

Northwest Territories

Municipal and
Community Affairs

Action Plan for Improving Support to Community Governments in the NWT

August 2017



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1. Introduction

1.1. Methodology and Timelines for the Audit

In late August 2015, the Office of the Auditor General of Canada (OAG) announced that they would undertake a Performance Audit of the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs (MACA). The OAG set the timelines, and worked with MACA from October 2015 through August 2016 to complete the audit. MACA staff provided support and information (including participating in a number of individual staff interviews and providing all documentation required related to the scope of the audit) as required during the OAG's planning, examination and reporting phases.

As part of the examination phase, the OAG carried out interviews with various departmental stakeholders and travelled into some communities to interview local community governments (Yellowknife and two representative regional communities).

After completing their work, the OAG released the *Report of the Auditor General of Canada to the Northwest Territories Legislative Assembly – 2016: Support to Communities for Municipal Services in the Northwest Territories – Department of Municipal and Community Affairs* on October 26, 2016.

Consistent with other audits completed by the OAG, the Department was provided the opportunity to review the recommendations and provide a response which is contained in the audit. The Department has accepted all recommendations and is now advancing this action plan in response.

1.2. Scope of the Audit

Based on initial interviews with MACA about its programs and services, the OAG narrowed the focus to whether MACA provided adequate support to community governments (during the period of April 1, 2013 to June 30, 2016) as they delivered the essential services that the Department funds – drinking water, waste management, fire protection, and emergency preparedness. The OAG chose these four service areas due to their potential to directly and significantly affect human health and safety. While other services (for example those related to recreation and road maintenance) are also important to quality of life, their potential for immediate impact on residents is lower.

In order to assess and analyze whether adequate support was being provided to community governments for each of these selected essential service areas, the OAG reviewed three ways that MACA supports NWT community governments, specifically:

- The tools that MACA has developed and uses to monitor community governments in the provision of the four essential services under review, and subsequently, the actions that MACA has taken to support communities when issues are identified through this monitoring;
- The Department's roles and responsibilities specific to supporting the NWT's 9 designated authorities as they provide services in the four essential services areas and MACA's efforts to work with Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) to address service delivery issues in these communities; and

- MACA's efforts to develop community government capacity through the programming available at the Department's School of Community Government.

1.3. Themes for Action

The OAG made 13 recommendations to improve the level and type of support provided to NWT community governments. Each recommendation was accepted and reflected in the Department's Action Plan for Improving Support to Community Governments in the Northwest Territories. The Department has categorized the 13 recommendations and associated Department responses into four themes:

Theme 1 – Supporting Delivery of Essential Services

Recommendations detailed in OAG's Report paragraphs: **41, 53, 63, 69**

Theme 2 – Tools to Support Community Governments

Recommendations detailed in OAG's Report paragraphs: **80, 81, 86, 95, 99**

Theme 3 – Supporting Designated Authorities

Recommendations detailed in OAG's Report paragraphs: **109, 112**

Theme 4 – Supporting Community Government Capacity

Recommendations detailed in OAG's Report paragraphs: **128, 129**

These recommendations have and will continue to guide the Department's work to meet our responsibilities to the NWT's 33 community governments and their residents.

2. Operating Environment

2.1. Community Governments

What Community Governments Do

Community governments provide programs and services that serve a municipal purpose including, but not limited to: the provision of water; the collection, treatment and disposal of sewage and garbage; fire protection; emergency planning and management; road maintenance; recreation, bylaw enforcement; land use planning and administration. This may differ from what a community government defines as a municipal purpose, which varies depending on individual community interests.

Types of Community Governments

There are six types of community governments in the NWT, each governed by different territorial or federal legislation.

Type of Community	Governing Legislation
Charter Community Fort Good Hope, Tsiigehtchic	<i>Charter Communities Act (GNWT)</i>
Hamlet Aklavik, Enterprise, Fort Liard, Fort McPherson, Fort Providence, Fort Resolution, Paulatuk, Sachs Harbour, Tuktoyaktuk, Tulita, and Ulukhaktok	<i>Hamlets Act (GNWT)</i>
City, Town or Village Fort Simpson, Fort Smith, Hay River, Inuvik, Norman Wells, and Yellowknife	<i>Cities, Towns and Villages Act (GNWT)</i>
Tł̨chq̨ Community Government Behchok̨, Whatì, Wekweètì, Gamètì	<i>Tł̨chq̨ Community Government Act (GNWT)</i>
Déł̨ne Got'ı̨ne Government	<i>Déł̨ne Final Self Government Agreement Act (GNWT)</i>
First Nations Designated Authority Colville Lake, Dettah, Jean Marie River, Kakisa, Kát'odeeche First Nation, Łutsel K'e, Nahanni Butte, Smbaa K'e, Wrigley	<i>Indian Act (Government of Canada)</i>

The majority of community governments (24) are established as municipal corporations under territorial legislation (hamlets, charter communities, cities, towns and villages, Tł̨chq̨ community

governments and the D l n  Got' n  Government). These municipal corporations must operate in accordance with the specific legislation under which they are created (*Charter Communities Act; Hamlets Act; Cities, Towns and Villages Act; T chq Community Government Act; D l n  Final Self Government Agreement Act*). These *Acts* set out the powers and duties of the community government, the duties of council and municipal employees, procedural requirements, and circumstances under which MACA can intervene in community government operations.

First Nations Designated Authorities

There are nine communities in the NWT who are not governed by municipal corporations created under territorial legislation. Rather, they are governed by a Band (often referred to as a First Nation) led by a band council established under the jurisdiction of the *Indian Act*. These Councils are recognized by the Minister of MACA as the prime public authority with whom MACA will contract for the provision of municipal services within the community. Because the Councils in these nine communities are not subject to territorial legislation, MACA does not have the same authority or ability to intervene in their operations as in other types of community governments.

Of note, there are 18 communities in the NWT where both a municipal corporation and a First Nation exist. In communities where this is the case, MACA has an established relationship with and provides support for the delivery of municipal programs and services to the municipal corporation.

Self-Governments (D l n  and potentially others)

Self-government is a reality in the NWT and MACA's role varies with each agreement. For example, with the T chq Final Agreement, there are four community governments created under territorial legislation and that legislation establishes the relationship with the Department. The D l n  Got' n  Government, created through the D l n  Final Self-government Agreement, involves a support relationship between the Department and the community, without any legislative framework. As additional agreements are finalized with Canada, MACA will need to be responsive based on the nature of the agreement negotiated.

2.2. Change in the Community Government Context

Community governments in the NWT face many challenges related to funding, capacity, increasingly complex technical and legislative requirements, and the needs of their increasingly diverse populations. Community governments strive to deliver quality programs and services while balancing diverse demands and interests in the following areas:

- Community governments face capacity challenges with both elected officials and administrative staff. Specifically, elected community government leaders face challenges related to developing their capacity to lead effectively, manage limited resources, hire competent administrators and make significant decisions on issues with long term implications. It is also challenging for community governments to hire, train and retain skilled staff in the various positions critical to the operation of a community government.
- Community governments continue to face pressures related to the public safety priorities of fire and emergency protection in their communities.

- Communities are seeking sustainable community based emergency response and fire protection services that reflect local needs and capacity.
- There are expectations that community governments will actively strengthen the community fabric by addressing youth issues and the public expectations for recreation, volunteer and community sport programs that address health concerns related to physical activity.
- There are increasingly sophisticated technical requirements such as project and asset management that require specialized skill sets to effectively design, plan and maintain community public infrastructure required to deliver programs and services.
- Community governments experience significant financial pressures as they strive to balance the diverse interests of residents with limited core funding.
- Community governments experience increasingly complex and demanding requirements for accounting and financial management.
- Communities in the NWT are experiencing the effects of climate change. Climate change will impact community government operations in the areas of finance, community planning, human resources, emergency response and infrastructure design, maintenance, and construction.

2.3. How do MACA's Programs Align with Community Government Responsibility?

Community governments have a distinct type of authority to provide programs and services that serve a municipal purpose. Community governments provide programs and in various areas of community life, these include, but are not limited to: the provision of water; the collection, treatment and disposal of sewage and garbage; fire protection; emergency planning and management; road maintenance; recreation, by-law enforcement; land use planning and administration.

MACA's support for the provision of these services by community governments is wide ranging, and delivered through the various divisions of the Department. Examples of the type of services and support the Department provides to community governments include:

- The development of tools and templates for community government use;
- The delivery of generic and/or customized workshops to community government staff and officials;
- The completion of operational reviews where required or requested;
- MACA intervention where required through ordered supervision and/or administration;
- The development of legislation and policy that responds to the changing interests and evolution of NWT community governments; and
- The evaluation and monitoring of legislative requirements.

3. MACA's Approach to Community Support

3.1. Vision, Principles and Values

MACA has a very broad mandate which includes activity in areas unrelated to the audit performed by the OAG. The work carried out by the Department that aims to provide services and support to NWT community governments as they provide essential services to community residents is informed and supported by the Department's vision, principles and values:

Vision

Responsible, responsive community governments, citizens and youth in safe and vibrant communities.

Principles

Among MACA's established operating principles, there are several which relate directly to how the Department understands their relationship with community governments, including:

- Community governments function as separate, distinct governments responsible for the provision of municipal programs and services.
- Community governments exercise authority and can assume responsibility for programs and services appropriate for community level delivery.
- Community governments have sufficient authorities and resources to undertake their responsibilities within territorial legislation and policy.
- Community governments are able to provide essential municipal services on an equitable basis, while ensuring safe, healthy, and attractive environments to residents.

Values

MACA has identified several values critical to the operations of the Department. Among these values are five which highlight the Department's respect for community government authorities and autonomy. In the operations of the Department, staff aim to:

- serve community governments and clients in a professional and progressive manner; while being responsible for our own actions and results;
- encourage integrated approaches to community development;
- serve the public with a client focused approach;
- strive to be open, honest and respectful of cultures, traditions and community priorities; and
- promote a timely and effective team approach within the Department and a partnership approach when assisting community governments toward sustainable solutions.

3.2. Linkage to GNWT Goals and Mandate

At the beginning of the term of the 18th Legislative Assembly, Members of the Legislative Assembly (MLA) came together to draft a Mandate of the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT). The mandate describes the strategic direction that the GNWT will undertake to advance the priorities of the 18th Assembly.

The mandate identifies twenty-five priorities important to residents as represented to their MLAs. Specifically, the 18th Legislative Assembly is interested in changing the way it does business by:

- Collaborating and fostering government-to-government relationships with Aboriginal governments; and
- Building stronger relationships with community governments and stakeholders.

The specific commitments listed in the mandate which relate to MACA's work with community governments in support of this priority and which also relate to the recommendations made in the OAG Report are:

- Working in partnership with Aboriginal governments to explore the design and launch of a training program for First Nations governments with municipal-like responsibilities in order to help improve the governance and management capacity of those governments (5.1.3).
- Taking further action to monitor drinking water quality as well as support community-based water monitoring programs (5.4.2).
- Work with stakeholders to develop and propose amendments to modernize the *Civil Emergency Measures Act* and to revitalize the Territorial Emergency Response Plan (5.4.7).
- Develop and propose amendments to the *Fire Prevention Act* and work with stakeholders to identify priorities for Community Fire Protection Plans (5.4.8).
- Develop a strategy to close the gap in funding levels to meet municipal core needs (5.4.5).

The 18th Legislative Assembly has also identified fostering lifelong learning, skills development, training and employability by expanding opportunities for post-secondary education, trades-oriented learning, and northern educational institutions as a priority.

Related to this priority as well as to some of the recommendations in the OAG Report, MACA has made a commitment to offer online delivery of the community government training curriculum to build capacity for careers that focus on community governance (2.3.2).

3.3. History and Context

The Evolution of Community Governments

Community governments in the Northwest Territories (NWT) and the relationship between local governments and the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) have evolved significantly over the last 20 years.

At the time of the division of the NWT in 1999, and the creation of Nunavut, the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs (MACA) began to make changes to existing policy that encouraged autonomy and responsibility at the community government level.

In 2004, significant changes were made to the various pieces of municipal legislation that reflected a movement towards a far less prescriptive approach to the relationship between MACA and community governments. In addition, these legislative changes allowed for the transfer of ownership of community assets and infrastructure to community governments.

In 2007, MACA rolled out a series of new funding policies that provided community governments with formula based funding arrangements that enabled community governments to provide community public infrastructure, fund operations and maintenance, and deliver water and waste services according legislation, policy and their own established priorities.

As a result of these various policy and legislative changes, MACA's role has transitioned from one of hands-on decision-making to one of supporting community governments to make their own decisions.

Legislation and Policy

MACA's operations are guided by the Municipal and Community Affairs' Establishment Policy. This Policy provides a mandate for the Department and outlines the principles which will be followed when delivering the mandate.

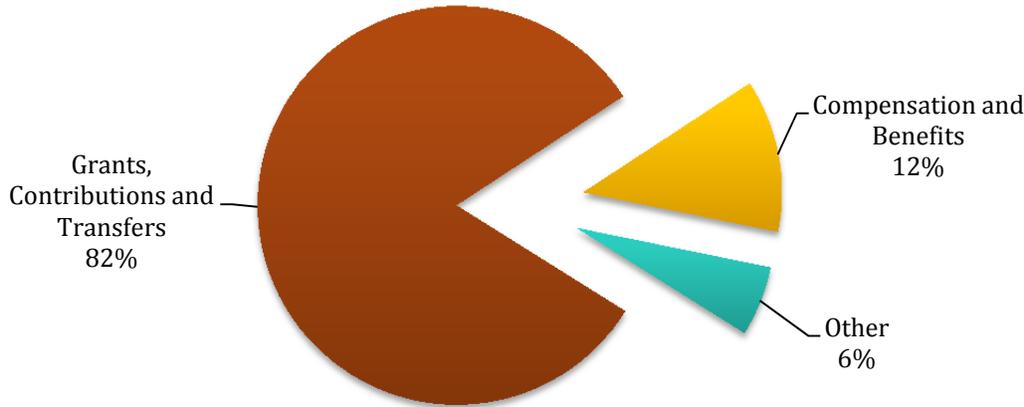
The Department is also responsible for the administration of 19 statutes and their associated regulations, including the various pieces of municipal legislation, and, among others, statutes governing local elections, consumer affairs and protection, the operation of lotteries, property assessment, public safety and emergency management.

MACA has a comprehensive policy base established to support the delivery of programs and services by the Department as prescribed by the establishment policy and the legislation the Department administers. The policies MACA administers are primarily funding policies that provide guidelines and criteria the Department uses to distribute various grants and contributions. The formula funding that the Department provides to community governments to support community public infrastructure, operations and maintenance, and water and sewer services is also described in policies administered by the Department.

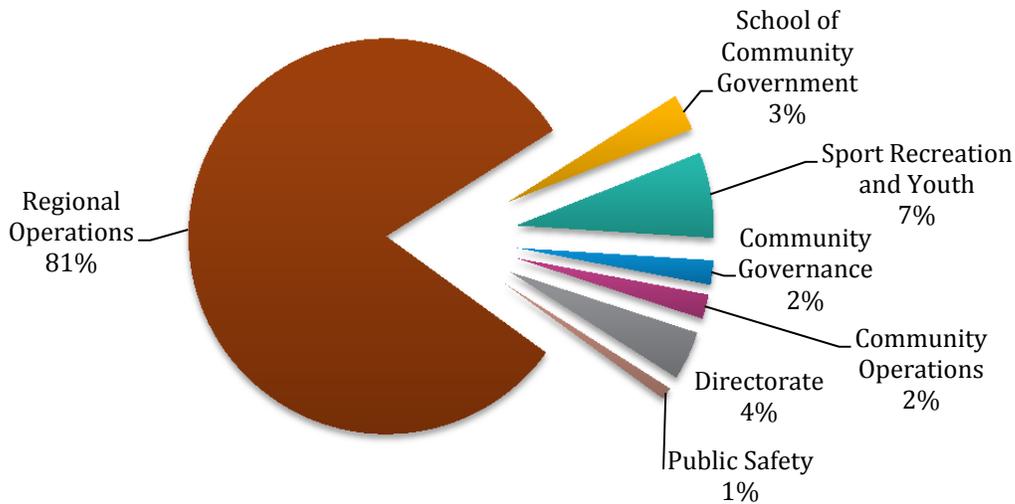
Budget

MACA's approved budget for fiscal year 2016-2017 is \$104.2 million. \$85.375 million or 81.9 percent is budgeted for financial assistance to our key stakeholders – community governments – through such programs as municipal operating grants, support for municipal infrastructure development and other grant and contribution programs. The remaining \$18.825 million or 18 percent is directed to expenditures in salaries and operating costs to deliver programs and services.

2016-2017 Operations Expenditures by Category



2016-2017 Operations Expenditures by Activity



Scope of the Department Relative to the Scope of the Audit

The OAG audit focused on assessing the Department’s success in monitoring and supporting the delivery of four specific services by NWT community governments: drinking water; waste management; fire protection; and emergency preparedness. MACA provides support in many more areas than those four examined by the OAG.

In order to serve the needs of community governments, MACA is organized into six headquarters divisions and five regional offices. Each of the six headquarters divisions is responsible for the design and development of policies and programs specific to a certain area where the Department engages with community governments and contributes towards the Department’s larger mandate of community government support.

Regional offices provide advice and support directly to community governments in the various areas of community government support provided by the Department.

Directorate

The Directorate is responsible for the overall management of the Department, managing human and financial resources and providing overall direction and planning through three individual sections (Corporate Affairs, Policy and Planning, and Financial Services). The Directorate also coordinates the development and implementation of the Department's strategies with the senior management team and links the Department's activities to the goals of the Minister and government.

Public Safety

The Public Safety division coordinates key regulatory programs and services within the Department that support the safety and protection of residents of the Northwest Territories. There are three sections within this division, each responsible for a different aspect of public safety: the Office of the Fire Marshal, Emergency Management and Consumer Affairs.

In 2017-2018, in addition to providing core support and services to community governments, this division will be focused on:

- Improving community emergency management and planning capacity and fire protection services.
- Providing support and tools to community governments to enable the development of individual Community Fire Protection Plans.
- Delivering tools for public engagement on potential amendments to the *Fire Prevention Act*.
- Developing a process to support community governments as they identify local solutions to deal with derelict properties that have been identified as a fire risk.

Community Operations

The Community Operations Division supports community governments to develop sound financial management and effective infrastructure management. The Division provides planning and technical advice to MACA regional offices and community governments as well as representing the interests of community governments on regulatory requirements and standards related to financial reporting and asset management. There are two sections within this division, each responsible for a different type of support to community governments: Community Financial Services and Capital Planning and Infrastructure.

In 2017-2018, in addition to providing core support and services to community governments, this division will be focused on:

- Finalizing an Asset Management Strategy for NWT Community Governments that will support community governments as they deal with the challenges of building and maintaining infrastructure in a northern environment.

- Encouraging community governments to work with the Arctic Energy Alliance to complete energy audits and then to implement the recommendations from their audits through existing capital planning and asset management processes.
- Developing and implementing a strategy that will allow the GNWT to close the gap in community government funding levels over the next ten years.
- Installing remote water monitoring stations in several communities and building three additional water treatment plants.

Community Governance

The Community Governance division coordinates and provides support to community governments in the areas of planning and governance, including municipal elections. There are three sections within this division, each responsible for a different type of support to community governments. These are: Community Governance; Community Planning; and Property Assessment.

School of Community Government

The School of Community Government (SCG) supports the development of capacity among elected community officials and community government staff by providing training, development opportunities and resources in the areas of governance, management, finance, infrastructure, fire protection, lands, recreation, airports, public safety, emergency management, and community operations.

In 2017-2018, the SCG will be focused on:

- Working in partnership with Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) and Aboriginal governments to design and develop training courses to assist those Aboriginal governments with municipal-like responsibilities to improve their governance and management capacity.
- Diversifying the methods of delivery for SCG programming to include various methods of online delivery among others to increase access to this programming by community government staff and elected officials.
- Updating existing curriculum in various program areas to include information on climate change awareness and adaptation for community governments.

Sport, Recreation and Youth

The Sport, Recreation and Youth division provides advice and assistance regarding sport, physical activity and recreation programs delivered by community governments and other non-government organizations. There are three sections within this division: Sport and Recreation; Youth; and Volunteerism.

In 2017-2018, in addition to providing core support and services to community governments and other stakeholders, this division will be focused on:

- Establishing the legislative and policy framework required to assume responsibility for the Western Canada Lottery Program.

- Developing and implementing a new NWT Sport, Recreation and Physical Activity Policy to guide the distribution of all sport and recreation funding by the Department.
- Completing a biannual, external program evaluation on the opportunities created for healthy lifestyle, resiliency, community leadership and capacity building for youth.
- Supporting programming related to the 2017 Canada Summer Games, the 2017 North American Indigenous Games and the 2018 Arctic Winter Games, including several deliveries of the Youth Ambassador Program.

Regional Operations

MACA divides the territory into five regions (South Slave, North Slave, Sahtu, Inuvik, and Dehcho) and has regional offices located in each region. These offices are responsible for the coordination, implementation and delivery of most of the Department's programs and services to community governments and are generally the first point of GNWT contact for many community governments.

4. MACA's Approach to Developing the Action Plan

MACA embraced the opportunity to complete a review of its supports for the delivery of essential services. In doing so, MACA cooperated fully with the OAG through all phases of the audit.

In developing the response to the audit and the action plan, MACA is committed to taking an authentic approach to addressing the concerns highlighted by the OAG.

Working through senior managers in the Department, all MACA staff were provided an opportunity to offer grassroots solutions and approaches to address the issue the OAG has identified. Using this approach underlines the importance of engaging staff who are going to be directly responsible for the implementation of the action plan.

Some of our action items are dependent upon cooperation with other GNWT and federal departments. MACA is committed to continuing to engage with those departments in order to move these action items forward.

The Department will remain open to making changes and adjustments to the action plan in order to reflect the feedback from Standing Committee and other key stakeholders.

5. Checking Back

As we develop processes and tools intended to support community governments in their role delivering essential services, it is important to engage with our stakeholders to validate the activities of the Department. The intent of engaging with key stakeholders is to ensure that the materials and the method by which we deliver these processes and tools remains relevant and meaningful to community governments and that our desired results are achieved.

Through our work with the OAG, MACA recognizes that many of the recommendations describe a lack of defined process and challenges the Department faces with data collection. Many of the action items included in the plan focus on better defining the process currently used, and expanding those processes where appropriate. There is a recognized need for the Department to create a mechanism to document not only the items in the action plan but the results of those actions.

MACA will develop a 12 month progress report to be shared with both the OAG and Standing Committee. In addition, the Department will use the Business Planning process as an additional method to report progress on some of the action items included in the plan.

6. MACA’s Action Plan

Theme 1 – Supporting Delivery of Essential Services

OAG Recommendation Paragraph 41

Office of the Auditor General Recommendation The Department of Municipal and Community Affairs should formally assess its information gaps with respect to water quality testing and use the information to work with community governments and the Department of Health and Social Services to identify and provide communities with the required types of support to comply with water testing requirements. It should also work with community governments to ensure that all water treatment plant operators receive the required training and support to obtain the appropriate certification.

Department Response **Agreed.** The Department of Municipal and Community Affairs will support the recommendation by:

- Continuing to work with the Interdepartmental Drinking Water Committee, whose mandate is to provide coordinated Government of the Northwest Territories support for technical issues related to drinking water and waste management in the Northwest Territories. This includes drinking water systems, support to water and waste system operators, maintaining water quality data and governance and regulation of water and waste in the Northwest Territories;
- Implementing a new database in the 2017-18 fiscal year that incorporates drinking water information needs of the Government of the Northwest Territories;
- Exploring options with the Department of Health and Social Services to expand and formalize the current process for sharing water testing results. This will include establishing a protocol for identifying the status of results and enabling the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs to make necessary adjustments to its support for community governments, including the Circuit Rider Training Program; and
- Continuing to support training delivery of the Circuit Rider Training Program, which provides hands-on formal training, course delivery through the School of Community Government, and one-on-one training to support community governments and ensure that their operators obtain required training and certification.

Action Plan for Improving Support to Community Governments in the NWT

Priority Actions		Indicators	Timeline
41.1	Continue to work with the Interdepartmental Drinking Water Committee (mandate commitment 5.4.2).	Number of times committee convenes as per TOR, review of TOR on annual basis	Ongoing
41.2	Establish a process to monitor database results, and identify a documented process to follow up collect missing data information, and response to database results.	Document a process, including established agreed upon goals	October 1, 2017
41.3	Work with the Committee to implement a new database.	Completion of database	March 31, 2018
41.4	Provide targeted training through the Circuit Rider Program and courses where certification is required depending on the classification of the water treatment plant.	Number of Circuit Rider visits, training events, Number of communities with certified WTP operator to the level of plant	Ongoing

Theme 1 – Supporting Delivery of Essential Services

OAG Recommendation Paragraph 53

Office of the Auditor General Recommendation

The Department of Municipal and Community Affairs, in consultation with the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, should work with community governments to help identify and provide the necessary support and capacity building, so that they can comply with regulatory and other waste management requirements. This should include:

- Support needed by each community government to comply with the water license that regulates the management of solid waste sites and sewage lagoons; and
- Support needed by community governments to ensure proper management of solid waste sites and proper handling and disposal of hazardous waste.

Department Response

Agreed. Through its work on the 2014 Municipal Funding Review, the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs acknowledges the need for improved support to community governments to fulfill their responsibilities relate dot solid waste. The Department will work with the other representatives on the Interdepartmental Drinking Water Management Committee to seek an extension of its terms of reference to create a subcommittee focused on waste management. Through this subcommittee, the Department will seek to formalize its understanding of the current condition of solid waste facilities in the Northwest Territories and any compliance issues with those facilities.

The Department will also work with the subcommittee to identify resources to advance solid waste management, including through identifying best practices and providing training on solid waste management to community governments. This work will also be coordinated with the implementation of the Asset Management Strategy to create a complete inventory of solid waste sites, their capacity and known issues with existing sites.

Finally, the Department will bring forward changes to its Water and Sewer Funding Policy in the 2017-18 fiscal year to include funding for solid waste management. In association with efforts to fully fund a needs based funding model, this will ensure that community governments receive funding to adequately operation and manage their solid waste facilities.

Action Plan for Improving Support to Community Governments in the NWT

Priority Actions		Indicators	Timeline
53.1	Broaden the Terms of Reference for the Interdepartmental Drinking Water and Wastewater Management Committee to include a subcommittee on waste management.	An Updated Terms of Reference with waste management subcommittee	August 2017
53.2	From the NWT Study of Waste Management Systems, create an inventory on baseline analysis of solid waste sites and sewage lagoons.	Receipt of study Completion of inventory baseline analysis	March 2017 August 2017
53.3	Working through the Waste Water Committee to assist communities with water licence compliance developing their operations and maintenance manuals for their community sewage lagoons, solid waste sites and spill contingency plans.	Completion of tracking tool of communities assisted	Fall 2017
53.4	Incorporate best practices on solid waste management into the Asset Management project and capital planning processes.	Completion of tools and display of resources available	April 2018
53.5	Work with interested parties to investigate opportunities to share resources and regional waste management	Completion of Waste Management Strategy	March 2019
53.6	Amend the Water and Sewer Fund Policy (Environmental Fund) to include solid waste.	Updated W&S Policy, posted to MACA website	March 2019
53.7	Amend the Solid Waste Management course curriculum, and deliver annual training. *Subject to EC and ENR to develop curriculum	Course updated, Number of participants and number of communities	March 2019

Theme 1 – Supporting Delivery of Essential Services

OAG Recommendation Paragraph 63

Office of the Auditor General Recommendation The Department of Municipal and Community Affairs should take immediate action to reassess whether communities with fire departments meet requirements under the *Safety Act*. For those fire department that do not, it should work with community government to establish a plan to assist them in meeting requirements. For community governments without fire departments, the Department should work with them to develop a strategy for fire safety.

Department Response **Agreed.** Through its efforts under the Community Fire Protection Plan, the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs is putting tools and actions in place to strengthen community fire protection services for the Northwest Territories. As part of this, the Department has initiated consultation to update the *Fire Prevention Act* and further define community governments’ role in fire protection.

The Department’s efforts also include a fire department assessment tool, scheduled for completion in spring 2017, which will assess administrative aspects of community fire services including compliance under the *Safety Act*. Once the assessment tool is complete, the Department will provide councils and staff with information on the tool and seek their commitment and interest in using it to identify current levels of service and gaps or risks. As assessments are completed, the Department will work with community governments to identify actions required to address gaps, obtain compliance with the *Safety Act*, and meet their desired level of service.

The full suite of tools and resources, including sample by-laws, standard operating procedures, training strategies, and public education tools will be complete by winter 2018.

If a community does not have a fire department, efforts will focus on fire prevention to reduce the risk of injury or damage.

Priority Actions		Indicators	Timeline
63.1	Complete Community Fire Department Assessment Tool.	Assessment Tool completed and in use	Completed
63.2	Identify priorities for Community Fire Protection Plans (mandate commitment 5.4.8) by	Number of communities with action	2018

Priority Actions	Indicators	Timeline
<p>completing assessments and developing community-specific action plans that help achieve <i>Safety Act</i> compliance.</p> <p>-</p>	<p>plans and progress towards achieving <i>Safety Act</i> compliance.</p>	
<p>63.3 Help communities maintain <i>Fire Prevention Act</i> and <i>Safety Act</i> compliance.</p>	<p>Number of communities re-assessed and action plans updated.</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>
<p>63.4 Align firefighter training with community fire department assessment results.</p>	<p>Number of training courses delivered per year aligned with assessments, number of training offers</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>
<p>63.5 Develop a web-based fire training resource center.</p>	<p>Completion of web-based resource centre</p>	<p>2017</p>
<p>63.6 Continue development of tools and resources to support implementation of community action plans according to the level of service defined by each community.</p>	<p>Develop and maintain tools and resources available to support action plans</p>	<p>2015-2019</p>
<p>63.7 Update the <i>Fire Prevention Act</i> (mandate commitment 5.4.8).</p>	<p>Updated <i>Act</i> comes into force.</p>	<p>2019</p>

Theme 1 – Supporting Delivery of Essential Services

OAG Recommendation Paragraph 69

Office of the Auditor General Recommendation The Department of Municipal and Community Affairs should work with community governments to provide the required supports, so that all communities have current emergency plans and receive training to implement these plans.

Department Response **Agreed.** The Department of Municipal and Community Affairs is updating the *Civil Emergency Measures Act* and anticipates introducing new legislation in fall 2017. This work will coincide with efforts to maximize available support to create and maintain emergency plans and training. The Department intends to use additional staff to help review existing plans and conduct table top exercises, so that Department staff can assist community governments in understanding, practising and updating their existing plans, as required (for example, minor updates to contact information.) More comprehensive plan development will continue to be supported by existing staff. At a minimum, the Department will review 5 plans per year and will endeavour to increase that to 8 to 10 plans per year in 2017-2018 fiscal year with additional staff.

As part of effort to expand learning opportunities, the Department will assign resources to create a basic emergency management course. For fall 2016 development, this resource will provide an online opportunity for individuals to learn basic emergency management concepts. Successful completion of this online course, combined with emergency plan workshops and table top exercises, will significantly increase community representatives’ capacity to prepare for and respond to emergency situations.

Priority Actions		Indicators	Timeline
69.1	Amend the <i>Civil Emergency Measures Act</i> and work with community governments to comply with the new legislation (mandate commitment 5.4.7).	Amended <i>CEMA Act</i> comes into force.	2018
69.2	Implement a systematic annual review of all community emergency plans.	Completion and implementation of an annual review process; and progress towards updating emergency	2018

Action Plan for Improving Support to Community Governments in the NWT

Priority Actions		Indicators	Timeline
		response plans.	
69.3	Implement online introductory emergency management training for municipal staff.	Completion of online training courses, number of participants	2017
69.4	Monitor and evaluate community emergency planning and preparedness efforts.	Indicator in Accountability Framework (AF), reviewed annually	Complete
	Assess community training needs relative to emergency response and preparedness and develop a strategy for skills development.	Completion of training needs assessments, completion of a skills development strategy.	2018 - assessments 2019 - strategy

Theme 2 – Tools to Support Community Governments

OAG Recommendation Paragraph 80

Office of the Auditor General Recommendation The Department of Municipal and Community Affairs should regularly review and modify (as required) the wording of the questions in the NWT Community Government Accountability Framework to ensure community governments can correctly answer them.

Department Response **Agreed.** Each year, the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs reviews questions and stakeholders’ feedback to ensure the questions are understood and that community governments representatives comprehend the nature of the questions and their responses.

The Department has communicated and reaffirmed to stakeholders that the NWT Community Government Accountability Framework (AF) is a living document and that, as required or appropriate, the questions and indicators will be updated to ensure that the tool is useful to community governments and the Department, to inform their engagement and priorities to work together.

In an effort to provide community governments with additional opportunity to provide comments, the Department adjusted the framework tool for the 2015-2016 data collection to include a place for community government to record comments and feedback on each indicator. That way, if they wish to raise issues with a question or provide further explanation, they are able to do so. As the Department continues to enhance the tool, it will seek continued opportunity to refine questions and provide opportunities for stakeholder feedback.

Priority Actions		Indicator	Timeline
80.1	Annually review all questions in the AF tool, based on stakeholder feedback and MACA analysis of prior year documentation.	Completion of report on stakeholder feedback	October 2017
80.2	Develop and implement a project plan to update the AF.	Completion and implementation of project plan	Complete

Priority Actions	Indicator	Timeline
80.3	Provide enhanced one-on-one support to community governments as they use the online AF Reporting Tool.	Number of community governments receiving one on one support, number of times support received
80.4	Evaluate data collected through the online AF Reporting Tool and consider a new or amended approach for 2018 process.	Identify trends and gaps in collected data; update process to collect data
80.5	Document all changes made to provide historical development continuum consistent with project plan objectives.	Develop tracking system using archived data and annual reports

Theme 2 – Tools to Support Community Governments

OAG Recommendation Paragraph 81

Office of the Auditor General Recommendation The Department of Municipal and Community Affairs should develop clear guidelines for community government and Department officials to complete and assess the NWT Community Government Accountability Framework’s performance indicator checklists. The guidance should explain the criteria for each question and provide community governments with clear guidance on how to respond appropriately to each question.

Department Response **Agreed.** The Department of Municipal and Community Affairs will develop a handbook for the NWT Community Government Accountability Framework.

The handbook will have two components. The first, to be completed in March 2017, will provide information to community government stakeholders on the accountability framework. This will include:

- An explanation of the tool and the intended purpose;
- Information on how the tool works, including online data collection;
- Information on the questions, their intent, and what a green, yellow, or red response may look like (with a help button for respondents if software permits that it be included directly in the tool itself);
- Information on how indicators are scored and how the green, yellow and red assessment is determined; and
- What to expect from the Department once the tool is complete.

The second component of the handbook for departmental use, to be completed by September 2017, will provide guidance to departmental staff on the implementation of the tool, including a calendar for implementation, information on tracking and validating indicator questions, and guidance on developing and implementing community government annual reports.

Priority Actions		Indicators	Timeline
81.1	Develop and implement a project plan to update the AF.	Completion and implementation of project plan	Complete
81.2	Develop a handbook that includes an orientation to the tool, how it works, the intent of the tool, how responses are scored, and the follow up by MACA.	Completion of handbook, feedback from stakeholders	March 2017

Action Plan for Improving Support to Community Governments in the NWT

Priority Actions	Indicators	Timeline
81.3 Formalize the Department's process for delivery of the tool including calendar for implementation, information on tracking and validating, and guidelines for supporting community public reporting.	Completion of draft; Implementation fulfilled	Draft by Fall 2017, implement by Spring 2018

Theme 2 – Tools to Support Community Governments

OAG Recommendation Paragraph 86

Office of the Auditor General Recommendation The Department of Municipal and Community Affairs should develop a strategy to verify the accuracy of information from community governments under the NWT Community Government Accountability Framework, in order to support meaningful engagement with community governments or required supports and foster accurate decision making about its department operations.

Department Response **Agreed.** As part of the development of the handbook described in the response to Recommendation 81, the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs will take a critical look at the questions in each indicator and the methodology for verifying each community government response.

As part of the work on the handbook, the Department intends to develop a prioritization (or weighting) exercise for the questions in each key indicator. The purpose of this change to the NWT Community Government Accountability Framework tool will be to properly distinguish between the relative importance of different question in a key indicator. By adding weighting criteria into the indicator, the results will more accurately reflect the performance of the community government.

In terms of verifying accuracy, the Department will ensure that the items that are weighted more heavily have documented verification available. Less heavily weighted questions may be captured through discussions and meetings but not verified through a formal process or document. Given the purpose of the accountability framework as an initial self-assessment of a community government performance, the Department will not document and track every questions but will focus on the more critical items related to performance.

Priority Actions		Indicators	Timeline
86.1	Develop and implement a project plan to update the AF.	Completion of project plan	Complete
86.2	Assess all questions to determine the weighting and criteria for assessing risk.	Completion of weighting and criteria system	March 2017
86.3	Develop a handbook that includes an orientation to the tool, how it works, the intent of the tool, how responses are scored, and the follow up by MACA.	Completion of handbook, feedback from stakeholders	Complete. January 2018

Priority Actions	Indicators	Timeline
86.4 Formalize the Department's process for delivery of the tool including calendar for implementation, information on tracking and validating, and guidelines for supporting community public reporting.	Completion of draft; Implementation fulfilled.	Draft by Fall 2017, implement by Spring 2018

Theme 2 – Tools to Support Community Governments

OAG Recommendation Paragraph 95

Office of the Auditor General Recommendation The Department of Municipal and Community Affairs should identify standard performance information for essential services that could be required under its contribution agreements. It should also follow a risk-based approach to identifying those higher-risk communities for which more frequent information should be provided.

Department Response **Agreed.** The Department of Municipal and Community Affairs will implement a broader risk based approach using tools to tailor community governments’ engagement, based on the nature of the issues and the relative risk to the public in their organization.

The Department will work with stakeholders to map out a staged approach for this engagement strategy:

- The initial stage will use the NWT Community Government Accountability Framework tool, during which the community government self-assesses its performance and the Department identifies how it can support issues identified.
- The mid-range stage is the contribution agreement, where there is a defined accountability. This tool can be enhanced, where deemed necessary, to have specific actions related to essential services.
- The next stage may be an operational review or municipal inspection, where the Department goes into a community and investigates the specific issue to determine whether there is a risk requiring formal intervention.
- The highest stage of engagement with stakeholders would be represented by co-management, supervision, or administration, where the Department takes a hands-on approach to overseeing the community government to ensure that critical tasks are completed to the Government of the Northwest Territories satisfaction.

Priority Actions		Indicators	Timeline
95.1	Develop and implement a project plan to update the AF.	Completion of plan	Complete
95.2	Create a process that will define risk based engagement with community governments.	Completion of process	January 2017
95.3	Develop a protocol that defines MACA/INAC roles and responsibilities related to designated authorities to strengthen accountability.	Completion of defined roles and responsibilities	2017-2018

Action Plan for Improving Support to Community Governments in the NWT

Priority Actions	Indicators	Timeline
95.4 Deliver workshops with community governments to validate new process and changes to contribution agreements.	Number of workshops offered per year, post workshop survey,	September 2017
95.5 Formalize the Department's process for delivery of the tool including calendar for implementation, information on tracking and validating, and guidelines for supporting community public reporting.	Completion of guidelines.	Draft by Fall 2017, implement by Spring 2018
95.6 Amend contribution agreements to define core services, AF, and defined engagement processes.	Quarterly review of contribution agreements, number of updated CA templates	2019-2020
95.7 Amend contribution agreements for designated authorities to define core services, and what the mechanism is for failure to perform.	Quarterly review of contribution agreements for designated authorities, number of updated CA templates	2019-2020

Theme 2 – Tools to Support Community Governments

OAG Recommendation Paragraph 99

Office of the Auditor General Recommendation The Department of Municipal and Community Affairs should review its monitoring mechanisms – notably contribution agreements and the NWT Community Government Accountability Framework – to determine how to use them more thoroughly to facilitate ongoing engagement with community governments. This would help provide community governments with required and timely support for essential services. The Department should also continue to develop tools aimed at identifying and collecting information critical for community government support.

Department Response **Agreed.** The Department of Municipal and Community Affairs envisions creating and documenting a process by which the Department engages with community governments using tools such as the NWT Community Government Accountability Framework, contribution agreements, and other reports and activities. Department engagement can range from support and advice, to increasing formal requests for compliance with contribution agreements or legislation, to formal authority through municipal supervision or administration.

The Department will pay particular attention in this exercise to identifying the type of engagement associated with each of the tools and how that engagement would escalate if issues and risks were identified.

This process must clearly define the respective roles and responsibilities for the community governments and of the Department. For example, contribution agreements should define the expectations of community governments in relation to funding being provided. This work will align with the handbooks and exercises noted earlier and will be fully completed by September 2017.

The Department will engage with stakeholders in developing these processes to ensure that actions and expectations are reasonable, and well understood, and can be effectively delivered.

Priority Actions		Indicators	Timeline
99.1	Develop and implement a project plan to update the AF.	Completion of project plan	Complete

Action Plan for Improving Support to Community Governments in the NWT

Priority Actions	Indicators	Timeline
<p>99.2 Create a community-specific engagement documentation process and tool for ongoing interaction with community governments. Documentation will include terms for escalation and risks, and roles and responsibilities.</p>	<p>Completion of engagement documentation process</p>	<p>Begin development in Spring 2017 with the intent of implementing in 2018, and including in 2018-2019 Funding Agreements.</p>
<p>99.3 Work with NWTAC and LGANT, along with community governments on the development and implementation of engagement document as part of process to advance accountability.</p>	<p>Number of meetings with stakeholder; completion of engagement document</p>	<p>March 2017</p>
<p>99.4 Amend Contribution Agreements.</p>	<p>Number of amended contribution agreements</p>	<p>2019-2020</p>

Theme 3 – Supporting Designated Authorities

OAG Recommendation Paragraph 109

Office of the Auditor General Recommendation The Department of Municipal and Community Affairs ‘ contribution agreements with designated authorities should include provisions related to the delivery of essential services it funds, to allow it to collect required performance information and take corrective action when essential services are at risk.

Department Response **Agreed.** Due to the complex relationship with the designated authorities, it is necessary to review the contribution agreements and enhance their effectiveness by establishing specific performance criteria that are required and identifying the consequences that will take place if those criteria are not met. The Department of Municipal and Community Affairs will consult with Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada as part of this work. Given that municipal legislation does not apply to designated authorities, the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs must be able to identify mechanisms to intervene or find alternative ways to ensure that service delivery is conducted in a manner that protects public health and safety – particularly in the delivery of essential services.

The Department of Municipal and Community Affairs will also consult internally within the Government of the Northwest Territories to ensure that the engagement with designated authorities aligns with the Aboriginal Engagement Strategy. It will ensure that actions to be taken through the oversight of contribution agreements with designated authorities is in line with other actions of the Government of the Northwest Territories, and ideally supported by Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada.

The Department of Municipal and Community Affairs will have a new contribution agreement format developed and reviewed for implementation in April 2017.

Priority Actions		Indicators	Timeline
109.1	Work with DAAIR on the implementation of the Aboriginal Engagement Strategy.	Completion of TOR for implementation of strategy; Strategy is implemented	Spring 2017

Action Plan for Improving Support to Community Governments in the NWT

Priority Actions	Indicators	Timeline
109.2 Develop and implement an engagement strategy designed to ensure that various stakeholders understand the Department's amended approach to dealing with issues related to DA communities.	Completion of engagement strategy; implementation of strategy	Spring 2017
109.3 Develop a protocol that defines MACA/INAC roles and responsibilities related to designated authorities to strengthen accountability.	Completion of protocol	2017-2018
109.4 Develop workshops and training (with INAC & DAAIR) that better explain INAC's role, MACA's role and the various functions that each support the band to do and how those relationships are established, defined and carried out.	Completion of workshops; Number of workshops per year; post-satisfaction survey of workshop	2017-2018 delivery
109.5 Work with INAC to develop a version of the Accountability Framework tailored to all NWT First Nations serving as designated authorities.	Completion of AF version for designated authorities	2018-2019
109.6 Amend contribution agreements for designated authorities to define core services, and what the mechanism is for failure to perform.	Contribution agreements amended	2019-2020

Theme 3 – Supporting Designated Authorities

OAG Recommendation Paragraph 112

Office of the Auditor General Recommendation The Department of Municipal and Community Affairs should consult with Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada to determine how the two organizations could work more effectively together to strengthen community governance in designated authorities.

Department Response **Agreed.** The Department of Municipal and Community Affairs will continue its efforts to engage with Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada and will strive to achieve the following:

- Develop a two-to-three hour presentation or workshop for local elected officials to explain the roles of Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada, the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs, and local community governments in the following types of community structures: municipal corporation (including charter community), self-government, and designated authority.
- Develop a department protocol for engaging with designated authorities when the Department of Municipal and Community Affairs identifies a risk or issues that require resolution. This identification of risks or issues may occur through the use of tools such as the NWT Community Government Accountability Framework and the monitoring of financial statements and contribution agreements, or it may come about through the engagement with the community government, Indigenous and Northern Affairs Canada, or other government departments. The protocol may include available measures up to and including third-party management and co-management.

Priority Actions		Indicators	Timeline
112.1	Develop workshops and training (with INAC & DAAIR) that better explains INAC's role, MACA's role and the various functions that we support the band to do and how those relationships are established, defined and carried out.	Completion of workshops, number of training events per year; post-satisfaction survey of workshop	2017-2018
112.2	Develop a protocol that defines MACA/INAC roles and responsibilities related to designated authorities to strengthen accountability.	Completion of protocol	2017-2018

Priority Actions		Indicators	Timeline
112.3	Work with INAC to develop a long term strategy on capacity building for community governments.	TOR with INAC on development of strategy; Completion of strategy;	2018-2019

Theme 4 – Supporting Community Government Capacity

OAG Recommendation Paragraph 128

Office of the Auditor General Recommendation The Department of Municipal and Community Affairs should formally assess how it identifies training needs for community governments, as well as the suite of training offered, to ensure that it continues to help community governments meet their needs and develop the required capacity to delivery essential services.

Department Response **Agreed.** The Department of Municipal and Community Affairs will work with stakeholders, including the NWT Association of Communities and the Local Government Administrators of the Northwest Territories, to determine whether current approaches to the following meet client needs:

- Approach to identifying training requirements
- Course scheduling
- Appropriateness of course content and the need for curriculum review.

The Department currently collects information on the above through trends analysis from the NWT Community Government Accountability Framework, requests for training through regional offices, and individual course evaluations.

If it is determined that a more formalized approach is desired, the Department will investigate conducting annual surveys potentially aligned with the accountability framework or the customer satisfaction survey, or as a stand-alone survey to ensure that the Department is collecting adequate information to determine whether its program delivery is meeting the needs of community government staff and councils.

Priority Actions		Indicators	Timeline
128.1	Conduct alternate year surveys with community governments to assess and determine their priority training needs (mandate commitment 2.3.2).	Develop plan outlining schedule for community government surveys; completion of training needs assessments	Spring 2017

Priority Actions	Indicators	Timeline
<p>128.2 Work with the Public Sector Capacity Building Steering Committee to implement improvements to the ALGAP program.</p>	<p>Meeting scheduled with implementation improvements on agenda; review progress quarterly</p>	<p>2017-2018</p>
<p>128.3 Work with program advisory committees, partners and clients to review/confirm the content within School of Community Government programs is aligned with capacity needs of community governments and amend content as required.</p>	<p>Develop TOR for PAC, partners, and clients; review database evaluation responses to determine alignment is required</p>	<p>March 2019</p>
<p>128.4 The SCG will provide training and curriculum to a variety of distributed learning methods to ensure courses are accessible, available and affordable.</p>	<p>Number of training events by year, by type of delivery and by cost for participant and cost for department</p>	<p>March 2019</p>
<p>128.5 Implement a process to review student and instructor feedback on whether training provided is meeting the needs to deliver essential services.</p>	<p>Completion of process to collect and review student and instructor feedback;</p>	<p>March 2019</p>

Theme 4 – Supporting Community Government Capacity

OAG Recommendation Paragraph 129

Office of the Auditor General Recommendation The Department of Municipal and Community Affairs should explore the use of distance education and partnership opportunities with educational institutions and other organizations as appropriate, to maximize the delivery of its programming.

Department Response **Agreed.** The Department of Municipal and Community Affairs is exploring maximizing programming delivery using a number of opportunities.

In the 2016-2017 fiscal year, the Department is piloting online delivery of a number of training programs for both elected officials and community government staff. Once the model for this style of program delivery is developed, the Department can continue to expand delivery in a planned approach for other programs delivered by the School of Community Government. Among programs being piloted in the 2016-17 fiscal year are six municipal governance modules, six Aboriginal governance modules (mandate commitment 5.1.3), and the Local Government Administrator Essentials program.

The Department currently works with a range of educational institutions to allow both program access as well as professional certification. The Department will continue to explore these types of partnerships in order to expand opportunities for education and certification of community government staff in the Northwest Territories. Current partners include Royal Roads University, the College of the Rockies, the University of Alberta, and Aurora College.

In addition to maximizing delivery, the Department will take advantage of these partnerships to validate our curriculum, seek to enhance our products, and continually improve the delivery of programs and services.

Priority Actions	Indicators	Timeline
<p>129.1 Meet with INAC officials to investigate the potential for cost shared training in areas of shared responsibilities.</p>	<p>Meetings scheduled with INAC to identify cost shared training</p>	<p>May 2017</p>

Action Plan for Improving Support to Community Governments in the NWT

Priority Actions	Indicators	Timeline
129.2 Transition SCG programs to diversified delivery, including online options (mandate commitment 2.3.2).	Number of online options, number of face to face, number of workshops, trend of type year by year	Spring 2017 and ongoing
129.3 Host meetings with stakeholder and partner organizations to reconfirm or negotiate ongoing relationships.	Number of meetings with stakeholder, Satisfaction survey	March 2018
129.4 Collaborate with relevant and educational institutions and negotiate educational or training agreements with the Department.	Number of agreements with education institutions	March 2018
129.5 Work with program advisory committees, partners and clients to review/confirm the content within School of Community Government programs and implement recommendations.	Develop TOR for PAC, partners, and clients; review database evaluation responses; Implement PAC recommendations	March 2019