What We Heard:
Community Gaming Grants
Indigenous Engagement Project

BRITISH COLUMBIA

Contents

TERRITORIAL ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

Community Gaming Grants acknowledges it carries out its work on the traditional territories of Indigenous nations throughout British Columbia. We recognize and respect the traditional custodians of these lands where we work and live.

We are grateful to the Lekwungen peoples and the Esquimalt and Songhees First Nations, on whose traditional territories our main office is located.

1. Executive Summary

The Community Gaming Grants program (CGG), as part of the Ministry of Municipal Affairs, provides $140 million annually to not-for-profit organizations throughout B.C., to support their delivery of ongoing programs and services that meet the needs of their communities. CGG is aligned with the ministry's mandate commitment of lasting and meaningful reconciliation with Indigenous peoples.

In an effort to better understand how Indigenous organizations may experience the CGG program, from September 2021 through May 2022, CGG conducted an Indigenous Engagement Project (the Project) that examined the CGG program through an Indigenous lens. The Project's goals were to examine how the CGG program is accessed and understood by Indigenous organizations and collect information and feedback about how CGG can better serve and engage Indigenous organizations within the CGG program.

The Project included an extensive review of the application history of Indigenous organizations within CGG programs over multiple grant years. Project work included an analysis of CGG's alignment to Indigenous rights guiding documents, including the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP) the *Declaration of The Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* (the *Declaration Act*), the Draft Principles that Guide the Province of British Columbia's Relationship with Indigenous Peoples (the Principles) and, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada: Calls to Action (TRC: Calls to Action). The Project also included a jurisdictional scan of other granting programs that serve similar purposes. The Project proactively engaged eight Indigenous organizations that have had previous experience submitting applications to CGG. The meetings provided valuable perspectives from each organization to build toward future program developments. The Project resulted in an internal Indigenous Engagement Report, created by CGG's Indigenous Engagement Coordinator, which included data analysis of Indigenous engagement with the program, information gathered through the engagement sessions and key recommendations for the program. The information was compiled into four main themes: Policy Development, Outreach Development, Relationship Building and Engagement Measurement. The following document will summarize these findings and recommendations, provide CGG's response to what we heard through the Project and actions that will be taken to address these recommendations. Through these four themes, CGG is committed to improving in the following ways:

Policy Development – CGG is committed to addressing barriers experienced by Indigenous organizations when applying for a Community Gaming Grant. Policies will be developed to increase access and engagement by Indigenous organizations.

Outreach Development – CGG is committed to creating more opportunities for outreach with Indigenous organizations and improving how information is provided. CGG commits to supplying better resources that assist organizations to be successful with their grant applications.

Relationship Building– CGG is committed to building and maintaining Indigenous relationships and understanding how to improve the CGG program from an Indigenous perspective. CGG is also committed to training opportunities for CGG staff to increase cultural competencies and awareness to support their work with Indigenous organizations.

Engagement Measurement – CGG is committed to improving how data is collected and used to inform future policy initiatives and increase engagement with Indigenous organizations and the CGG program.

2. Background and Methodology

2.1 Background

Indigenous organizations within B.C. support a broad spectrum of services throughout the province and represent over 270,000 First Nation, Inuit and Métis individuals who benefit from specific programming to support their communities. The broader population of B.C. further benefits from the programming these organizations offer through improved public understanding of Indigenous histories, rights, cultures, languages and the negative impacts of Indigenous-specific racism. CGG understands the importance of reducing barriers to funding experienced by Indigenous not-for-profit organizations and is committed to ensuring these organizations feel included in the grant program.

In 2021, CGG hired an Indigenous Engagement Coordinator through the province's Indigenous Youth Internship program to support the Project. The Project focused on gaining a better understanding of how the CGG program is accessed and understood by Indigenous organizations and gathered information about how Indigenous organizations can be better served by the CGG program.

The Project focused on an internal review of the CGG program, including a data analysis of applications submitted by Indigenous organizations, a jurisdictional scan of other grant programs and a review of key documents concerning Indigenous rights in B.C. This review resulted in an internal report that recorded the key data and findings of each theme.

2.1.1 Data Analysis and Review
To understand how Indigenous organizations currently engage with CGG, the Project reviewed applications submitted by self-identified Indigenous organizations. As of 2019, CGG has included the ability to self-identify as an Indigenous Organization on the Gaming Online System (GOS) application. This change improves tracking and analysis of this sector. Data analysis focused on the engagement of Indigenous organizations over three grant years: 2019/20, 2020/21 and 2021/22. Key information gathered from these reviews informed the outreach sessions and the Project's recommendations.

This analysis aimed to identify gaps within the program and to develop solutions that will increase engagement with Indigenous organizations. The data indicates that Indigenous organizations are still underrepresented within CGG. To achieve its goals in relation to the Declaration Act, CGG will continue to review data related to Indigenous organizations, track data year after year and report on the findings.

2.1.2 Jurisdictional Scan
The Project included a jurisdictional scan which examined 15 other grant programs and paid close attention to any programs with inclusive initiatives for underrepresented groups. The research highlighted program similarities and examined topics that were relevant to CGG's objective to increase Indigenous engagement with the program. This research uncovered various approaches to creating inclusive programs, some of which could inform future CGG developments.

2.1.3 Review of Indigenous rights documents in B.C.

The Project examined the program in relation to four key guiding documents concerning Indigenous rights: The United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples (UNDRIP); the *Declaration of The Rights of Indigenous Peoples Act* (the *Declaration Act*), Draft Principles of Province of British Columbia's Relationship with Indigenous Peoples (the Principles); and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's 94 Calls to Action (TRC). These documents outline the inherent rights of Indigenous peoples and the recommendations developed to achieve greater equality for Indigenous peoples in Canada.

Both UNDRIP and the Principles are frameworks that reflect the need for continued collaboration with Indigenous peoples to move toward reconciliation. The TRC includes 94 calls to action directed at different governmental bodies and economic sectors. When examining these Indigenous rights documents in relation to CGG, there are many actions that closely align with the CGG program's goals that could be adapted for future policy initiatives.

2.2 Engagement Methodology

The Project included engagement sessions with eight self-identified Indigenous organizations that had previous interactions with the CGG program. Organizations were selected for the engagement sessions if they encountered recurring application challenges and could potentially benefit from targeted outreach sessions. During these meetings, the outreach team was able to begin important steps for relationship building. Each session focused primarily on providing information and resources to help with future applications, while reserving time to hear about the organization's own experiences with and feedback for the CGG program. These sessions were tailored to the specific organization and included information from their individual applications, submission history and unique programming. These sessions were developed with the findings from the internal review, which highlighted topics to discuss with organizations to gather feedback on CGG's plans for Policy Development, Outreach Development, Relationship Building and Engagement Measurements.

3. What We Heard

3.1 Policy Development

What We Heard

Throughout the engagement sessions, the organizations made comments and introduced suggestions about policy developments that CGG could implement to support Indigenous organizations. These policy developments look to address barriers Indigenous organizations are experiencing within the program and explore potential changes to create greater accessibility and increase engagement. Through future policy development, CGG is committed to:

- *Reviewing policies and guidelines with special consideration to potential barriers Indigenous organizations experience when accessing the CGG program.*

- *Ensuring application feedback provided by CGG to Indigenous organizations is clearly communicated and supports successful future applications.*

Community Gaming Grants Response

We heard that Indigenous organizations are experiencing barriers when applying for funding from the CGG program. CGG is committed to exploring recommendations related to policy development that will ensure Indigenous organizations feel represented within both the guidelines and the application process itself.

CGG commits to undertaking several reviews of specific policies that could be updated to improve equitable access to funding for Indigenous organizations. Ideas being explored range from small changes that could potentially be introduced quickly, to larger structural changes that require extensive research, engagement and longer timelines.

During engagement sessions with organizations, CGG heard that the feedback provided to unsuccessful grant applicants tended to cause greater misunderstanding instead of clarification. CGG acknowledges that adjusting the information included in grant notification letters would improve relationships with organizations and clarify what supports are available for unsuccessful applicants. CGG reviewed the language in grant notifications to make them more accessible and easier to read. The revised notification letters will be used for the 2023/24 notification period of the CGG program.

3.2 Outreach Development

What We Heard

Developing ongoing outreach with Indigenous organizations will not only provide more resources and support but is also key to building strong relationships. During the engagement sessions, ongoing and proactive outreach was identified as an impactful method to bridge gaps and increase Indigenous engagement and success. Continuing to proactively assist Indigenous organizations with advice and application resources would improve participation with the program and ensure future program developments are inclusive of Indigenous perspectives and experiences.

CGG is committed to developing outreach by:

- *Exploring staffing opportunities within CGG that would improve the program's engagement with Indigenous organizations.*

- *Creating an outreach process for internal staff to ensure successful future applications and to identify referrals to provide to Indigenous organizations.*

- *Improving the tools the program provides to applicants to simplify the application process and make it more user-friendly.*

Community Gaming Grants Response

There was a positive response to the engagement sessions held throughout the Project. CGG heard that developing Indigenous-centred outreach would reduce engagement gaps experienced by Indigenous organizations.

CGG will continue to strive toward presenting more transparent information and continued communication to build stronger relationships with Indigenous organizations. CGG is considering both short term solutions, to enable increased support for Indigenous organizations for the 2023/24 grant intake, as well as long term solutions.

CGG has already begun exploring staffing opportunities to consider how to build internal capacity to provide Indigenous organizations with more proactive support and outreach. CGG understands that engaging in more proactive outreach would reinforce our commitment to supporting Indigenous organizations within the CGG program.

3.3 Relationship Building

What We Heard

Commitment to relationships and connections between people and organizations is a core element of many Indigenous perspectives. Given CGG's goal to provide more accessible and informed support for Indigenous organizations, it is critical that CGG maintains relationships with Indigenous organizations that can reach out to and speak on behalf of organizations within their sector. By doing so, CGG could demonstrate its commitment to work with Indigenous organizations to develop a program that is inclusive of Indigenous perspectives and voices.

CGG is committed to building relationships by:

- *Ensuring Indigenous voices and perspectives are included during CGG's ongoing stakeholder engagement to collect feedback and recommendations to inform policy and program criteria updates.*

- *In alignment with TRC: Call to Action #57, providing training opportunities for CGG staff members to learn about reconciliation, Indigenous histories, diversity, inclusion, equity and accessibility. Increasing staff members' cultural competencies and awareness would provide them with additional support to work effectively with diverse Indigenous organizations.*

Community Gaming Grants Response

Throughout the engagement sessions, many organizations mentioned the importance of relationship building in Indigenous communities. Organizations often felt the relationship between the organization and CGG was impacted by the lack of focus on relationship-building within the CGG branch. CGG is committed to improving this aspect of our program and understands that building and maintaining relationships with Indigenous organizations will create opportunities for the program to target specific sectors that are currently underrepresented. This will ensure diverse perspectives are included in all aspects of our programming. CCG will continue the relationship-building started in the engagement process and commits to ongoing engagement with Indigenous organizations to ensure that future developments are informed by and reflect Indigenous experiences.

CGG welcomes the feedback that we should ensure all CGG staff members have access to additional training opportunities that are focused on Indigenous perspectives and histories as well as broader opportunities around diversity, inclusion, equity and accessibility. CGG understands that implicit bias and lack of Indigenous perspectives in policy and programing can impact Indigenous organizations and, therefore, their ability to deliver programming to their communities. In alignment with the ministry's commitment to offer opportunities for staff to engage in learning opportunities, CGG will implement targeted training for individuals working with Indigenous organizations.

The CGG program supports inclusive community programming that provides widespread benefits to a diverse range of community members. The program has included eligibility criteria to ensure programs are open and inclusive to people of all backgrounds. Many organizations that submit applications represent diverse or vulnerable groups, under-represented populations, LGBTQ2IA+, and organizations that address other equity issues. CGG commits to offering more in-depth, specific training to staff to

increase awareness of the unique circumstances these diverse populations experience. This commitment is made to reduce the likelihood of unconscious bias impacting staff when they are reviewing applications from organizations that represent or serve these diverse groups.

3.4 Engagement Measurements

What We Heard

The data analysis conducted as part of the Project highlights the importance of improving engagement measurements in the CGG program to support future policy initiatives. Implementing a process to annually review data relating to Indigenous organizations and report on the findings will help to improve Indigenous engagement with the program. Enhancing the process for data collection, analysis and presentation will help to inform future policy and guidelines recommendations. From what CGG heard and in alignment with TRC: Call to Action #55, CGG is committed to:

- *Developing and maintaining systems to track yearly Indigenous engagement in all CGG sectors and grant streams to better understand how engagement initiatives and policy changes are impacting Indigenous organizations.*

- *Developing and publishing reports related to Indigenous engagement with the program, to increase transparency and accountability within the program.*

CGG Response

CGG is committed to improving Indigenous engagement and breaking down barriers experienced by Indigenous people and other underrepresented groups in accessing the program. Since 2019, CGG applications have included the ability for organizations to self-identify as Indigenous organizations, which allows for improved tracking and analysis of these organizations. CGG agrees that improving data collection, analysis and tracking of Indigenous engagement will assist with better understanding gaps in representation and the impacts of policy changes to Indigenous organizations. Continuing to review data related to Indigenous organizations, track data year after year, and report on the findings will be essential to achieving CGG's goals in relation to the TRC: Calls to Action and the Declaration Act. Having reliable data will help CGG with future policy and guidelines recommendations.

CGG is committed to increasing transparency and accountability and, therefore, for the 2021/22 Annual Report, CGG will include more data related to Indigenous engagement. CGG is also committed to working with MUNI to determine priorities in responding to the *Anti-Racism Data Act* and will act as necessary to ensure alignment with legislation.

4 Looking Forward

This report summarizes what was heard during the Project as well as the recommendations for CGG to implement moving forward. During these important engagement sessions, the Project heard that Indigenous organizations encounter systemic barriers within the not-for-profit sector, wider society and the CGG program itself.

Over the course of the Project, CGG was able to introduce the program to over 35 new Indigenous organizations and help multiple returning organizations. The Project was an example of how Indigenous-focused outreach could be implemented at the CGG program and the potential results that are possible through increased engagement. The role of the Indigenous Engagement Coordinator, filled by an Indigenous Youth Intern, was specially created to conduct the Project. The success of this role and the Project reflects the value of relationship building with Indigenous organizations and CGG.

During the Project, relationships with Indigenous organizations were developed and many of these organizations generously and honestly shared their feedback and recommendations to help CGG improve the program. CGG will use the findings from the Project to inform program changes based on the Indigenous perspectives and experiences shared with CGG. Looking forward, CGG will continue its engagement with Indigenous organizations to develop relationships that can lead to meaningful change.