most is clearly describing what the activity is and how it connects to regulatory or resource management needs.

Question: Traditional knowledge and elders’ involvement are essential to decision-making but are often cut first when funding is reduced. Is traditional knowledge work explicitly eligible and how should it be reflected in applications.

- **Response (GNWT-ECC):** Traditional knowledge work can be included within applications if it relates to resource development.

Comment: Contribution agreements can be too rigid. If an item (e.g., travel) is not clearly written into the agreement, Finance may later disallow it, even if it was discussed verbally which may limit the ability to adapt to changing circumstances.

- **Response (GNWT-ECC):** Contribution agreement items are pulled directly from approved application activities. If travel or related costs supports an approved resource pressure, they are eligible even if not listed as a separate item. IRMA program coordinator encouraged organizations to review contribution agreements carefully and request changes before signing.

Conclusion

The 2026 IRMA Workshop underscored both the essential role the program plays in supporting Indigenous participation in land and resource management and the significant pressures facing communities across the Northwest Territories. Participants emphasized that the current level of funding, administrative requirements, and regulatory demands are not aligned with on the ground realities, and that communities continue to operate under severe capacity constraints despite increasing development activity and expectations. Territorial and federal partners acknowledged these challenges and expressed commitments to improving program clarity, modernizing guidelines, expanding communication and training opportunities, and pursuing additional funding.

Across all sessions, a strong theme emerged: Indigenous governments and Indigenous organizations remain deeply committed to meaningful participation in resource management, but require sustained, predictable, and flexible support to do so effectively. The workshop provided an important forum for honest dialogue, shared learning, and collaborative problem solving, and participants expressed interest in continuing these conversations more frequently. Moving forward, the insights gathered during this workshop will play a crucial role in shaping program updates, informing funding discussions, and strengthening partnerships to better support communities and the land and water systems they steward.