



**STARTING A FIRST NATIONS
ADULT SECONDARY
EDUCATION PROGRAM
IN BRITISH COLUMBIA**

THINGS TO THINK ABOUT



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STARTING A FIRST NATIONS ADULT SECONDARY EDUCATION PROGRAM IN BRITISH COLUMBIA: THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

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THINGS TO THINK ABOUT

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GLOSSARY OF TERMS USED

BC Adult Dogwood Diploma: formally known as the BC Adult Graduation Diploma, a BC Ministry of Education graduation certificate that is available to adult learners. A student can only be placed on an Adult Dogwood program AFTER the age of 18.

BC Dogwood Diploma: formally known as the BC Certificate of Graduation, the Ministry of Education graduation certificate awarded to students who successfully complete the provincial graduation requirements. The Dogwood Diploma indicates that a student has achieved the provincial learning outcomes set out by the Ministry of Education.

BC Tripartite Education Agreement: Supporting First Nation Student Success: or “**BCTEA**”, an agreement signed by FNEESC, Canada, and British Columbia, and witnessed by the FNSA, which is intended to lead to systemic shifts to support successful educational outcomes of all First Nation students, regardless of where they live or are enrolled in school in BC.

First Nations Adult Secondary Education Program: a BCTEA-funded program of study for adult learners who have not yet graduated and who are taking secondary level courses to access the Dogwood or Adult Dogwood Diploma, and adult learners who have graduated and are taking one or more eligible provincial academic upgrading courses in order to pursue further studies or employment opportunities (as listed in Appendix A).

First Nation Adult Education Centre: a centre located on-reserve and operated and administered by a First Nation in British Columbia, which provides a First Nations Adult Secondary Education Program.

First Nation School: a school located on-reserve and operated and administered by a First Nation in British Columbia, providing education at one or more of the kindergarten, elementary or secondary levels, including First Nation Independent schools. First Nation schools enroll school-age and possibly also adult students.

First Nations Education Steering Committee: or “**FNEESC**”, a policy and advocacy organization that represents and supports First Nations’ efforts to improve the success of their students and advance First Nations education by disseminating information, undertaking research, administering programs and services, and advocating and negotiating with government at the direction of First Nations.

First Nations Schools Association: or “**FNSA**”, a society that supports First Nation schools in creating effective, nurturing, and linguistically and culturally appropriate education environments that provide students with a positive foundation in all academic areas.

First Nations Education Funding Model: the approach for federal funding for K4-12 First Nations education in BC (including adult secondary education), which is based on the Ministry of Education Operating Grants Manual, with specific adaptations to reflect the unique needs and circumstances of First Nation schools and First Nation adult education centres.

First Nations Education Funding Handbook: the funding manual maintained by FNEESC and FNSA that sets out the formula used to calculate funding for students attending First Nation schools and adult education centres.

Funding Estimator Tool: a calculator that determines the funding allocation for a First Nation based on the BC First Nations Education Funding Model and student enrolment numbers.

First Nations Schools Assessment and Certification Process: a process for assessment, improvement planning, and certification of First Nation schools and First Nation adult education centres, which is managed by FNSA and FNEESC.

Indigenous Services Canada: or “ISC”, the federal department that manages funding for First Nations education.

ISC Nominal Roll: the registry of all eligible elementary and secondary students (including adult students) who are funded by Canada to attend a First Nation, federal, provincial, or private/independent school, including a First Nations adult education centre.

School Governing Authority: the term used when referring to the Authority that oversees the ongoing operations of First Nation schools and adult education centres, including directing their purpose, mission, budget, and policies.



INTRODUCTION

This pamphlet was created by the BC First Nations Education Steering Committee (FNESC) and BC First Nations Schools Association (FNSEA), in consultation with Indigenous Services Canada (ISC), to share information with First Nations representatives who are interested in starting a First Nation Adult Secondary Education Program.

This pamphlet includes four sections focused on key topics for establishing a new program.

1. Confirming that there is community support and an appropriate space for the program.
2. Planning the program's structure and thinking about what the program is intended to offer, including:
 - the preferred format for the learning opportunities;
 - whether the program will be for adults only, or if it will also support teens who are experiencing challenges in other education settings; and
 - how courses will be delivered.
3. How graduating students will be awarded the Dogwood or Adult Dogwood.
4. Preparing to open and operate the program, including accessing funding and getting the necessary staff in place.

Each section includes key questions to consider, followed by background information – all of which is intended to help facilitate discussions about what approaches will best meet each community's unique circumstances, needs, and preferences – recognizing that adult education is an issue that will continue to evolve over time.

Resources with additional details about the topics briefly described herein are highlighted where relevant, and support is also available upon request.

- ▶ Please feel free to contact adulthood@fnesc.ca for further assistance if needed.
- ▶ Specific questions about ISC funding for adult secondary education can be directed to the ISC BC Region education team at aadnc.bceducation.aandc@canada.ca.

KEY TOPIC NO. 1

CONFIRMING SUPPORT AND SPACE FOR YOUR PROGRAM

Key Questions to Consider

1. Have we confirmed community support for operating an Adult Secondary Education Program?
 - If no, what do we need to do to meet this priority?
2. If there is community support, will our adult program be operated as part of our community's First Nation school, or will it operate independently – as a separate learning centre?
3. Have we determined how our program will be governed? If the program will operate as part of an existing First Nation school, it may be governed by that school's Governing Authority. If the program will operate independently, it may have its own School Governing Authority.
 - Have we confirmed that Chief and Council supports our planned governance structure?
 - Have we clarified the relationship of our School Governing Authority and Chief and Council, including the differing roles and responsibilities and what authorities, if any, have been delegated to the School Governing Authority by Chief and Council?
4. Have we identified a suitable facility in which to offer the Adult Secondary Education Program? If not, what steps are necessary to address this issue?
5. Will our adult students be attending with school-age students who are also using the same facility (for example, will we be sharing a school site with an elementary or secondary program that enrolls children and teens)?
 - If we will be sharing a site with younger students ...
 - how will we address supervision of the school-age students? Will the adult and younger students be separated when they are using the facility at the same time, such as using separate entrances, separate washroom facilities, etc.?
 - have we considered whether criminal record checks will be required for our staff and adult students who will be around children during school hours?

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Confirming Support and Space for the Program

One of the first things to consider when preparing to offer a First Nation Adult Secondary Education Program in your community is where the program will be located.

- ▶ Some First Nations that already operate a First Nation school choose to enroll adult students in that school. If this option is chosen, it is important for the school community to consider any appropriate structures or procedures related to having adult students in the same building as school-age students, including issues related to the supervision of young children, criminal record checks for all adults who will be around children, the possible need for separate spaces for children and adults, etc. The safety of all students must be paramount, and it is also important to consider access and the comfort of both adult and younger students when deciding where to offer programming.
- ▶ Other First Nations choose to open an adult education centre that operates independently of an existing First Nation school. These programs may operate in their own centre, or they may operate in a building with a First Nations mandated post-secondary institute.
- ▶ Sometimes adult education centres also enroll secondary students through an alternate education program. [Alternate education](#) is described further in this guide.

In any case, First Nations that want to access funding from Indigenous Services Canada (ISC), including those that intend to open a new centre and those that are planning to add a grade or adult education program to an existing First Nation school, must first apply to ISC. ISC must then review and approve the application before the new grade or program can be funded through the Nominal Roll. ISC approval of new programs and funding through the ISC Nominal Roll for the operation of Adult Secondary Education Programs is described further in this document.

Generally, the ISC application to add grades / add a new program requires information to demonstrate that an adequate facility is available to offer the adult education program, as well as information about projected enrollment and the applicant's ability to offer adult students the Dogwood or Adult Dogwood Diploma.

The ISC application to add grades / a new program also requires confirmation of Chief and Council support for the program, and so it is critical to communicate clearly and have community approval in place for any planned First Nations adult secondary education program.

An additional issue to be considered is how the program will be governed. A range of governance models exist for First Nation schools and First Nation adult education centres in BC, such as:

- ▶ operating under the direct authority of Chief and Council, with no school board or education committee in existence;
- ▶ being governed by Chief and Council, advised or guided by some kind of an education committee or board, which may or may not be incorporated;
- ▶ being guided by some kind of committee (non-legal entity) that is accountable back to the Chief and Council; or
- ▶ having a formal school board (a distinct legal entity, usually under the provincial *Societies Act*).

Some adult education centres are governed by the same authority that oversees a First Nation school in the community. Others are governed by a separate authority.

Whatever the case may be, determining the governance structure that will work best for your particular needs and circumstances is a key decision for any First Nation adult education centre, and one that clearly requires direction from Chief and Council and your community.

It is also critical to clarify the roles and the responsibilities of the School Governing Authority and its relationship to Chief and Council. For example, the following chart highlights considerations related to optional approaches to school governance.

Governance Option	Legal entity operating the school and employing staff	School Governing Authority	Comments
Chief and Council is the School Governing Authority (with or without an education advisory committee or a non-incorporated board)	The First Nation	Chief and Council	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> In this scenario, there may be an education advisory committee or non-incorporated board (i.e. not a separate legal entity) that provides input or advice, but it does not have decision-making authority.
Chief and Council delegates some or all of its authority to an education committee or non-incorporated board	The First Nation: a non-incorporated board should not be responsible for employment	Chief and Council and the education committee or board (with authorities clearly identified)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> If an education committee / board has been delegated decision-making authority over all education matters, it will be the school governing authority. If the committee / board has only been delegated authority over some matters, it will be the School Governing Authority for those matters and Chief and Council will remain the School Governing Authority for the other matters. It is critical to delineate which matters have been delegated to the education committee/ board, and which have not, through a written agreement, terms of reference, or a letter of understanding.
Formal school committee or school board established under BC Societies Act, federal law, or PFN law.	The committee or board that is legally established – which in this case may be responsible for employment.	The committee or board	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> As in option 2, it is critical to delineate which matters have been delegated to the committee or board, and which have not, through a written agreement, terms of reference, or a letter of understanding with Chief and Council.

► Further information about effective school governance is available in a 2020 FNEESC and FNSA *Handbook For First Nation School Governing Authorities*.

► Template Terms of Reference for a School Governing Authority are also available.

KEY TOPIC NO. 2

PLANNING THE PROGRAM STRUCTURE

Key Questions to Consider

6. How do we plan to structure our programming / deliver courses?
 - Will we offer one or a combination of the following options?
 - Cohort-based classes led by an on-site instructor
 - Cohort-based classes taught through the FNEC and FNSA Connected Classroom Program, which requires having a certified co-teacher on-site to administer the courses and support students
 - Individual self-paced learning opportunities that are technology-based or that use paper packages (e.g. courses accessed through an Online Learning school, with an on-site teacher, tutor or other staff available to support students)
 - If we plan to offer cohort-based courses, do we plan to offer semester or year-long courses, or a combination of both?
 - What will our school day look like? Will we have scheduled blocks for each course students will be enrolled in, or will the day be more free-flowing, with students dropping in and working on various courses throughout the day, depending on their preference?
 - When will our Centre be open? Will we be able to offer evening or weekend classes as an option for working adults?
 - Have we considered the pros and cons of the different options and approaches?
 - What structure(s) do we think will benefit our students most? Have we surveyed or otherwise interacted with potential adult learners in the community to determine their preferences?
7. Do we plan to enroll only adult students, or will we also accommodate teenage alternate education learners who need a supportive educational environment, as well?
 - If we enroll adults and teens, have we considered all of the issues related to supporting both age groups in one program?

- Have we considered how to ensure it is a safe and comfortable environment for both adult and school-age learners?
- Will all of the adults (staff and learners) complete a criminal record check if they are going to have contact with school-age students?

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Planning the Program Structure

Course Delivery

First Nation schools and First Nation adult education centres use a variety of approaches to offer secondary courses to students – often using different methods simultaneously.

- ▶ **Instruction On-site:** Offering instruction on-site is an ideal option if a teacher with the appropriate expertise is available. Offering instruction on-site can help to build a sense of connectedness for students and can be especially beneficial for supporting students directly and pro-actively. This is true whether the students are school-age or adults.
- ▶ **Course Purchase:** Many adult centres purchase courses, such as from the BC ProActive Curriculum website, which follow the current BC curriculum and provide a unit-by-unit framework for coursework that can be localized for a Nation’s delivery with a learner taking that particular course. This approach can be helpful at times since class sizes are sometimes small, with only one or two learners interested in a specific course during any given year.
- ▶ **Connected Classrooms:** For schools and adult education centres that do not have a teacher with the necessary subject matter expertise available to deliver specific courses on-site, the FNEsc/FNSA-sponsored Connected Classrooms program facilitates an innovative opportunity for collectives of BC First Nation schools and adult education centres to offer high school courses using a combination of technologies to create an integrated, interactive classroom environment for students in various locations. This project differs from other online learning initiatives as the students use real-time video conferencing to participate in a virtual classroom with an instructor who is qualified to teach the subject, complemented by in-person support from a certified lead co-teacher who is located on-site. More information about this option is available by contacting connectedclassrooms@fnesc.ca.

- ▶ **Online Learning Arrangements** with a provincial online learning provider (previously known as Distributed Learning – DL): Some First Nation high schools and adult education centres help their students take courses through arrangements with provincial Online Learning schools.

“Online Learning” means a method of instruction that relies primarily on indirect communication between learners and educators, including internet or other electronic-based delivery, teleconferencing or correspondence.

Beginning in the 2023/2024 school year, the Ministry of Education and Child Care policy now provides for two types of Online Learning providers – District Online Learning Schools, which can only enroll students from within the District catchment area, and Provincial Online Learning Schools, which can enroll students from anywhere within the province. The Ministry's Online Learning Procedures state:

All students who are enrolled in First Nations schools can access Online Learning programs and courses offered by Boards and Authorities by enrolling in a Provincial Online Learning School (POLs) anywhere in the province or a District Online Learning School (DOLS) operating in their area, as appropriate. DOLS are restricted to providing educational services within the catchment area.

First Nations schools may choose to work in partnership with POLs or DOLS to deliver part or all of the education program of students attending non-independent First Nations schools.

To initiate this partnership, representatives from the First Nation should work with the principal of the Online School to complete an Online Learning service agreement [Service Agreement]. It is suggested that Service Agreements contain the following information:

- ♦ The term of the agreement
- ♦ The agreed upon payment structure
- ♦ Which school will be responsible for maintaining records (e.g., Permanent Student Record (PSR) and other files)
- ♦ For Grades 10 to 12, which school will be responsible for registration for Provincial Assessments and uploading GRAD files
- ♦ The key contacts at the First Nation school and POLs or DOLS to ensure effective communications between the two schools
- ♦ Agreed upon terms for reporting on student engagement in the course, progress, and outcomes

First Nations will receive the tuition for the students enrolled in their First Nation school and will pay agreed upon fees to the School District or Independent School Authority for educational services provided by a POLS or DOLS.

To assist First Nations in developing an agreement that will ensure supports for learning are adequately provided by both the First Nation school and the POLS or DOLS, a template Service Agreement has been co-developed by FNEESC and the Ministry. That template is available from FNEESC.

- ▶ If you are using online learning through an arrangement with a provincial agency, it may be helpful to review the information pamphlet: *Things to Know If You Are Using Online Learning To Offer Courses To Your Students* (prepared by FNSA and FNEESC, updated July 2023).

What About Offering Alternate Education?

In some cases, school-age high school students may enroll in a First Nations Adult Education Centre or a First Nations school to work towards completion of their Dogwood Diploma through what are commonly called “Alternate Education Programs.” Such programs often:

- ▶ are designed to support vulnerable and at-risk students whose educational, social and emotional needs are not being met through existing mainstream programs;
- ▶ are focused on educational, social and emotional issues for students whose needs are not being met in a traditional school program;
- ▶ provide support through individualized instruction, specialized program delivery, and enhanced counselling services based on students’ needs.

Strong practices for alternate education programs can include:

- ▶ an intake process to determine the students’ needs, educational and life goals, and strengths / prior learning;
- ▶ an annually reviewed learning plan for each student that clearly defines the objectives for the student, additional services needed, strengths and progress to date, and any transition plans;

- ▶ an exit strategy for each student that focuses on their transition back into the regular school system, to graduation, or to work or post-secondary training and education; and
- ▶ efforts to access additional services that would be beneficial for students (i.e. youth workers, counselling, etc...).

As noted in the first section of this pamphlet, it is important to discuss with the community whether it is appropriate / beneficial for the adult centre to offer alternate education opportunities, considering the safety, access, and comfort of all students.

NOTE: It is important to contact an ISC Education Program Advisor (aadnc.bceducation.aandc@canada.ca) before including school-aged alternate education students who are enrolled in a First Nation adult education centre on the Nominal Roll report

KEY TOPIC NO. 3

OFFERING THE DOGWOOD / ADULT DOGWOOD DIPLOMA

Key Questions to Consider

8. How are we going to offer our graduating students the Dogwood or Adult Dogwood?
 - Have we made arrangements for how we will offer graduation certificates?
 - If we plan to offer the diploma through our centre, have we contacted FNEC/FNSA to ask about how we can become Certified through the First Nation Schools Assessment and Certification Process – which is required in order to award the Dogwood or Adult Dogwood?

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Offering the Dogwood and Adult Dogwood

As agreed through the British Columbia Tripartite Education Agreement (BCTEA), First Nation schools and First Nation adult education centres can offer their eligible students the provincial Dogwood or Adult Dogwood Diploma if the school or centre is certified through the First Nations Schools Assessment and Certification Process.¹

The First Nations Schools Assessment and Certification Process is a five-year cycle of review and follow-up. The Process begins with participating schools and adult education centres implementing a year-long examination of all aspects of their operations, including considering their programs and administration structures, student outcomes data, as well as survey input from governing authority members, students, parents / caregivers, and school staff. The overall goal of the process is to identify school or centre strengths and areas for growth, leading to the creation of a School Growth Plan (that is, a strategic plan for improvement). First Nation schools and adult education centres are sponsored for participation in the process, and there are also workshops and ongoing assistance from FNEC staff for participating schools.

¹ First Nations schools with Independent School status can automatically award the Dogwood or Adult Dogwood certificate to eligible graduates and they do not require FNSA Certification. However, First Nations Independent schools may choose to participate in the First Nations Schools Assessment and Certification Process for school improvement planning purposes.

Upon completion of the internal review, participating schools and adult centres are then visited by a team that reviews the assessment findings and School Growth Plan to provide suggestions and feedback. In years two to four, funding grants and continued support from FNEESC staff are provided to assist schools and adult centres in implementing their School Growth Plans.

Participating schools and adult education centres also may request “Certification” as part of the assessment process. This component requires meeting a set of collectively established standards that relate to student achievement and overall success, including having well-supported and effectively planned programs, with a School Growth Plan that will help the school or centre to realize its mission.

Students who attend a First Nation school or adult education centre that has been certified can access the Dogwood or Adult Dogwood if the students complete all of the graduation requirements set by the BC Ministry of Education.

- ▶ The steps to offer the Dogwood or Adult Dogwood are outlined in a *Guide to the Dogwood / Adult Dogwood Diploma Process for Non-Independent First Nations Schools*.

Alternatively, First Nation adult education centres can have their students access the Dogwood or Adult Dogwood through a partnership arrangement with another First Nation school, with a school district, or with a provincially recognized Online Learning School.

Most First Nations schools and First Nation adult education centres award the provincial graduation certificates by becoming FNSA Certified.

KEY TOPIC NO. 4

OPENING AND OPERATING THE PROGRAM

Key Questions to Consider

9. Have we applied to ISC for approval of the adult secondary education program?
 - Has our application been approved, so we can include our students on the Nominal Roll?
 - **NOTE:** It is important to notify FNESC/FNSA that the program has been approved and will be operational in order to access a range of programs and services?
10. Do we fully understand the Nominal Roll requirements? If not, contact ISC for assistance.
11. Have we considered how we will fund our program in our first year of operations?
12. Have we reached out to FNESC/FNSA to discuss our eligibility for the Special Education Program (SEP) and First Nations Language and Culture Program (FNLCP) funding grants?
13. If we are offering cohort-based classes, what courses do we plan to offer in our first year? Or at least our first semester?
14. How do we plan to offer courses?
15. Have we arranged staffing for our program? Do we have a qualified teacher or adult instructor identified or hired?
 - Do we know who will provide an orientation for our program staff?
 - Do we know who will oversee the positions?
 - Have we clarified whether the staff will be employees of the First Nation and subject to the community's Human Resource policies?
 - Have we clarified the relationship between our program's staff and the Education Director or community education administrator?
16. Will we be able to offer First Nations language and culture learning opportunities to our adult students?

- Is an Integrated Resource Package (IRP) available for your language, meaning there is a Ministry-approved curriculum for your language courses?
 - Will our language teacher need a Letter of Permission from the Teacher Regulation Branch?
 - Who is available to assist us with language and culture opportunities for our students?
17. Will we be able to identify an Elder Advisor or Elders Advisory Committee to support the program and our students? How else can Elders be involved in our program, such as an Elder-in-Residence Program or Elder support through a weekly Talking Circle, etc.?
18. What other services are available to support our program and our learners?
- Are there other relevant community service agencies we should be interacting with?
 - Will health services be available for our learners? Child care? Counseling services?
 - How will those services be funded / accessed?

BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

Opening and Operating the Program

ISC Approval for Adding an Adult Secondary Education Program

As described above, First Nations that want to access federal funding, including those that intend to open a new centre and those that are planning to add a grade or adult education program to an existing First Nation school, must first apply to ISC. ISC must then review and approve the application before the new grade or program can be funded through the Nominal Roll.

First Nation schools that have been approved by ISC to offer a secondary education program up to Grade 12 may enroll students up to and including the age of 21 without applying to ISC to add an Adult Education Program.

When should you reach out to ISC for approval to add a program?

- ▶ If your school doesn't already offer up to Grade 12 and you want to enroll students up to age 21 in grades ISC has not previously approved (*you need approval to add secondary grades*)

- ▶ If your school has not already been approved to offer an Adult Secondary Education Program and you want to begin enrolling students age 22 and older (*you need approval to add an adult secondary program*)
- ▶ If you want to offer an Adult Secondary Education Program through a facility other than an existing First Nation school and you do not yet have ISC approval for the program (*you need approval to add an adult secondary program*)
- ▶ If you want to enroll students under the age of 19 in an Adult Secondary Education Program (*you need approval to enroll teen-age students in an ISC approved adult secondary program*)

Applications to add grade(s) or program(s) must be submitted to ISC by January 31st in order to be considered for implementation in September of the following school year, although applications are accepted all year.

- ▶ The addition to grade or program application form, which includes details about ISC's requirements, can be requested from ISC Education Program staff by email at [aadnc.bceducation.aandc@canada.ca](mailto:aandc@canada.ca).

Nominal Roll Funding

First Nations that have approval from ISC to add adult secondary education to an existing First Nation school or to open a new First Nation adult education centre can receive Nominal Roll funding for their students according to the BCTEA funding formula. The majority of First Nation schools in BC are now funded according to the BCTEA funding formula, with the exception of schools that are operated by a First Nation that has a treaty or self-government agreement with Canada. The funding arrangements for those schools are consistent with their Nation's agreement.

The BCTEA funding formula is based on the BC Ministry of Education's funding model for public schools, with adaptations to reflect the unique circumstances of First Nations.

First Nations' BCTEA funding allocations are calculated by ISC using student enrolment data and factors that apply specifically to each school or adult education centre. Enrolment data is collected by ISC annually using the Nominal Roll – the registry of all eligible elementary and secondary students funded by Canada. The Nominal Roll count date is September 29, and the Nominal Roll information is submitted to ISC by mid-October.

Each year, ISC applies the BCTEA funding formula to First Nation schools and First Nation adult education centres, and outlines the approved funding amount for each First Nation using a “Funding Detail Budget Report.”

- ▶ The BCTEA funding model and ISC’s Funding Detail Budget Report are described in a First Nations Education Funding Handbook, and a “Funding Estimator” tool is available to allow First Nations to forecast their school funding for the upcoming year based on projected enrolments.
- ▶ The updated BCTEA Funding Handbook and Estimator Tool are available on the FNESC and FNSEA web sites, and support for using the resources is available from FNESC staff.

It is critical to understand that the BCTEA funding model and Nominal Roll numbers calculate the amount of funding that is provided for the adult education program each year. *The use of the funding that is provided by ISC to operate the adult education program is flexible and the annual budget for the program should reflect needed program expenditures.* While the annual budget should match the overall funding provided by ISC, and from any other available funding sources, the expenditure amounts do not have to reflect the components of the funding model that are outlined on ISC’s Funding Detail Budget Report.

It is also important to note that the annual funding provided through the Nominal Roll reflects the student numbers reported to ISC on October 15 – i.e., the number of students who were enrolled as of September 29. Additional students can be enrolled in an adult education program throughout the year and there can be an ongoing intake of students. However, if new students join the program (or if students leave the program) the funding provided by ISC for that year will not change. It is up to the adult education program staff to determine if new students can be accommodated throughout the year, given the resources available to operate the program.

Nominal Roll Requirements

- ▶ **NOTE:** As of the 2023/2024 school year, students aged 4 to 21 who are ordinarily resident on-reserve and enrolled in a First Nation, public or private/independent school will be considered “school-age students” for the purposes of the Nominal Roll report. Previous to the 2023-2024 school year, ISC BC Region funded eligible school-age students through the BCTEA funding formula using the Province of BC’s definition of school-age as ages 4 to 19 years old. The purpose of this change is to align with

BCTEA, which defines a school-age student as a “student aged 4 to 21 years on December 31 of the school year in which funding support is required and enrolled in Kindergarten 4 through grade 12.”

This definition of school-age is for the purpose of receiving funding from ISC. First Nations can determine the ages of students who will enroll in their schools and adult centres according to their own priorities and circumstances.

- ▶ There is no maximum age limit for adult learners.
- ▶ In order to be Nominal Roll funded, adult learners must be ordinarily resident on-reserve and must be enrolled in an ISC approved adult program or adult education centre. All students who are ordinarily resident on-reserve can be included on the Nominal Roll, including Indigenous and non-Indigenous learners.
- ▶ Adult students who have not previously graduated are eligible for funding for courses that lead to the Dogwood or Adult Dogwood.
- ▶ Graduated adult students are eligible for funding for the provincial Academic Upgrading courses listed in Appendix A, recognizing that some graduated adults may require courses for the purpose of upgrading their education for employment or to meet the pre-requisites of post-secondary or training programs.
- ▶ It is a requirement of the Nominal Roll data collection system (EIS) to identify the grade level of a student enrolled in any program – including an adult secondary education program. The grade level listed for an adult student will affect ISC’s funding calculations. To calculate a student’s FTE enrollment for the purpose of the Nominal Roll:
 - Students who are working below the grade 8 level can be reported as up to 1.0 FTE, regardless of the number of courses being taken.
 - Students who are working at the grade 8 or 9 level will be funded at a base of 0.625 FTE for 1 course, plus 0.125 FTE for each additional course being taken.
 - Students who taking grade 10, 11 or 12 courses will be funded at 0.125 FTE per course.
- ▶ Each student’s grade level can be determined as part of each program’s specific intake processes / placement assessments, which may include formal standardized assessments (such as the Canadian Adult Achievement (CAAT) test), use of a program-developed placement assessment, or an assessment that is part of a student’s literacy or numeracy course.

# of Courses Being Taken	Adult Students Who Have Not Graduated High School			Adult Students Who Have Graduated High School
	WORKING AT A LEVEL BELOW GRADE 8	WORKING AT A GRADE 8 OR 9 LEVEL	TAKING GRADE 10 - 12 COURSES	ELIGIBLE SECONDARY LEVEL COURSES
1		0.625 FTE	0.125	0.125
2		0.750 FTE	0.250	0.250
3		0.875 FTE	0.375	0.375
4	Up to 1.0 FTE total, regardless of number of courses being taken	1.000 FTE	0.500	0.500
5		1.000 FTE	0.625	0.625
6		1.000 FTE	0.750	0.750
7		1.000 FTE	0.875	0.875
8		1.000 FTE	1.000	1.000
9		1.000 FTE	1.125*	1.125*

(see Note 3)

***Note:** Under BCTEA, it is possible to claim more than 1.0 FTE for grade 10 to 12 students who are enrolled in more than eight courses. Each additional course can be claimed as an additional 0.125 FTE.

Other Issues Related to Funding

Another key thing to think about is how your first year of operations will be funded, as you will not receive funding based on your October Nominal Roll submission until the following year.

ISC may consider providing advance funding to a First Nation if program implementation will result in financial hardship. As funding is dependent on the number of FTEs, having a firm number of anticipated students will be important. It is necessary to contact an ISC Funding Services Officer to initiate discussions if this is an option you want to pursue.

Other Funding Sources

Once students are included on the ISC Nominal Roll, a number of funding grants for First Nation adult education centres are available.

For example, for almost three decades a Special Education Program (SEP) administered by FNEC and FNSA has supported First Nation schools and First Nation adult education centres in meeting the needs of their students who have exceptionalities. Each year, the majority of the funding available for this program is allocated to all First Nation schools and adult education centres through grants to support their special

education programming. A separate portion of the BC SEP funding is also available through a proposal process to address extraordinary needs that cannot be met using schools' annual grants, and grants are also provided to promote access to Occupational Therapist and Speech Language Therapist services.

FNESC and FNSA also manage a comprehensive First Nations Language and Culture Program, which provides grants to First Nation schools and First Nation adult education centres for students on the Nominal Roll, totaling approximately \$14 million annually. Integrating language and culture opportunities and reflecting the Nation's values, traditions, and priorities into the learning opportunities and education setting are key components of First Nations Adult Secondary Education Programs in BC. For those reasons, many adult centres find it valuable to establish an Elder-in-Residence or Elder's Advisory Committee to provide guidance and advice.

- ▶ *A Guide to Language Revitalization: Promising Education Practices for Consideration by First Nations Schools* is available from FNESC/FNSA, which includes a section specific to language and culture programming for adult students.

BCTEA-funded First Nation schools and First Nation adult education centres are provided details about the SEP and Language and Culture grants each year, including information about their specific funding amounts, as well as the process for accessing the allocations and reporting on the sponsored activities.

You may also want to consider whether you can access other sources of funding available to support your adult secondary education program, if needed. For example, there are currently 14 Indigenous Skills and Employment Training (ISET) agreement holders in BC, with regional service areas, to help Indigenous people prepare for, find and keep high-demand jobs now and in the long term. In some cases, it may be possible to access financial assistance for secondary courses if they are part of a skills training program. Information about this opportunity can be found at <https://www.itabc.ca/aboriginal-people-trades/isets-holders>.

It is also important to clarify how the funding for adult students will be integrated into the overall school budget if adult secondary education is added to an existing First Nation school.

Unfortunately, although school-age students who are ordinarily resident off-reserve can access funding from the Ministry of Education and Child Care, adult students are currently not eligible for funding through the Reciprocal Tuition agreement with the Province of BC.

Staffing the Program

A key consideration for First Nations adult secondary education is determining who will oversee the program.

Larger programs may be led by a Program Coordinator, or the program may have a head teacher, principal, or adult education instructor leading the administration of the program and providing student supports and instruction, as appropriate.

If your courses are being taught by a qualified adult education instructor and you want to seek certification by the Ministry of Education, the instructor can apply to the BC Ministry of Education Teacher Certification Branch for a Letter of Permission (LOP) – a special permit to teach at a particular school for up to one school year. LOPs are generally used to hire an uncertified instructor when a certified teacher is not available. More information about applying for a Letter of Permission is available at <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/education-training/k-12/teach/employer-support/letter-of-permission>.

Being Attentive To Student Attendance

A key issue to be considered when operating an adult education program is how to promote regular attendance. High rates of absences can seriously threaten student success rates. Also, some researchers suggest that tendencies toward absenteeism for adult learners can ultimately lead to attrition, which poses serious challenges not only for students, but also for program success rates and ultimately an ability to continue to offer effective adult secondary education courses.

Adult learners face unique challenges related to attendance. Some adult students are uncomfortable returning to school – especially if they previously had negative educational experiences. Adults also have many competing responsibilities, possibly including work and family responsibilities, and financial constraints are common for many adult students.

What can be done to help?

- ▶ Balancing high expectations for attendance with understanding of the very real challenges adult students face is fundamental.
- ▶ Providing educational opportunities that are relevant to students' lives is important for all learners, and especially for adult learners – who often return to school with specific goals, and who often have other important priorities in their lives.

- ▶ Wrap-around supports often help adult students attend. Meal programs, counselling, financial incentives (which are often tied to reasonable attendance and progress), health services, child care, etc. can help adult learners access and be successful in the program.
- ▶ Cultural learning activities and supports, including deliberate efforts to involve Elders in the program, are also invaluable for helping students feel connected to the adult education program – which is key to students attending regularly.

▶ Suggestions for addressing this very challenging but important topic are available in a FNEC and FNSA *Toolkit For Raising The Attendance Rates of First Nations Students In British Columbia*.

▶ FNEC and FNSA have also created a new document: *First Nations Adult Secondary Education In British Columbia: A Discussion Guide*. That document outlines considerations for the continued operation of effective First Nation adult secondary education programs. Copies of the Guide are available from FNEC/FNSA.

SUMMARY

CHECKLIST OF ACTIVITIES AND CONSIDERATIONS

Community Support and Space for the Program

- We have confirmed that the community supports the adult secondary education program.

- We have confirmed how our program will be governed, and that Chief and Council supports our governance structure.

- We have clarified governance roles and responsibilities.

- We have identified a suitable facility in which to offer the adult secondary education program.

- If our adult students will be attending with school-age students who are also using the same facility, we have discussed and made necessary arrangements to ensure student safety and appropriate interactions.

Planning the Program Structure

- We have discussed how we plan to structure our programming / deliver courses.

- We know whether our program will include alternate education students, and if so, we have considered the associated issues.

- We have made arrangements for offering our graduating students the Dogwood or Adult Dogwood.

- If we plan to offer the provincial graduation certificate ourselves, we have reached out to FNEC and FNSA to discuss certification of our program.

Opening and Operating the Program

- We have confirmed ISC approval of the adult secondary education program so we can include our students on the Nominal Roll.

- We understand the Nominal Roll requirements.

- We have clarified how we will fund the first year of our program.

- We have notified FNESC/FNSA that the program has been approved and will be operational so we can access their programs and services.

- We know how we will offer courses in our first year.

- We have arranged staffing for our program and we know how the staff will be overseen.

- We have begun promoting the program and identifying interested students for at least the first year of operations.

- We are exploring or we know how we will offer First Nations language and culture learning opportunities to our students, whether we will be able to identify an Elder Advisor or Elders Advisory Committee to support the program and our students, and what other services are available to support our program and our learners and how those services will be funded or accessed.

APPENDIX A

PROVINCIAL ACADEMIC UPGRADING COURSES

The following provincial Academic Upgrading courses can be offered to adult students who already have graduated by adult education programs that have been approved by ISC through the Additions to Grades application process as of the 2021/2022 school year.

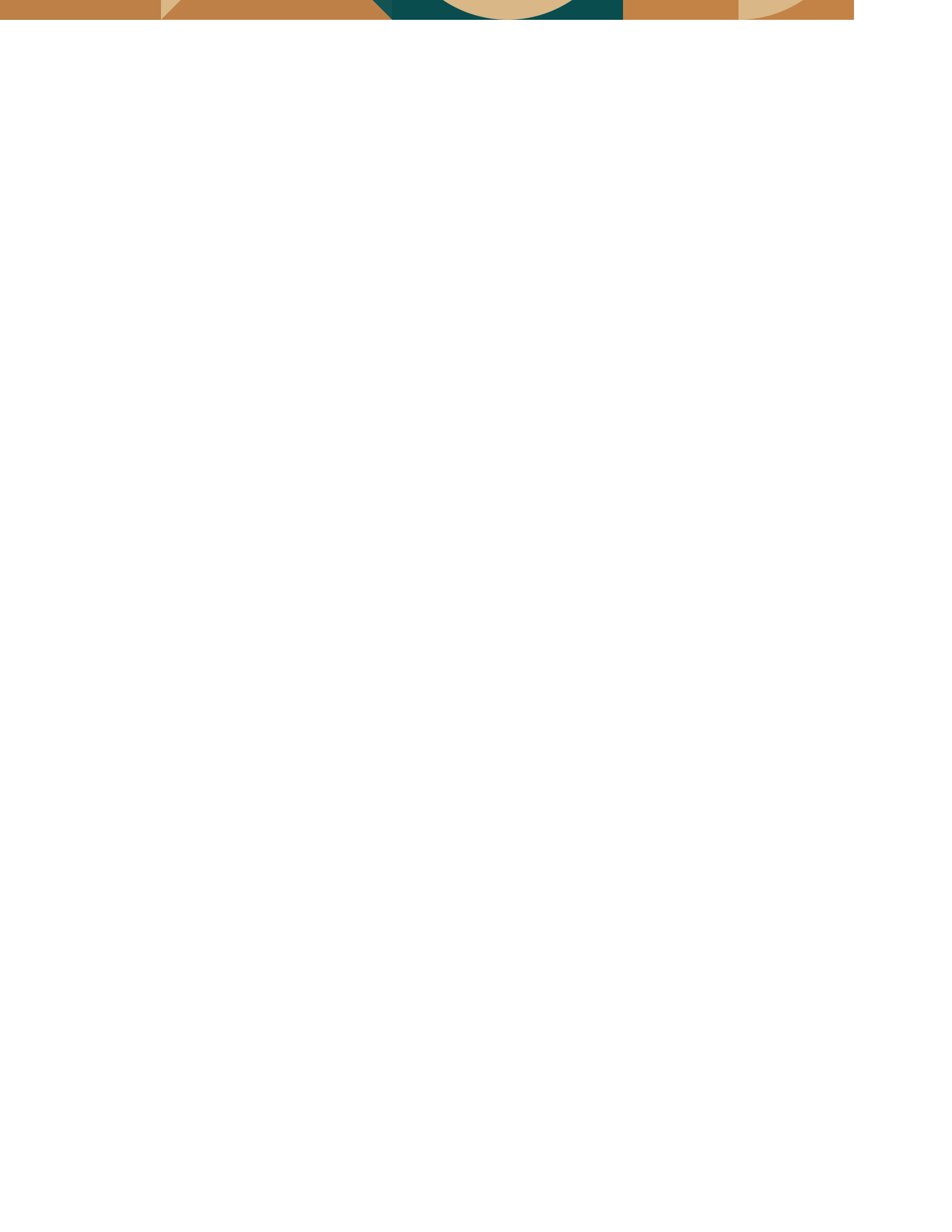
The full list of approved courses is highlighted in the ISC Nominal Roll instructions.

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> English Level 1/2: Companion-Reading | <input type="checkbox"/> Social Studies |
| <input type="checkbox"/> English Level 1/2: Companion-Speaking & Listening | <input type="checkbox"/> English First Peoples 12 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> English Level 1: Core | <input type="checkbox"/> Composition 11 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> English Level 2: Core | <input type="checkbox"/> Creative Writing 11 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> English Level 3/4: Companion - Reading | <input type="checkbox"/> Literary Studies 11 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> English Level 3/4: Companion - Writing | <input type="checkbox"/> New Media 11 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> English Level 3: Core | <input type="checkbox"/> Spoken Language 11 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> English Level 4: Core | <input type="checkbox"/> English Studies 12 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> English Level 5/6/7: Companion - Writing | <input type="checkbox"/> Life Sciences 11 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> English Level 5: Core | <input type="checkbox"/> Anatomy and Physiology 12 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> English Level 6: Core | <input type="checkbox"/> Chemistry 11 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> English Level 7: Core | <input type="checkbox"/> Chemistry 12 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Information & Communications Technology | <input type="checkbox"/> Physics 11 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Math Level 1, 2, 3, 4 or 5 | <input type="checkbox"/> Physics 12 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Math Level 6: Apprenticeship & Workplace | <input type="checkbox"/> Workplace Mathematics 11 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Math Level 6: Math Foundations | <input type="checkbox"/> Foundations of Mathematics 11 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Math Level 7: Apprenticeship & Workplace | <input type="checkbox"/> Pre-Calculus 11 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Math Level 7: Math Foundations | <input type="checkbox"/> Pre-Calculus 12 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Science: Biology | <input type="checkbox"/> Apprenticeship Mathematics 12 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Science: Chemistry | <input type="checkbox"/> Foundations of Mathematics 12 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Science: Physics | <input type="checkbox"/> Calculus 12 |



The BC First Nations Education Steering Committee (FNESC) is committed to supporting First Nations in their efforts to improve the success of all First Nations students in BC. FNESC facilitates collaborative services in the areas of research, communications, advocacy, program administration and networking, and strives to share up-to-date information about available programs, government policies and initiatives, and local, provincial and national education issues that affect First Nations learners. See www.fnesc.ca.

The BC First Nation Schools Association (FNSA) was formally established as a non-profit society with charitable status in 1996. The FNSA represents and works on behalf of First Nations controlled schools in BC and has a mandate to support those schools in creating effective, nurturing, and linguistically and culturally appropriate education environments that provide students with a positive foundation in all academic areas. More information is available at www.fnsa.ca.





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