



# Income Security Programs

2015-2016 **Annual Report**

# Table of Contents

<b>Director's Statement.....</b>	<b>3</b>
<b>Report Overview .....</b>	<b>4</b>
Vision .....	4
Guiding Principles .....	4
Service Level Standards .....	5
<b>Income Assistance .....</b>	<b>6</b>
Program Overview .....	6
Productive Choice .....	6
Program Accomplishments .....	7
Audit and Compliance .....	8
Appeals.....	8
<b>Senior Home Heating Subsidy .....</b>	<b>10</b>
Program Overview .....	10
Audit and Compliance.....	11
Appeals.....	11
<b>Student Financial Assistance .....</b>	<b>12</b>
Program Overview .....	12
Program Accomplishments .....	13
Audit and Compliance .....	13
Appeals.....	13
<b>Other Income Security Programs .....</b>	<b>15</b>
Senior Citizen Supplementary Benefit.....	15
NWT Child Tax Benefit .....	15
Territorial Workers' Supplement .....	16
<b>Income Security Programs Division Overview .....</b>	<b>17</b>
Organizational Structure .....	17
Roles and Responsibilities .....	18
Staffing .....	20
Workplace Safety.....	20
Training .....	21

Training Accomplishments .....	21
<b>Conclusion</b> .....	<b>25</b>
<b>Contact Information</b> .....	<b>26</b>
<b>Appendix</b> .....	<b>27</b>
Summary of Commitments made to the Auditor General of Canada .....	27

# Director's Statement

## A MESSAGE FROM THE DIRECTOR, INCOME SECURITY PROGRAMS

I am pleased to present the 2015-16 Income Security Programs Annual Report.

This report is intended to provide the public with important information on program operations and client services. It also highlights the progress made over the 2015-16 fiscal year as we continue to implement our commitments in response to the Office of the Auditor General's recommendations made in 2013.

The Income Security Program staff have been working diligently over this past fiscal year to deliver programs efficiently, while continuing to monitor and evaluate practices to ensure that Northerners are receiving quality services. We have:

- Put greater focus on transitioning employable clients into the labour force and making improvements to better support those who are unable to work through the Income Assistance program.
- Implemented significant enhancements to the Student Financial Assistance program to support our postsecondary students and encourage them to return to the Northwest Territories upon completion of their studies.
- Seen an increase in the number of seniors qualifying for the Senior Home Heating Subsidy; ensuring that some of our most vulnerable residents are accessing the supports they need.

As Director, I am committed to improving accountability and transparency of program administration and taking a collaborative approach for improving Income Security Programs. Our programs recognize the importance of family and community in the promotion of self-reliance. Our commitment is to provide high caliber programs and services to help Northerners to become as self-reliant as individual capacity allows, to participate fully in community life, and to share in the opportunities available to them.

Best Regards,

Jolene Saturnino  
Director, Income Security Programs

## Report Overview

This annual report will detail program accomplishments, as well as review the organizational structure of the Income Security Programs Division. The vision, guiding principles, and dedication of a service-oriented team are some of the tools that contributed to the continued support and growth of a self-reliant Northwest Territories (NWT).

Income Security Programs include:

- ❖ Income Assistance
- ❖ Senior Home Heating Subsidy
- ❖ Student Financial Assistance
- ❖ Senior Citizen Supplementary Benefit
- ❖ NWT Child Benefit/Territorial Workers' Supplement

For each Income Security Program, an overview is provided that includes statistics on caseloads and expenditures over the previous five fiscal years. Significant program accomplishments are highlighted and future initiatives are outlined. Other pertinent program information discussed includes audit and compliance, and appeals.

The organizational structure of the Income Security Programs division is provided, and outlines the roles and responsibilities of the different units. Staffing statistics are discussed and information is given on workplace safety and training initiatives. In addition, the appendix provides an overall summary of the commitments that were made to the Auditor General of Canada.

## Vision

Income Security Programs, in combination with developmental opportunities, help Northerners become self-reliant as individual capacity allows, to participate fully in community life, and to share in the opportunities available to them.

## Guiding Principles

- ❖ Encourage self-reliance
- ❖ Treat individuals with respect and dignity
- ❖ Have clear policies and procedures
- ❖ Target benefits to those most in need

While delivering quality service in the NWT is the primary focus, it is also important to maintain residents' confidence and trust in the integrity of the administration and delivery of Income Security programming. Service level standards ensure that the right person receives the right service or benefit at the right time and for the intended purpose.

## Service Level Standards

- ❖ The Income Security Programs Division strives to:
  - Provide courteous, quality service;
  - Treat individuals with dignity and respect;
  - Protect personal information and correct personal information if there has been an error or omission;
  - Only use personal information for the purpose of determining program eligibility;
  - Welcome a friend, family member, or advocate to come to meetings; and
  - Work with clients towards reaching self-reliance.
  
- ❖ This will be achieved by:
  - Providing a response to applications no later than 2 business days of verifying all required documents;
  - If approved, issuing payment within the same timeframe;
  - Returning telephone and e-mail messages within 2 business days;
  - Assisting with filing an appeal if a client does not agree with a decision; and
  - Conducting periodic customer satisfaction surveys to ensure optimum service.

# Income Assistance

## Program Overview

The Income Assistance (IA) program supports NWT residents by providing financial assistance for the basic living needs of food, clothing, shelter, and utilities. The benefits paid to clients enable them to purchase food, clothing, as well as cover the costs of their shelter and utility expenses.

The IA program further supports clients in returning to the labour force by providing benefits for education and training costs, child care expenses, and record suspension application fees. Clients can also receive assistance with the security deposits needed to obtain a home, and a furnishings allowance to purchase household goods. Furthermore, additional allowances are also provided to seniors and persons with disabilities.

Table 1 summarizes the total number of distinct cases and total expenditures for the IA program over the past five fiscal years. Each distinct case includes a single individual or a family (parent(s) and child(ren)). The statistics show that the number of distinct cases has decreased in the 2015-16 and expenditures have increased. This is a result of the continual increase in the cost of living as the IA program pays market rental assistance, as well as the actual cost of fuel and utilities. Additionally, the food allowance amounts were increased in April 2015.

*Table 1 Income Assistance Statistics*

Fiscal Year	Total Number of Distinct Cases	Expenditures
2011-12	3,321	\$15,762,161
2012-13	3,188	\$16,160,994
2013-14	3,092	\$16,937,341
2014-15	3,323	\$18,213,654
2015-16	3,301	\$20,087,837

## Productive Choice

An integral component of the IA program is the participation in a Productive Choice. The purpose of a Productive Choice is to engage clients in activities that will help lead to self-reliance. Productive Choice activities support clients by promoting decision-making and accountability.

Productive Choice activities include participation in the labour force, wellness activities, unpaid community work, traditional activities, education and training, career counselling, and parenting or care of family members. Seniors and clients with long-term or permanent disabilities are exempt from participating in the Productive Choice requirement.

Client Services Officers work with clients to assess their individual needs and make appropriate referrals to community programs and services. When a client decides on a Productive Choice, Client Services Officers provide a range of services, which include:

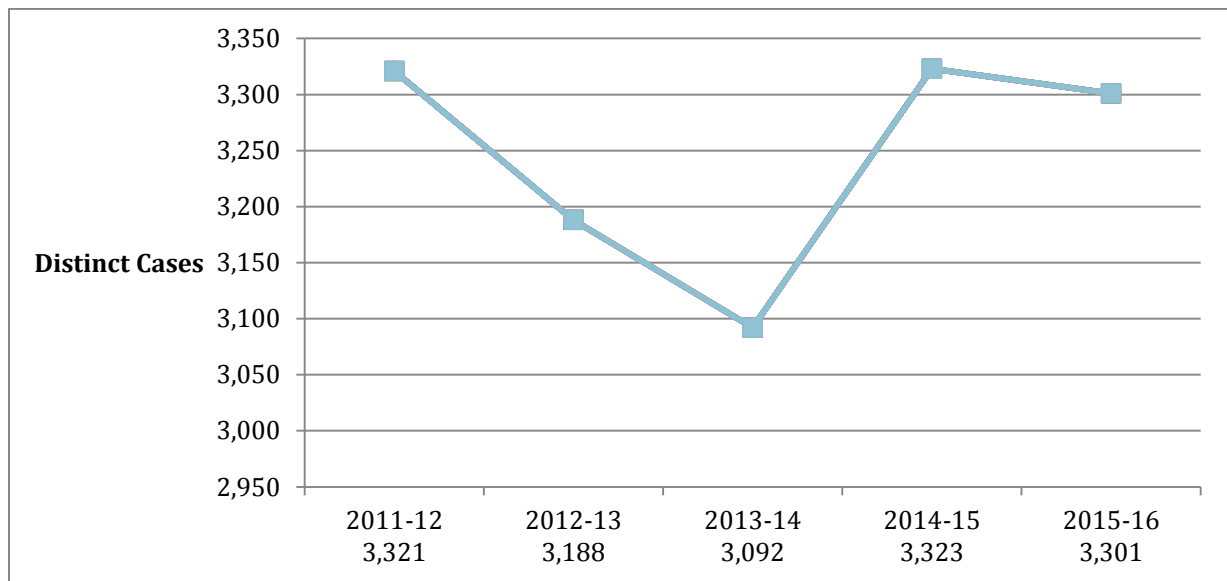
- ❖ Helping clients identify strengths, challenges, and resources;
- ❖ Coaching clients to visualize a plan and goals;
- ❖ Matching client needs with service providers; and
- ❖ Promoting and supporting of client well-being through the development of skills and abilities to improve the clients' quality of life.

The Department of Education Culture and Employment will be reviewing the Productive Choice component of the IA program in 2016-17.

## Program Accomplishments

During 2015-16, the IA program number of distinct cases showed a decrease, as seen in Figure 1 below. Factors may be higher cost of living in the smaller communities and fewer economic opportunities.

*Figure 1 Total Number of Income Assistance Distinct Cases*



In order to evaluate the effectiveness of the IA program, performance targets and outcome measures were established for the first time in 2013-14. Focus was given to clients deemed to be employable based on their age and personal circumstances. The goal of the targets was to ensure that clients are moving forward in reaching self-reliance.

Over the past year, the IA program has successfully:

- ❖ Reduced case load traffic by over 50% by placing longer-term clients on different reporting schedules to ensure certain client groups are not required to report monthly; and
- ❖ Referred 100% of long-term employable clients aged 19-29 to career counselling.

Going forward to 2016-17, IA will continue to refer employable clients to career counselling opportunities with a 100% referral target.



## Audit and Compliance

Audit and compliance standards ensure staff are delivering programs consistent with the applicable legislation and policies, and to protect the integrity of Income Security programs.

During 2015-16, the Income Security Programs Division conducted monthly IA file reviews which are submitted to the Director on a quarterly basis. IA compliance audits were completed in the communities of Behchokò, Fort Providence, Fort Resolution, Norman Wells and Tuktoyaktuk.

IA file reviews and compliance audits will continue in 2016-17.

## Appeals

All IA clients have the right to appeal decisions made regarding their eligibility and level of benefits. This right provides clients with the opportunity to verify they are receiving the appropriate benefits and that front-line staff are assessing them in accordance with program legislation.

The IA Program has two levels of appeal:

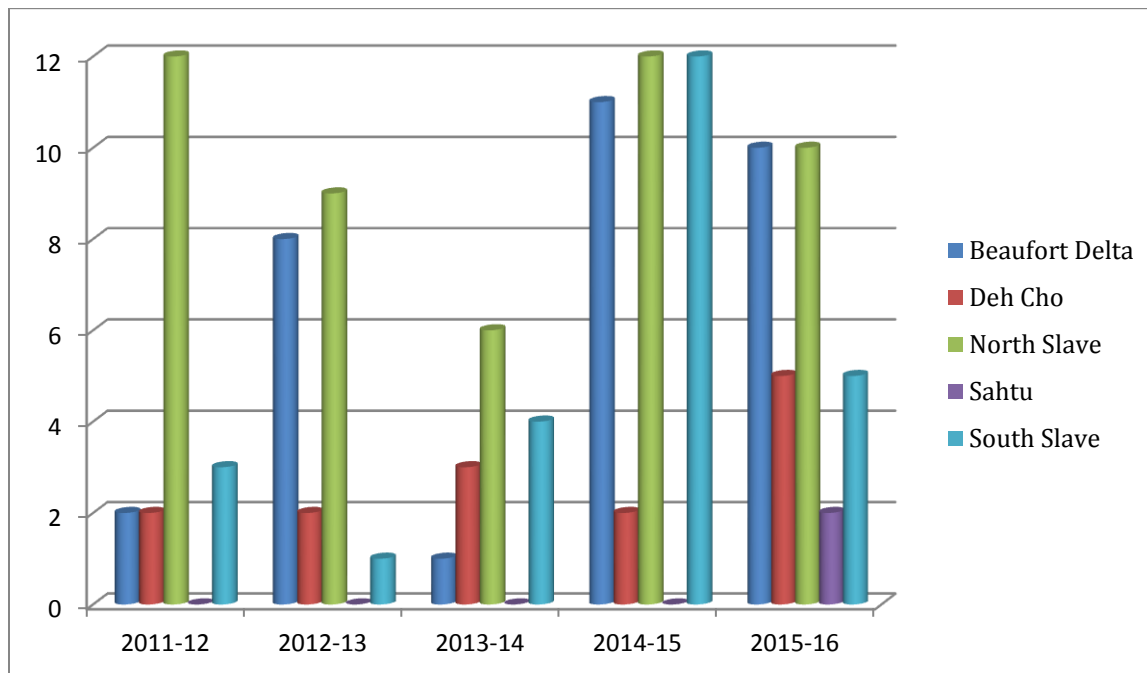
1. Social Assistance Appeal Committee (Committee); and
2. Social Assistance Appeal Board (Board).

There are 22 Committees with a total of 61 members that hear IA appeals for all NWT communities. Five members are appointed to the Board to hear appeals of Committee decisions. The role of the Committee and Board is to ensure the Client Services Officer has made decisions in accordance with program policies and legislation.

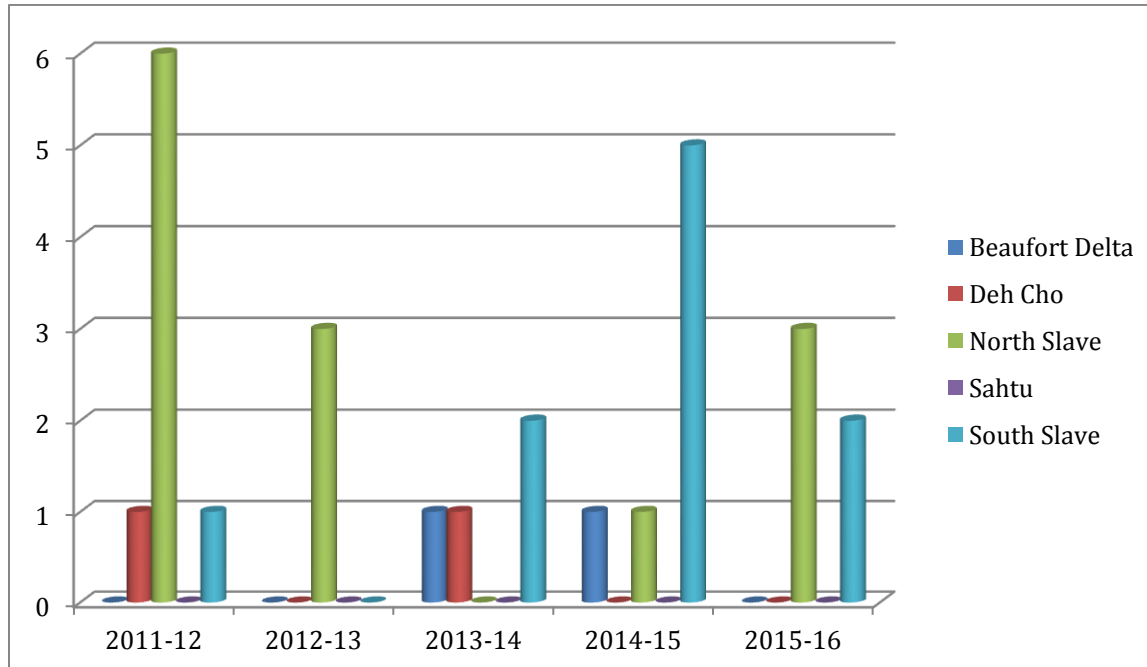
Clients have 7 calendar days to appeal a decision in writing to the Registrar of Appeals who coordinates the appeal hearing. First level appeal hearings must be heard and a decision rendered within 30 days of the filing of an application to appeal. Second level appeals to the Board have 45 days from the filing to be completed.

The following graph (Figure 2) summarizes the number of appeals heard by the Committee and Board by region for the past 5 fiscal years. The statistics show that the Committee heard the fewest appeals in 2013-14. Overall, the number of appeals heard by the Board has been decreasing over the past 5 years.

**Figure 2 Income Assistance Appeals**



*SAAC: Social Assistance Appeal Committee*



*SAAB: Social Assistance Appeal Board*

# Senior Home Heating Subsidy

## Program Overview

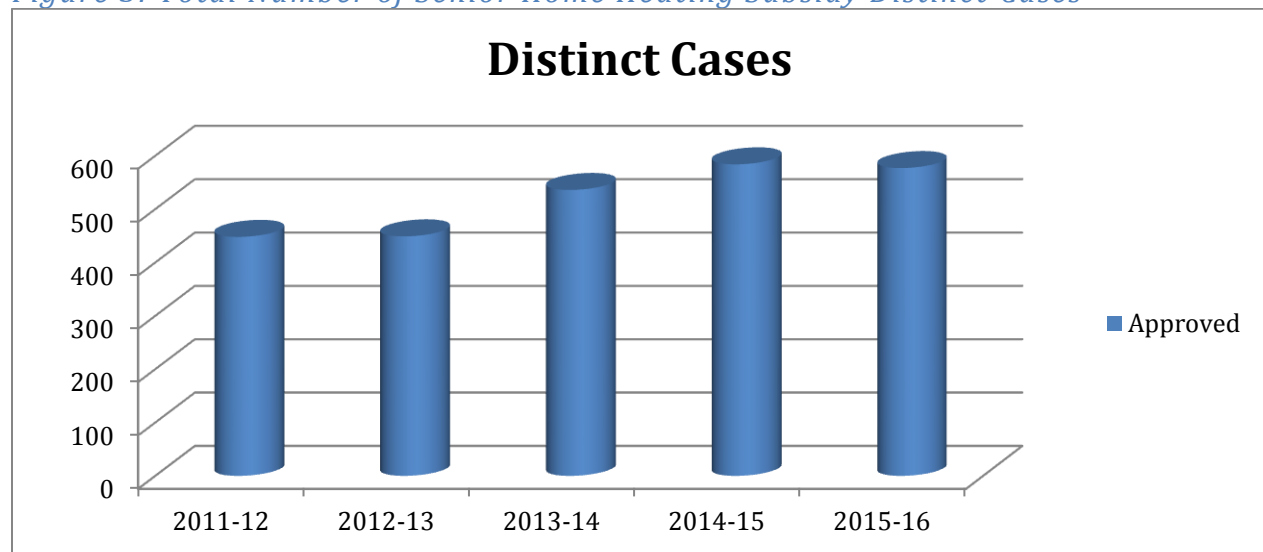
The Senior Home Heating Subsidy allows low-income seniors pay for the cost of heating their homes. Eligible seniors are able to purchase a set amount of wood, oil, propane, gas, and/or electricity depending on their household income and the community in which they live.

Table 2 summarizes the total number of distinct cases and total expenditures for the Senior Home Heating Subsidy over the past five fiscal years. Each distinct case includes a single individual or a family (senior and spouse). The statistics show that the number of distinct cases has decreased by 7 compared to the previous fiscal year, which is a decrease of 9%. Expenditures have decreased in 2015-16.

Table 2: Senior Home Heating Subsidy Statistics

Fiscal Year	Total Number of Distinct Cases	Expenditures
2011-12	448	\$1,268,759
2012-13	449	\$1,261,461
2013-14	536	\$1,642,126
2014-15	584	\$1,657,503
2015-16	577	\$1,315,299

Figure 3: Total Number of Senior Home Heating Subsidy Distinct Cases



Going forward, the Income Security Programs Division will continue to review administrative processes in order to enhance service to seniors.

## Audit and Compliance

Audit and compliance standards ensure staff are delivering programs consistent with the applicable legislation and policies, and to protect the integrity of Income Security programs.

File reviews are conducted on a monthly basis and submitted to the Director quarterly. In addition to the file reviews, Senior Home Heating Subsidy compliance audits were completed in the communities of Behchokò, Fort Providence, Fort Resolution, Norman Wells and Tuktoyaktuk.

Senior Home Heating Subsidy file reviews and compliance audits will continue in 2016-2017.

## Appeals

All Senior Home Heating Subsidy clients have the right to appeal decisions made regarding their eligibility and level of benefits. This right provides clients with the opportunity to verify they are receiving the appropriate benefits and that front-line staff are assessing them in accordance with program legislation.

There are two levels of appeal under the Senior Home Heating Guidelines:

1. An internal review by two or more Regional Managers; and
2. The Administrative Review Group.

Clients have 30 calendar days to appeal a decision in writing to the Registrar of Appeals who coordinates the internal review. Both levels of appeal are heard within 30 days of receiving the appeal.

There have been no appeals regarding Senior Home Heating Subsidy benefits at either the first or second level over the past five years. This is due to the fact that clients have the ability to have their file re-assessed based on their current year income, should they not qualify based on their prior year income.

# Student Financial Assistance

## Program Overview

The Student Financial Assistance (SFA) program assists NWT residents in pursuing a postsecondary education through a combination of grants and loans. SFA benefits assists with the costs associated with tuition, book, travel and living expenses. Additional grants are also available to students with permanent disabilities so they are able to participate fully in a postsecondary environment.

Indigenous Aboriginal residents are able to finance their postsecondary education through grant funding from the SFA program. Upon completion of their studies they will not be burdened with the repayment of student loans.

Students who complete any of grades 1 through 12 in the NWT can receive a remissible loan to help pay for their living expenses, in addition to grants for tuition, book and travel costs. Upon the successful completion of postsecondary studies, students are able to have their remissible loan forgiven if they reside in the NWT.

The loan repayment incentives component of the SFA program plays an essential part in alleviating student debt. Loan forgiveness on remissible loans and 0% interest is an important tool in recruiting educated residents to return to the NWT upon completing their studies.

The SFA program is one of the best student aid programs in Canada. Promoting the program is essential in making residents aware of the benefits of seeking a postsecondary education. In addition, a comprehensive SFA national campaign was initiated during the 2015-16 academic year to further promote the program. SFA has a Facebook and Twitter page that is used to promote the program and to link graduating students with job opportunities in both the GNWT and private sector.

Table 3 summarizes the total number of approved applications and total expenditures for the SFA program over the past five fiscal years. Each approved application represents a student who received benefits during the academic year, which runs from September 1 to August 31. Expenditures are reported by the government fiscal year; April 1 to March 31. The statistics show that the number of approved applications and expenditures has fluctuated slightly over the previous five years.

*Table 3: SFA Statistics*

Fiscal Year	Total Number of Approved Applications	Expenditures
2011-12	1,518	\$16,465,200
2012-13	1,507	\$16,371,424
2013-14	1,456	\$16,306,193
2014-15	1,342	\$15,685,695
2015-16	1,389	\$16,957,297

## Program Accomplishments

Over the past year, the SFA program has made a number of significant program enhancements to benefit students. The rates for tuition, fees and books were increased to assist with 80% of the average cost. SFA also reintroduced the revolving loan limit to encourage residents to pursue continued learning while removing the 20 semester funding limit. In addition, loan forgiveness rates were increased while still encouraging residents to move to smaller remote communities.

The administration of the travel benefit will be reviewed to determine the effectiveness of current processes.

## Audit and Compliance

Audit and compliance standards ensure staff are delivering programs consistent with the applicable legislation and policies and to protect the integrity of Income Security programs.

SFA file reviews are conducted on a monthly basis and submitted to the Director quarterly. In addition to the file reviews, a SFA compliance audit was also completed. Furthermore, 25% of all SFA applications are audited throughout the year.

SFA file reviews and compliance audits will continue in 2016-2017.

## Appeals

All SFA clients have the right to appeal decisions made regarding their eligibility and level of benefits. This right provides clients with the opportunity to verify they are receiving the appropriate benefits and that front-line staff are assessing them in accordance with program legislation.

The SFA program has two levels of appeal:

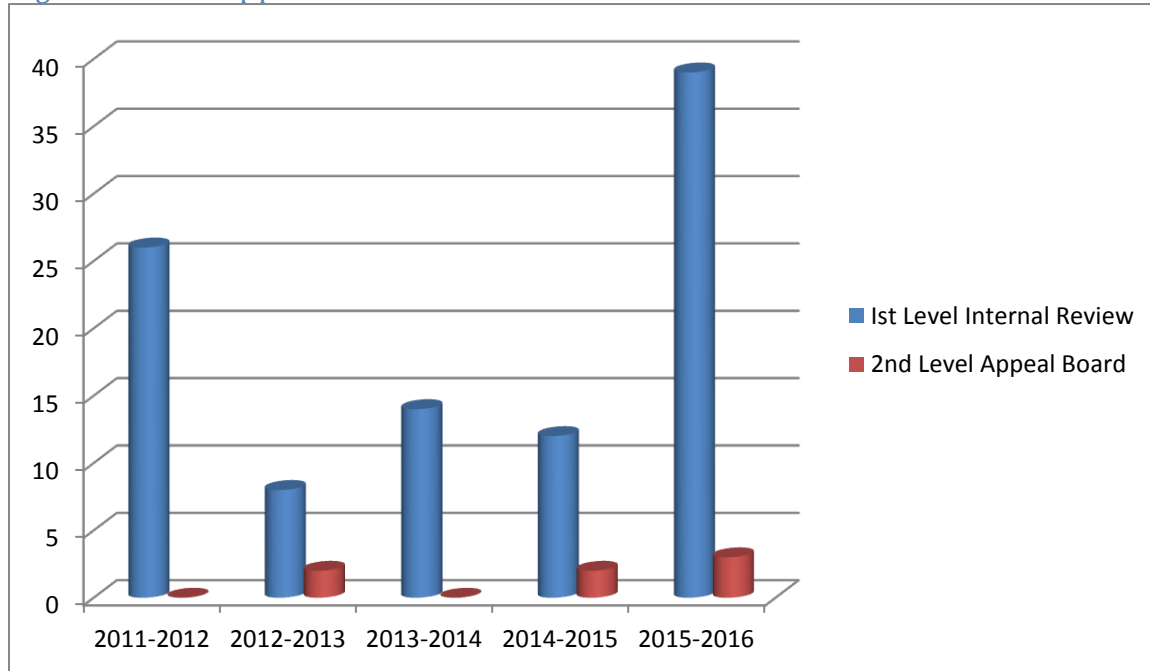
1. Internal Review; and
2. SFA Appeal Board.

Clients have 30 days to submit an appeal in writing to the Internal Review. The Internal Review is comprised of departmental staff who review the file to ensure that the *Student Financial Assistance Act*, regulations and policies have been applied correctly.

If students are not satisfied with the decision made by the Internal Review, they may submit an appeal to the SFA Appeal Board. The SFA Appeal Board is composed of five members of the public. Students may attend the second level appeal, obtain legal representation, or have someone speak on his/her behalf, such as an advocate, parent, or friend.

The following graph (Figure 4) summarizes the number of appeals heard by the Internal Review and SFA Appeal Board over the past 5 academic years. The number of first level appeals has fluctuated over the past 5 years. The SFA Appeal Board has heard very few appeals over the same time period.

*Figure 4: SFA Appeals*



## Other Income Security Programs

Income Security Programs Division has additional programs that are administered by the Federal Government. This results in a harmonized delivery system and application process for both federal and territorial benefits.

### Senior Citizen Supplementary Benefit

The Senior Citizen Supplementary Benefit (SCSB) helps offset the high cost of living by providing financial assistance NWT seniors. A monthly payment is paid to low-income seniors who are receiving federal Old Age Security benefits.

Table 4 summarizes the number of clients and total expenditures for the Senior Citizen Supplementary Benefit over the past 5 fiscal years. The statistics indicate that both the number of clients and total expenditures have remained relatively consistent over the five year period.

*Table 4: SCSB Statistics*

Fiscal Year	Number of Clients	Expenditures
2011-12	1,231	\$2,124,180
2012-13	1,214	\$2,097,539
2013-14	1,206	\$2,042,760
2014-15	1,023	\$1,964,480
2015-16	1,083	\$2,254,712

### NWT Child Tax Benefit

The NWT Child Tax Benefit (CTB) helps low-income families with the costs of raising children. Monthly benefits for eligible families are automatically attached to the National Child Benefit cheque received from the federal government.

Table 5 summarizes the average number of clients and total expenditures for the NWT CTB over the past 5 fiscal years. The data provided by the Canada Revenue Agency does not report on distinct cases for the fiscal year; therefore, the number of clients is based on the average for the fiscal year. The statistics indicate that both the average number of clients and total expenditures have continued to decrease over the past five years.

*Table 5: NWT CTB Statistics*

Fiscal Year	Average Number of Families	Expenditures
2011-12	1,609	\$1,226,581
2012-13	1,554	\$1,175,011
2013-14	1,527	\$1,147,539
2014-15	1,445	\$1,146,277
2015-16	1,502	\$1,139,739



## **Territorial Workers' Supplement**

The Territorial Workers' Supplement (TWS) is a benefit included with the NWT CTB that helps low-income families with the costs of raising children.

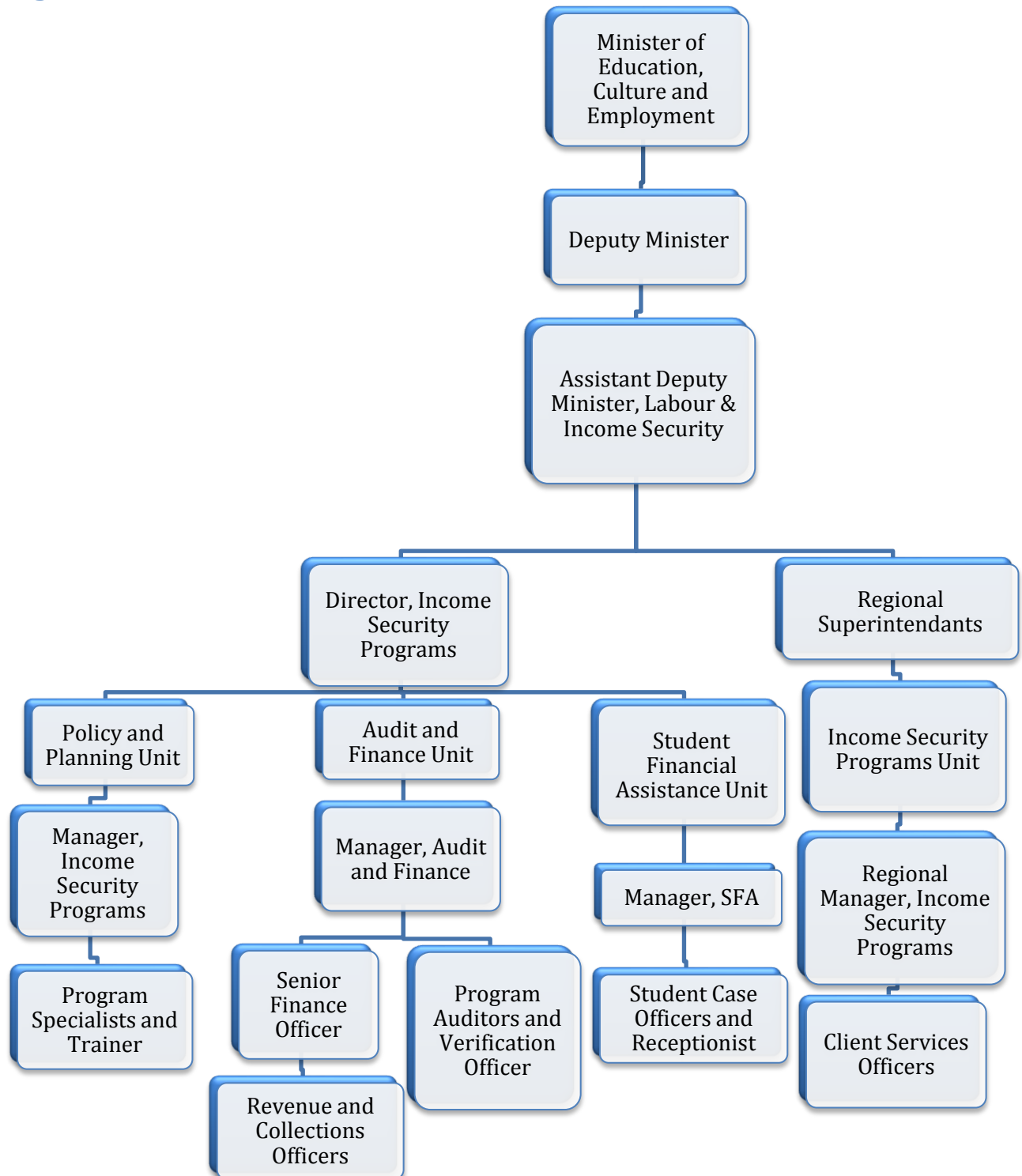
Table 6 summarize the average number of clients and total expenditures for the TWS over the past 5 fiscal years. The data provided by the Canada Revenue Agency does not report on distinct cases for the fiscal year; therefore, the number of clients is based on the average for the fiscal year. The statistics indicate that both the average number of clients and total expenditures have continued to decrease over the past five years.

*Table 6: TWS Statistics*

<b>Fiscal Year</b>	<b>Average Number of Families</b>	<b>Expenditures</b>
2011-12	1,043	\$273,829
2012-13	948	\$248,987
2013-14	904	\$237,349
2014-15	867	\$225,310
2015-16	845	\$217,094

# Income Security Programs Division Overview

## Organizational Structure



## Roles and Responsibilities

### *Headquarters*

#### **Policy and Planning Unit**

The purpose of the Policy and Planning unit is to develop policy, conduct research and program analysis to improve Income Security programs. The unit provides strategic support to senior management, facilitates program development and provides guidance to regional program delivery teams.

The Policy and Planning unit is responsible for the development of all communications materials. The unit evaluates and reports on Income Security programs and participates on multiple teams and committees, including federal/provincial/territorial groups.

Information Systems assists the Policy and Planning unit through the implementation of information systems and technologies. Information Systems designs and develops computer applications and reporting capabilities to improve operations of the Income Security Programs Division. Information Systems provides services such as Help Desk, database requests and inquiries, business processes, computer application selection and implementation, and web design.

#### **Divisional Finances Unit**

The Divisional Finances unit administers the forgiveness and repayment of NWT student loans. This is done centrally from Headquarters by three Finance Officers.

Through two the Program Auditor's, the Audit and Finance unit provides assurance that value for money for the GNWT is achieved and that policies, procedures, and program guidelines are adhered to. In addition, the Verification Officer provides verification support services by obtaining highly confidential information about clients and ensuring completeness and accuracy of applications.

#### **Student Financial Assistance Unit**

The Student Financial Assistance program is delivered centrally from Headquarters by four Student Case Officers. On average, over 1,400 applications are paid each year with two primary application intakes for programs starting in the fall and winter semesters. Student Case Officers travel throughout the NWT to provide program information sessions to parents and students. In addition, Student Case Officers liaise with high schools, postsecondary institutions, and Aboriginal governments and organizations.

### *Regional Delivery*

#### **Income Security Programs Division Staff**

Regional staff are responsible for the delivery of the IA and the SHHS programs. Each region comprises of a Regional Superintendent, Regional Manager and Client Services Officers (CSO) who determine eligibility for both programs. CSOs also focus on the aspects of service management in helping clients reach the goal of self-reliance.

The five regional centres are located in Inuvik, Norman Wells, Yellowknife, Fort Smith and Fort Simpson. Communities that do not have a full-time CSO are able to access IA and SHHS programs through telephone, fax, email services, or regularly scheduled visits from itinerant Client Services Officers.

As of March 2016, there were 29 Client Services Officers appointed under the *Social Assistance Act*, located in 18 communities in the NWT. This included three itinerant Client Services Officers who do not carry a static caseload. They are required to travel within their region, and sometimes to other regions throughout the NWT, to deliver programs when Client Services Officers are away from the office.

The following table indicates the location and number of Client Services Officers:

*Table 7: Location of Client Services Officers*

<b>Community</b>	<b># of Positions</b>
Aklavik	1
Behchokò	3
Déline	0.8
Fort Good Hope	0.8
Fort Liard	0.5
Fort McPherson	1
Fort Providence	1
Fort Resolution	0.5
Fort Simpson	2
Fort Smith	2
Hay River & Katlodeeche First Nation	2
Inuvik	3
Paulatuk	0.5
Tuktoyaktuk	1
Tulita	0.8
Ulukhaktok	0.8
Whatì	1
Yellowknife	5

## Staffing

Table 8 provides statistics on the total number of positions within the Income Security Programs Division, which include the following staff:

- Director, Income Security Programs Division
- Administrative Assistant (2)
- Manager, Income Security Programs
- Program Specialist (2)
- Trainer
- Manager, Divisional Finances
- Senior Finance Officer
- Finance Officer (3)
- Expenditure Officer
- Program Auditor (2)
- Verification Officer
- Manager, Student Financial Assistance
- Student Case Officer (4)
- Student Case Receptionist and Support
- Regional Manager, Income Security Programs (5)
- Senior Client Services Officer
- Client Services Officer (29)

*Table 8: Income Security Programs Division Staffing Statistics*

Total Positions	Indigenous Aboriginal	Indigenous Non-Aboriginal	No Priority	Vacant
57	38	10	8	1
<b>Total Percentage</b>				
100%	66%	18%	14%	2%

## Workplace Safety

The Department of Education, Culture and Employment has a responsibility to ensure that employees work in a healthy and safe environment. Discussion with some clients can be emotional and stressful, causing them to react in an unfriendly manner. Additionally, Client Services Officers located in small and remote communities often work in isolation.

In 2015-16, Client Services Officers were provided with training that was designed to help mitigate risk and implement personal safety strategies, including:

- ❖ Motivational Interviewing
- ❖ Client Service Professional.

In addition to training, several offices have been renovated and equipped with security measures such as, glass partitions, service windows, client interview rooms, and alternate exit doors.

Going forward, the Income Security Programs Division will continue to monitor workplace safety to ensure a safe environment for all staff.

## Training

Training is a key component to ensuring Income Security programs are being delivered consistently and fairly across the NWT. The Department of Education, Culture and Employment will continue to provide ongoing training and professional development opportunities for employees.

## Training Accomplishments

Between April 2015 and March 2016, a variety of Income Security Programs (ISP) training sessions and opportunities took place. These training sessions included face-to-face delivery of Statutory Training, online/distance delivery of Statutory Training and competency modules delivered through a combination of GoTo Meetings, SharePoint and ProProfs, Social Assistance Appeal Board (SAAB) and Social Assistance Appeal Committee (SAAC) training, an annual 3-day Client Services Officer (CSO) Conference, and a quarterly CSO Newsletter.

### *1. ISP Statutory Training*

Between April 2015 and March 2016, a total of 14 staff members received ISP Statutory Training. This included 8 CSOs, 1 Regional Manager and 5 Superintendents. All individuals successfully completed the training requirements.

Statutory Training sessions occurred in August 2015, October 2015 and March 2016 in addition to 4 online/distance sessions in April 2015, July 2015, December 2015 and March 2016. ISP Statutory Training covers the following:

- ISP overview
  - Overview of GNWT ISPs and history
  - Overview of ISPs specific to ECE
  - Code of Ethics for ISP employees
  - CSO Resource & Procedures Manual
  - ISP Verification Procedures Manual
- Income Assistance (IA)
  - Regulations, Policies and Procedures
  - Forms
  - Activities and scenarios
- Senior Home Heating Subsidy (SHHS)
  - Guidelines
  - Forms
  - Scenarios
- CMAS training
- How to write effective Appeal Briefing Notes, Director's Approvals and CMAS notes
- GNWT Code of Conduct

- How to make appropriate referrals
- Client/customer service
- CSO Competency training and other training modules, such as:
  - Non-Violent Crisis Intervention Training
  - Business Writing
  - Empathic Listening
  - Emotional Intelligence
  - Financial Literacy

A final exam is administered on the last day of Statutory Training. Participants must pass the exam with a minimum of 70% in order to be assigned a Social Welfare Officer (SWO) number which enables one to deliver IA and SHHS.

In cases where an individual does not pass the exam, an individual training plan is developed to address specific needs.

## *2. SAAB/SAAC Training*

In November 2015, all SAAB and some of the Regional SAAC members received Fair Appeal Hearing training delivered by the Foundation of Administrative Justice (FOAJ). The ISP Trainer also took part in the training in order to incorporate the knowledge provided by the FOAJ into future SAAB and SAAC training. This event took place over 3 days and was tailored to the specific needs of the SAAB and SAAC members, and included an overview of:

- Introduction to administrative law
- Duty to act fairly
- Interpreting legislation
- Evidence
- Decision making
- Decision writing
- Fair hearings

The learning objectives for participants were:

- Describe the focus of administrative law and appeals
- List the 4 basic elements of the duty to be fair
- Distinguish procedures from content of administrative decisions
- Use and apply statutes using basic elements of the modern method of interpretation
- Apply a decision making model to enhance consistency of decision making
- Apply best practices to telephone and in-person hearings
- Examine their decisions to meet best practices in content and style

The training concluded with a mock appeal hearing and final exam. A mark of 70% or higher was required in order to pass the exam; of the 12 participants, 10 successfully passed the exam.

In addition to the training provided by the FOAJ, all SAAC members received training in the fall of 2015, delivered regionally.

### *3. Competency-based Training*

A Core Competency Model for CSOs was developed in 2013-14 and was incorporated into CSO Performance Appraisals for the 2013-14 performance period. A Competency Assessment Tool and specific competency training modules were also developed; competency training modules have been implemented in both Statutory Training and individual training opportunities.

### *4. Web-based Training*

The use of technology in training allows for an accessible, flexible, customizable and cost-effective alternative to face-to-face training. Currently, Go-To Meetings and ProProfs are the primary web-based software used in ISP training.

Go-To Meetings are an online meeting platform with the following features:

- Video-conferencing
- Desktop viewing
- Keyboard & mouse sharing
- Instant messaging
- Chat
- Audio service
- Drawing tools

Go-To meetings have been used to train CSOs on new procedures and to provide Superintendents and ISP Regional Managers with information such as CMAS web report training.

ProProfs is an online training and testing tool which allows for the creation and tracking of quizzes, surveys and online training. ProProfs has been used primarily for online/distance refresher training and delivering one-on-one competency-based training.

### *5. SharePoint*

SharePoint is a portal-based platform that allows for document and file management, collaboration and online discussions. All ISP documents and forms are located on SharePoint in addition to training documents, a shared calendar, CSO Newsletters, useful links and a discussion board.

### *6. Client Services Officer Newsletter*

The CSO Newsletter is a tool that allows for the sharing of information, best practices and to reinforce important program changes. The newsletter also provides helpful reminders and health & wellness strategies. CSOs are encouraged to provide input and content for the newsletter. The newsletter is distributed on a quarterly basis and is communicated to all ISP staff via SharePoint.



## 7. Client Services Officer Conference

The annual CSO Conference took place on January 12, 13 and 14, 2016. In addition to a break out session specific to CSOs on the first day, the CSOs, in conjunction with the CDOs and ETOs, received 2 days of Certified Service Professional (CSP) training. This conference was attended by 26 CSOs, 16 CDOs, 5 ETOs and 6 Headquarters staff.

The CSP component of the conference was facilitated by Marie-Josée Martel of the Institute for Citizen-Centred Service. The CSP Program was launched in 2014 and designed to promote a culture of excellence by:

- Establishing a common understanding of citizen-centric service delivery
- Encouraging the growth of knowledgeable and skilled staff who demonstrate a commitment to citizen-centric service delivery
- Promoting shifts in frontline staff behaviours and attitudes leading to improved service quality
- Enhancing frontline capabilities and employee engagement

Below is a summary of the participant evaluation for the CSP training:

### *Summary of Participant Evaluation – Yellowknife, January 13-14, 2016*

Content	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neither Agree nor Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
The learning objectives for this course were clear	18	22	3	2	1
The learning objectives were achieved	18	25	3	0	0
The content met my expectations	15	20	10	0	0
The content was easy to understand	23	19	4	0	0
The content is valuable for service professionals	23	20	3	0	0
Participant discussions were encouraged	28	17	1	0	0
The discussions were valuable (e.g.: engaging, good supplement to the content.)	18	27	1	0	0
The Pace of the course was appropriate	18	24	2	2	0
The facilitator was knowledgeable	33	12	1	0	0
The facilitator(s) shared best practices and/or personal experiences to related to citizen-centered service delivery	30	14	2	0	0
The facilitator(s) encouraged questions and discussion	32	13	1	0	0

The facilitator(s) responded to questions well	34	10	1	0	0
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## Conclusion

The Income Security Programs Division works diligently to ensure that residents have access to the services they need when they need them. Improvements in training, program compliance, policy clarification, and program evaluation were all steps towards providing a more transparent and accountable set of programs.

While 2015-16 saw improvements to Income Security programs, there are a number of areas that require more attention. Moving forward in 2016-17, there are plans to fine tune improvements to services by clarifying policies, procedures, and guidelines; continue monitoring client files for compliance and conducting regular audits to ensure clients receive the benefits to which they are entitled; and continue to provide training to employees that supports their professional development.

In the upcoming year the Income Security Programs Division will continue to enhance upon the performance targets for the IA program. A review of the Productive Choice requirement under the IA program will be conducted.

The Income Security Programs Division continues to be committed to delivering the best programs and services possible to the residents of the NWT.

## Contact Information

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# Appendix

## Summary of Commitments made to the Auditor General of Canada

RECOMMENDATION	COMMITMENT	DEADLINE	STATUS
The Department of Education, Culture and Employment (ECE) should clarify policies, procedures and guidelines outlining income security program delivery requirements and how to meet them. It should ensure staff understand and are following procedures and guidelines.	Produced and implemented an Income Assistance Policy Manual, Verification Manual and a Client Service Officer resource Manual	October 2012	Completed <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>These are living documents that will be updated as policies change.</li> </ul>
	Rewrite Senior Home Heating Subsidy (SHHS) Guidelines to ensure clarification on when the subsidy can be used	October 2013	Completed
	Dedicate staff for persons with disabilities and seniors	May 2013	Completed <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Position staffed in July 2014.</li> </ul>
	Develop and implement a delivery system for seniors and persons with disabilities	August 2013	In-Progress
	Train Regional Managers on using existing reports to monitor, track and set targets	November 2013	Completed
	Develop, in partnership with other social envelop departments, an integrated service management approach that is client-centered	2013-14	Completed
	Ongoing use of technology to deliver training	Ongoing	Completed/Ongoing
	Use various media to ensure knowledge of requirements and procedures such as through staff Newsletter	Ongoing	Completed/Ongoing
	Implement a work load standard for CSOs	2014-15	In-Progress
	Align training with core competency	2013-14	Completed/Ongoing
	Reduce case load traffic by placing more longer term clients on different reporting schedules to ensure certain specific client groups are not required to report monthly	2013-14	Completed/Ongoing
	Develop curriculum for service management	2013-14	In-Progress
	Support <i>Building on the Strength of Northerners – A Strategic Framework toward with Elimination of Poverty in the NWT</i>	Ongoing	Completed/Ongoing
As ECE introduces its revised Child Care User	Make changes to the Child Care Benefit. These changes include a streamlined	September 2012	Completed

RECOMMENDATION	COMMITMENT	DEADLINE	STATUS
Subsidy (CCUS), it should develop clear guidelines that are consistent with program requirements and clearly communicate these requirements to front-line staff and potential applicants.	application process and the ability for CSOs to make timely payments		
	All staff to be trained using a web based delivery method	September 2012	Completed
	Commitment to ongoing training	Ongoing	Completed/Ongoing
	Produce training plans for staff	2014	Completed/Ongoing
	Support <i>Right from the Start: A Framework for Early Childhood Development in the NWT</i>	Ongoing	Completed/Ongoing
ECE should ensure Regional Managers and supervisors formally monitor client files. The monitoring should include regularly scheduled reviews of client files as well as the use of standard templates in regions to help ensure a consistent approach. In cases where monitoring uncovers deficiencies or other issues, regional managers and supervisors should follow-up formally.	Meeting to finalize the audit tool	January 2013	Completed/Ongoing
	Establish a process for monthly reviews, reporting process and monthly follow up	March 2013	Completed
	Continued support of monitoring process through training and guidance	Ongoing	Completed/Ongoing
	Continued monitoring of regional auditing, including setting targets for performance	Ongoing	Completed/Ongoing
	The Director of Income Security Programs will monitor all audits	Ongoing	Completed/Ongoing
ECE should clarify program requirements for Productive Choices in its guidance to CSOs and clearly communicate them. Regional Managers should monitor compliance with Productive Choice requirements and take corrective action where necessary.	The standard audit tool includes a review by the Regional Managers of participation in Productive Choices	March 2013	Completed
	Determine a work load standard for CSOs	2013-14	In-Progress
	Consistent and regular training	Ongoing	Completed/Ongoing
	Competency evaluations conducted for all staff to ensure skills match required competency	2013-14	Complete
In accordance with its program requirements, ECE should audit a selection of Income Security files periodically to ensure clients receive benefits to which they are entitled. ECE should establish a framework	Complete five community audits in 2012-13	March 2013	Completed
	Report on findings	June 2013	Completed
	An audit manual for the Program Auditor that includes a framework for file reviews	October 2012	Completed
	Secure additional resources for the audit section to work in partnership with the collections of IA client overpayments	2013-14	Completed

RECOMMENDATION	COMMITMENT	DEADLINE	STATUS
to identify files to audit, based on pre-determined criteria. Results should be reported to the Director of Income Security annually.	Determine training needs for Program Auditing staff	2013-14	Completed/Ongoing
	Initiate audits of 10% of SFA files	March 2014	Completed
	Professional development for Program Auditor	2013-14	Complete/Ongoing
	Ensure appropriate training is in place for staff	2013-14	Complete/Ongoing
When ECE identifies Income Assistance overpayments, it should comply with the Financial Administration Manual requirements for collecting overpayments. It should follow collection procedures through issuing invoices and written notifications, and forward outstanding debts to the Department of Finance for collection when required.	Review required changes to CMAS	2013-14	In-Progress
	Reconcile debts in CMAS	September 2013	Completed
	Verify all outstanding overpayments	September 2013	Completed
	Follow the process for statute barred debts	April 2013	In-Progress
	Invoices issued using the GNWT SAM system	2013-14	In-Progress
	Complete required changes to CMAS	2013-14	In-Progress
	Ensure appropriate staffing levels to prevent overpayments and assure recovery where appropriate	2013-14	In-Progress
	Training in place to prevent overpayments	2014-15	In-Progress
ECE should modify its management of student loans to ensure that identification of student loans due for repayment is not solely reliant on student notification or manual review by officials.	Review of remission rates	2013-14	In-Progress
	Develop a loans policy/procedure manual	November 2013	In-Progress
	Complete loan audit on loan remission/repayment process and collection	2013-14	Completed
	Enhance the automated process to identify loans due for repayment	2014-15	In-Progress
	Development of a loans module in the GNWT SAM accounting system	2014-15	TBD
ECE should formalize current and future competency-based training programs for CSOs and Student Case Officers. It should identify and provide core training so they can attain and maintain the competencies their job requires. The Department should also ensure staff members receive regular training updates, to ensure they	Conduct annual performance appraisals	June 2013 and ongoing	Completed
	Develop a competency model for CSOs	June 2013	Completed
	Individual assessments on all CSOs and SCOs to identify training needs	August 2013	Completed
	Monitoring new processes will identify training deficiencies to be incorporated in training activities	August 2013	Ongoing
	All staff will take Mental Health First Aid Training	2013	Completed
	Develop competency model for Student Case Officers	March 2014	In-Progress
	Develop competency model for Regional Managers and the Manager of SFA	March 2014	In-Progress
	Incorporate disability sensitivity and	2013-14	In-Progress

RECOMMENDATION	COMMITMENT	DEADLINE	STATUS
fully understand income security program requirements.	awareness training for staff		
ECE should establish targets and outcome measures that align with the overall objective for its Income Security programs. ECE should review the data it currently collects on Income Security programs to ensure it has the data required to measure whether targets and outcomes are being met. ECE should develop a plan to identify when it will evaluate its program to determine if the objective of its Income Security programs is being met.	Review data that is currently collected to determine success targets	August 2013	Completed
	Complete a cost analysis of the indexing of the SFA living allowance	2013-14	In-Progress
	Establish and set targets for longer term employable IA clients referrals to career counselling and involvement with training/skills development and/or work	2013-14	Completed
	Set and report on targets	2013-14	Completed
	Develop an annual report that will include: Income Security staff turnover, workplace safety issues, IA payment systems by community	April 2014	In-Progress
	Automated reporting tool to report ability to track success through ECE programs	2014	In-Progress
	Complete a cost analysis of the indexing of the SFA living allowance	2013-14	In-Progress
	Increase index benefits under the IA program (food, clothing and incidentals)	2014-15	Completed
	Program evaluation to determine if objectives are being met	2014-15	TBD
	Conduct a cost analysis of providing an incidental allowance to all IA clients	2014-15	In-Progress
	A complete review of the SFA Regulations making necessary amendments	2014-15	In-Progress
	Conduct a review and report on the Productive Choice component of the IA program	2014-15	In-Progress
	Complete a review of the SHHS income thresholds using the market basket measure	2015-16	TBD
	In cooperation with the federal government and the NWT Bureau of Statistics develop a Northern basket measure	2015-16	TBD