



Funding First Nations child and family services (FNCFS): A performance budget approach to well-being

How does this work connect to the Canadian Human Rights Tribunal (CHRT) rulings on FNCFS?

- The Canadian Human Rights Tribunal (CHRT) found the First Nations child and family services (FNCFS) system to be discriminatory and inadequately funded.
- Canada was ordered to develop an alternative system to fund FNCFS that focuses on prevention and addresses the funding gaps identified by the CHRT.
- Canada has supplemented the current system with Tribunal-mandated funding for retroactive payments, as well as for wellness/prevention focused programming.
- While there have been benefits from the supplementary funding, the funding is short-term and does not solve the underlying challenge of the system.
- The current fee-for-service funding system is focused on protection and maintenance. This means that agencies and service providers do not have the flexibility required to allocate resources to focus on well-being and prevention based on community need.
- What is needed is a First Nations-led data architecture, with funding commensurate to need in communities.
- This work seeks to reset the structure, funding, and governance of the current FNCFS system to mitigate and address the causes of contact with the protection system.
- The proposed approach has two connected parts:
 - 1) **The *Measuring to Thrive* framework for well-being:** developed by agency leadership, experts, and practitioners, the framework is designed for data collection by First Nations for First Nations. The interrelated elements of child, family and community well-being are captured through a series of culturally informed indicators. The information collected can be used as evidence to support decision-making and planning efforts by First Nations. As data is collected and turned into evidence, it can help to improve the alignment of funding to the goals of child, family, and community well-being.
 - 2) **A needs-based funding structure:** designed to address known gaps in FNCFS funding, including prevention, information technology, capital, geography, poverty, and data collection for results. Funding is allocated through these components and transferred as a block to the entity providing FNCFS. This equips the service provider with the necessary resources and flexibility to apply them to meet the needs of the First Nations served.
- Taken together, the *Measuring to Thrive* framework and the new funding structure offer a new vision built from the bottom-up with FNCFS agencies to journey toward the goal of holistic wellness for children, their families, and communities.