

NORTHERN DEVELOPMENT MINISTERS' FORUM

**Looking Back, Looking Forward:
Enhancing the Effectiveness of the Northern Development Ministers'
Forum for the Future**

2023 Report

Churchill, Manitoba

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Table of Contents

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	1
INTRODUCTION	3
OVERVIEW.....	3
APPROACH	3
SECTION 1: LOOKING BACK	4
BACKGROUND.....	4
MANDATE	4
OBJECTIVES	5
MEMBER JURISDICTIONS.....	5
PROCESS.....	6
TERMS OF REFERENCE	6
ACTION PLAN	6
EMERGING ISSUES	6
PRIORITIES.....	7
PROJECTS	7
GOVERNANCE	7
PAST FORUMS.....	7
PREVIOUS PROJECTS.....	8
SECTION 2: LOOKING FORWARD	11
OBJECTIVES	11
SURVEY.....	12
JURISDICTIONAL RESPONSES	13
ASSESSMENT OF PRIORITY PROJECTS.....	13
NDMF MANDATE	14
PARTICIPATION	17
LOGISTICS.....	18
PRIORITIES.....	20
COMMUNICATIONS	22
OTHER INFORMATION	22
CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDED ACTIONS	23

Appendix A - Looking Back, Looking Forward Jurisdictional Survey 28

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: List of Previous Gatherings of the Northern Development Ministers’ Forum 8
Table 2: List of Previous Northern Development Ministers’ Forum Projects and Undertakings ... 8
Table 3: NDMF Priority Projects (2013-2019)..... 13

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Priority Theme Survey Responses - 2020 and 2023 Comparison 21

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

For over 20 years, the Northern Development Ministers' Forum (NDMF) has operated as an intergovernmental table and a consensus-based body focused on addressing commonly shared economic, fiscal and social issues of importance to the North, being inclusive of Indigenous and Youth.

During the NDMF 2019 annual meeting, Ministers directed the Senior Officials Working Group (SOWG) of the NDMF to assess past Forums to determine their overall impact and effectiveness and make forward-looking recommendations to improve the functioning of the NDMF moving forward. In 2020, the project working group designed and distributed a survey to be completed by NDMF member jurisdictions.

As a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, the NDMF has been postponed for the past three years. Furthermore, during the pandemic, we have seen several shifts in government due to provincial, territorial elections, as well as the establishment of new ministries within provincial and territorial governments that have assumed responsibility for the NDMF. The shift has also resulted in a loss of corporate knowledge in relation to the NDMF. Given this transition, there is a need to revisit the intended purpose of the NDMF, and examine its functionality.

This report has been compiled using a variety of sources including past NDMF priority projects, process surveys and informal discussions with legacy members of the SOWG to provide eight recommendations anticipated to result in more effective, influential and relevant outcomes for future Forums and projects, including:

1. Maintain NDMF's membership and not include all ten provincial jurisdictions.
2. Continue the NDMF's mandate to focus on the north and not specifically include 'rural'.
3. Ministers direct the current host jurisdiction (Manitoba) to establish an informal rotational Chair Committee with the future host (Newfoundland and Labrador) and present on the outcomes, lessons learned and recommendations related to the implementation of a NDMF rotational Chair Committee at the next Forum.
4. Each host jurisdiction endeavours to canvass all other member jurisdictions on potential Forum dates early into the planning phase to minimize scheduling conflicts and strengthen in-person participation of Ministers.
5. Ministers direct the NDMF's SOWG to develop a standardized process for annually conducting a jurisdictional scan of member priorities and emerging issues to present to Deputy Ministers for ongoing discussion and direction.

6. Whenever possible, future Forums will be held in Northern communities, incorporate engaging speakers and presentations and allocate multiple opportunities for Ministers to meet privately and discuss Northern priorities and strategic actions.
7. Ministers direct the SOWG to develop and maintain a communal NDMF Outcomes Spreadsheet to track the status of recommendations, information sharing and ongoing outcomes/impacts of all future Forum projects and initiatives. In addition, the previous Chair jurisdiction will deliver an Outcomes Session during all future Forums to present on the status of previous project recommendations and impacts since the last Forum.
8. Ministers direct the NDMF's SOWG to develop a standardized work plan template that incorporates details on pre- and post-project engagement activities with timelines wherever possible.

The above recommendations are anticipated to generate the necessary communication, processes, and support necessary to implement and advance ongoing enhancements to the practises, initiatives and outcomes of the NDMF in order to strength its future ability to achieve its mandate and objectives on an ongoing basis

INTRODUCTION

OVERVIEW

The Northern Development Ministers' Forum (NDMF) was established in 2001 with the purpose of advancing the diverse and common interests of the people living in Canada's North, while raising awareness among decision-makers and the public about the accomplishments, contributions and potential of Northerners. The Forum provides an opportunity for federal, provincial and territorial Ministers representing Canada's North to collectively gather and advance issues of common interest and raise awareness of opportunities pertaining to the North.

The Forum is typically organized around a series of priority projects, as identified by Ministers. Priority projects focus on economic, fiscal and social issues of importance to the North, being inclusive of Indigenous and Youth.

The theme of the most recent Forum held in Yellowknife in 2019 was "Inclusive Partnerships in the North". During Ministerial discussion at the 2019 NDMF, Ministers directed the Senior Officials Working Group (SOWG) to assess the overall impacts and effectiveness of the Forum. Given this direction, a project working group of NDMF member jurisdictions was convened to undertake a priority project titled "Looking Back, Looking Forward" the purpose of which is to gain insight into the format, and purpose of the NDMF with an aim to:

- Determine the overall impact and effectiveness of the Forum; and
- Advance forward-looking recommendations to improve the functioning of the NDMF in the future.

APPROACH

The "Looking Back, Looking Forward" priority project working group is comprised of government officials from the following NDMF member jurisdictions: Alberta, Canada (Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada), Manitoba, Newfoundland and Labrador, Northwest Territories, and Québec. The working group was led by the Government of Manitoba, represented by the department of Natural Resources and Northern Development.

The NDMF has been postponed for the past three years due to the COVID-19 pandemic, during this time there has been a transition in participating ministries and staff across many of the Forum's member jurisdictions. While the initial intention of the "Looking Back, Looking Forward" priority project was to incorporate a stronger forward-looking focus, the hiatus of the Forum and shift in participation has highlighted the need to include an overview of previous content and

current format of the NDMF as useful background information that will support an enhanced and collective understanding of the Forum and its activities among all jurisdictional members.

The first section of this report offers an overview of former NDMF efforts and current processes to provide a foundational background that strengthens an understanding of the Forum's past and present focuses. A stronger understanding of the Forum's previous and current focuses will help facilitate collective discussions and decisions on forward-looking opportunities to enhance the functioning of the NDMF by all members on an ongoing basis.

Drawing from the last five NDMFs, the second section of this report provides consolidated survey responses from NDMF member jurisdictions. The survey was distributed during the inception of the "Looking Back, Looking Forward" project in 2020 to gather insights on the Forum's overall impact and effectiveness across several focus areas. Although not a detailed analysis, responses and information shared by member jurisdictions will be valuable in stimulating further discussions related to the proposed enhancements outlined in the recommendations of this report.

SECTION 1: LOOKING BACK

BACKGROUND

In September 2000, Ministers responsible for northern development met in Happy Valley-Goose Bay, Newfoundland and Labrador to hold the initial meeting of the Northern Development Ministers' Council. In 2001, the name was changed to the Northern Development Ministers' Forum (NDMF) with Saskatchewan hosting the Forum in La Ronge.

The NDMF's mission is focused on addressing commonly shared economic, social and environmental issues and priorities of importance to the North, being inclusive of Indigenous and Youth where appropriate to advance the diverse and common interests of people living in Canada's North, while raising awareness among decision-makers and the public about the accomplishments, contributions and potential of the North.

MANDATE

The NDMF's mandate includes the following priorities:

- Reinforce cooperation among Federal, Provincial and Territorial (FPT) authorities in northern regions of Canada;
- Provide leadership on strategic actions that will advance the socio-economic development of the North;

- Increase awareness, share best practices on northern priorities, and where appropriate, engage relevant FPT tables; and
- Recommend actions to be implemented by Ministers in accordance with their mandate and within their jurisdictions.

OBJECTIVES

To carry out its mandate, the four primary objectives of the NDMF are to:

- 1. Advance the sustainable development of the North through the exchange of information, related research, programs and policies:**
 - Coordinate with relevant FPT tables to foster two-way information exchanges;
 - Liaise and stay informed of other intergovernmental tables' work plans for possible links or impacts on Northern issues;
 - Encourage the North to increase investment, tourism, and export opportunities.
- 2. Promote results of the NDMF:**
 - Inform partners and stakeholders, disseminate information, and share reports and findings with relevant FPT tables;
 - Disseminate information about the NDMF's priorities and work plans.
- 3. Track outcomes:**
 - Gather information from participating jurisdictions on impacts the Forum and projects have had in their departments/ministries and/or government.
- 4. Hold Ministers' Forum every 12-18 months to discuss current and emerging issues, build relationships among jurisdictions, make recommendations, establish priorities and give future direction to senior officials.**

MEMBER JURISDICTIONS

The NDMF is composed of Ministers responsible for northern development from member jurisdictions that currently include the governments of Yukon, Northwest Territories, Nunavut, British Columbia¹, Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, Ontario, Québec, Newfoundland and Labrador, and the Government of Canada.

¹ As of March 2, 2023, British Columbia confirmed an inability to continue as a full participant in the NDMF at the Ministerial and executive level at this time, but would continue its participation at the staff-level on the Senior Officials Working Group.

In Canada, the statistical classification of North and South is defined as a variant of Standard Geographical Classification. The definition of the North is the one used by the Conference Board of Canada's Centre for the North, based on the NDMF definition. In this definition, the North is broadly defined as the three territories and the northern extent of Newfoundland and Labrador, Quebec, Ontario, Manitoba, Saskatchewan, Alberta and British Columbia based on provincially determined definitions that generally reflect administrative regions.

Other provinces, including Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, and Prince Edward Island, have not previously been incorporated into the NDMF because they do not have territory that is defined as “North”.

PROCESS

Since the host of the Forum rotates on an ongoing basis, a series of documents have been developed to facilitate consistency across Forums, as well as to provide parameters around the governance structure associated with this Forum and processes that support the selection and implementation of priorities and associated projects.

TERMS OF REFERENCE

The NDMF’s Terms of Reference defines its purpose and structure and outlines the ways in which jurisdictional members work together to advance the mandate and common goals of the Forum. The NDMF’s initial Terms of Reference was advanced in 2012 from existing Procedural Guidelines previously developed in 2008. The NDMF Terms of Reference is reviewed every three years, or as necessary, during the in-person SOWG meeting and has been subsequently updated in 2015 and 2019. Additional updates and enhancements will be presented to Ministers during the 2023 Forum for approval.

ACTION PLAN

Each NDMF is structured and guided by an Action Plan that outlines a central theme and the details and planning related to the series of priorities and/or projects, as identified by Ministers during the previous Forum. A draft Action Plan is assembled by the host jurisdiction using a pre-established framework and with feedback from all member jurisdictions. The draft Action Plan is provided to Deputy Ministers for review and for briefing Ministers to gain approval of the NDMF Action Plan that guides the current Forum proceedings.

EMERGING ISSUES

In advance of each NDMF, the SOWG compiles a list of emerging issues along with a brief description of each that indicates how, if it became a priority project, would fulfill the Forum’s objectives. The emerging issues are presented to Deputy Ministers for direction on which issues are presented to Ministers during the upcoming Forum for Ministerial direction on the priorities that will be investigated further by the SOWG, with outcomes reported and presented during the following NDMF.

PRIORITIES

Ministers of the NDMF determine and direct a maximum of three priorities to be advanced through expert panels, guest speakers, site visits, or other methods as proposed. Typically, the direction and focus of the priority projects stems from the emerging issues presented to Ministers during the proceedings for each Forum. A smaller working group is assigned to develop a work plan to advance each priority.

PROJECTS

If required, NDMF project(s) are carried out to address the priorities selected by Ministers during the Forum and should conclude after a maximum of two years. Priority project abstracts with recommendations are distributed among the SOWG for Deputy Minister's review prior to the Forum. Projects are presented during the Forum by a Minister or delegated member of the SOWG.

GOVERNANCE

Ministers, Deputy Ministers, the SOWG, and a Communications Committee participate in a variety of NDMF activities, responsibilities, and roles during each Forum. The specifics related to the responsibilities across the various participant roles are detailed within Section 5 of the NDMF Terms of Reference.

Member jurisdictions rotate duties associated with leading the NDMF as Chair/host, either individually or in collaboration with another member jurisdiction. The host jurisdiction(s) coordinates and leads the development of Forum-related details, materials, meetings and information sharing among senior officials.

The remaining member jurisdictions provide support by attending meetings, sharing information, reviewing and providing feedback on related documents, and either leading or supporting the development of priority activities and project reports delivered during each NDMF.

In addition to NDMF member roles, the Canadian Intergovernmental Conference Secretariat (CICS), a neutral conference support body, provides administrative, coordination, translation, interpretation, distribution, security and technical services. Assistance by CICS helps to ensure the effective delivery of the Forum and publically communicated outcomes and future focus of the NDMF.

PAST FORUMS

Since its official establishment of the NDMF in 2001, there have been 14 Forums hosted across the various member jurisdictions. The following table lists the forums held since inception.

Table 1: List of Previous Gatherings of the Northern Development Ministers' Forum

YEAR	HOST	FORUM THEME
2000	Newfoundland and Labrador	Northern Development Ministers' Council
2001	Saskatchewan	Name Change: Northern Development Ministers' Forum
2002	Alberta	Building the North: Awareness-Capacity-Strength
2003	Nunavut	The Way Forward: Tradition-Knowledge-Innovation
2004	Québec	Maximizing Economic and Social Impacts from Major Projects in the North
2005	Manitoba	Education, Training and Employment
2006	Yukon	Knowledge North
2007	Canada	The Dynamic North
2008	Northwest Territories	Developing the Tourism Potential of the North
2010	Ontario	Seizing the Future: Taking Hold of Our Economic Opportunities
2012	Newfoundland & Labrador	Northern Directions: An Evaluation of Strategic Planning in Canada's North
2013	Saskatchewan & Alberta	Energy For All
2015	Yukon	Build North: Infrastructure, Partnerships, and Innovations
2016	Nunavut	The North: A Land of Opportunities
2017	Québec	The Importance of Collaboration in Northern Development
2019	Canada and Northwest Territories	Inclusive Partnerships in the North

PREVIOUS PROJECTS

Since its inaugural year in 2002, member jurisdictions of the NDMF have collaborated to produce and present 42 undertakings and deliverables over the past 14 Forums. The following table provides an overview of the project activities and updates initiated by the NDMF.

Table 2: List of Previous Northern Development Ministers' Forum Projects and Undertakings

Year	Title	Type	General Theme
2002	Northern Awareness Enhancement Campaign	Presentation	Visibility
2002	Economic Investment Infrastructure Strategy	Presentation	Infrastructure
2002	Recruitment and Retention Best Practices Inventory	Report	Workforce
2003	Northern Innovation: Using the Innovation Agenda for Northern Development	Discussion Paper	Innovation

2003	Recruitment and Retention in Northern Canada: Partnerships for Progress	Discussion Paper	Workforce
2003	Northern Infrastructure Strategy Progress Report	Presentation	Infrastructure
2004	Initiatives to Maximise Economic and Social Impacts from Major Projects in the North	Inventory	Maximise Impacts
2004	Northern Transportation Investment Strategy	Presentation and Communication Plan	Infrastructure
2005	Education, Training and Employment	Report	Workforce / Training
2005	Website Development	Communication Protocol	Visibility
2005	Northern Innovation	Environmental Scan and Report	Innovation
2006	Knowledge North	Presentation	Research Access
2006	Initiatives to Maximise Economic and Social Impacts from Major Projects in the North	Report	Maximise Impacts
2006	Northern Transportation Investment Strategy	Discussion Paper	Infrastructure
2006	Education, Training and Employment	Report	Workforce / Training
2007	Climate Change	Panel Discussion	Climate Change
2007	Future Direction of the Northern Development Ministers' Forum	Report	NDMF
2008	Tourism Potential in Canada's North	Report	Tourism
2008	Initiatives to Maximize Economic and Social Impacts from Major Projects in the North	Report	Maximise Impacts
2010	Aboriginal Youth Entrepreneurship – Success Factors and Challenges	Briefing Paper and Inventory	Entrepreneurship
2010	Changing Northern Economies : Helping Northern Communities Build a Sustainable Future	Report	Resource Management Partnerships
2010	Northern Infrastructure	Report	Infrastructure
2010	Climate Change and Best Management Practices in the Boreal Forest	Presentation	Climate Change
2012	Aboriginal Economy Youth Entrepreneurship	Report	Entrepreneurship
2012	Northern Directions: An Evaluation of Strategic Planning in Northern Canada	Report	Strategic Planning
2012	NDMF Terms of Reference	Terms of Reference	NDMF
2013	Housing Priority Discussion Paper	Report	Housing

2013	Pan-Northern Minimum Broadband Standard	Report	Information Communications Technology
2013	Sustainable Resource Development – Benefit Agreements	Report	Benefit Agreements
2015	Managing Change	Presentation	Development
2015	Innovating Development	Report	Development
2015	Sustainable Resource Development – Benefit Agreements Phase II (pushed to 2016)	Presentation	Benefit Agreements
2016	Northern Food Security	Panel Discussion	Food Security
2016	Strengthening Working Relationships between Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal Governments when considering Northern Development	Panel Discussion and Report	Relationship Building
2016	Sustainable Resource Development – Benefit Agreements Phase II	Report	Benefit Agreements
2017	Alternative Heating Sources for Remote Northern Communities	Panel Discussion and Report	Renewable Energy
2017	Regional Northern Data: Implications for Understanding and Advancing Development in the North	Panel Discussion and Issues Paper	Development
2017	Labour Force Development	Environmental Scan and Panel Discussion	Workforce
2019	Government Service Delivery in the Northern Communities	Discussion Paper	Service Delivery
2019	Assessing Economic Growth Potential for Northern Communities	Report	Economic Growth
2019	Economic Resiliency: Helping Northern Communities and Businesses Prepare for and Recover from Disasters	Presentation	Recovery and Resiliency
2019	Growing the Digital Economy in Rural and Remote Northern Communities	Report	Information Communications Technology

From the above table of 42 NDMF activities, projects and updates, 52% (22) have been delivered through reports, 19% (8) as presentations, 12% (5) by discussion papers, and the remaining 17% (7) under other forms including inventories, panels, protocols and terms of reference documents.

A few of the 42 NDMF undertakings represent activities and projects that have been carried over across multiple Forum proceedings as updates or additional investigations to advance recommendations proposed as part of previous efforts.

Being cognisant of this, the general themes and focus areas of the NDMF undertakings have concentrated on northern: Workforce/Training or Entrepreneurship 17% (7); Infrastructure 12% (5); Partnerships and Benefit Agreements 12% (5); Development 7% (3); Maximising Impacts 7% (3); Innovation 5% (2); Information Communications Technology 5% (2); Climate Change 5% (2); Visibility 5% (2); and NDMF documents or updates 5% (2). The remaining nine general themes included, Tourism; Housing; Food Security; Renewable Energy; Research; Strategic Planning; Service Delivery; Economic Growth; and Recovery/Resiliency each represent 2% with one undertaking related to each.

The above information and quantification should be taken into consideration by NDMF member jurisdictions as the focus of future Forums and the selection of priority projects are proposed and determined moving forward. A stronger understanding of previous Forum undertakings should help avoid duplication, facilitate information sharing on past efforts and outcomes, and build upon previous work as issues of Northern significance evolve over time.

SECTION 2: LOOKING FORWARD

OBJECTIVES

As identified earlier, the aim of the “Looking Back, Looking Forward” priority project is to assess the overall impact and effectiveness of the format, content and outcomes of the NDMF over the previous five years in order to:

- Determine the overall impact and effectiveness of the Forum; and
- Advance forward-looking recommendations to improve the functioning of the NDMF in the future.

In advancing a new vision and direction for the Forum, officials examined several core questions associated with the Forum’s format, focused on the current configuration and design of the NDMF; its content, bringing attention to the utility and significance of the NDMF; and outcomes, related to advising decision makers and sharing information. The core questions among the three areas assessed include:

FORMAT

- Would broadening the Forum to include all 10 provinces be worthwhile, to make it a true Federal/Provincial/Territorial Table?
- Would broadening the Forum’s mandate to include both Northern and rural be worthwhile?

- Would having a permanent Chair (perhaps with a rotating Co-Chair) be more effective? If yes, who should that be?
- Would having a permanent location/time of year for the Forum be more effective?

CONTENT

- What steps can be taken to make the Forum more effective and responsive to the needs of provinces, territories and the federal government?
- What steps can be taken to increase participation and engagement at the Forum?

OUTCOMES

- How many NDMF projects or undertakings have incorporated recommendations?
- How broadly have previous NDMF projects or undertakings been distributed or shared?

The information and jurisdictional insights gathered as part of this report were included and structured based on their high potential to generate considerations and practical opportunities for increasing the effectiveness of the NDMF so that the Forum and its various undertakings will result in more effective, influential, and relevant outcomes moving forward.

SURVEY

In 2020, the initial working group for the “Looking Back, Looking Forward” project curated and distributed a survey among NDMF members. Refer to Appendix A for a blank copy of the jurisdictional survey. The aim of the survey was to gather jurisdictional input on the Forum’s overall impact and effectiveness within several focus areas including:

1. **Assessment of Priority Projects**
2. **NDMF Mandate**
 - Forums effectiveness and responsiveness to FPTs
 - Priority Projects effectiveness and responsiveness to FPTs
3. **Participation**
 - Benefits
 - Increased involvement and engagement
4. **Logistics**
 - Tracking recommendations and follow up
5. **Priorities**
 - Top priorities over the next three years
6. **Communications**
 - Processes to enhance communication
7. **Other Comments and Suggestions**

Of the NDMF's eleven jurisdictions, ten provided responses to the 2020 survey.

JURISDICTIONAL RESPONSES

The following sections present a summary of survey responses by focus area.

1. ASSESSMENT OF PRIORITY PROJECTS

The first section of the survey focused on an assessment of previous NDMF priority projects, which was limited in scope to the past five Forums.

There have been 16 projects conducted over the past five Forums, but only 13 projects were reported on as part of the survey. The difference was a result of projects that had been carried over for multiple years and were amalgamated into a single response.

For each project reported, the survey asked jurisdictions to identify if recommendations were included as part of the project and if any related follow-up occurred in relation to the recommendations or to the project in general after the Forum.

Table 3: NDMF Priority Projects (2013-2019)

Year	Project Name	Recommendations Y/N	Follow-up Y/N
2013	Housing Priority Project Discussion Paper	Y	Unknown
2013	Pan-Northern Minimum Broadband Standard	Y	Y
2013	Sustainable Resource Development - Benefit Agreements	Y	Unknown
2015	Managing Change (Panel Discussion)	N	N
2015	Innovating Development	N	Unknown
2015	Sustainable Resource Development - Benefit Agreements Phase II (held over to 2016)	Y	N
2016	Northern Food Security	Y	Unknown
2016	Strengthening Working Relationships between Aboriginal and Non-Aboriginal Governments when considering Northern Development	Y	Y
2016	Sustainable Resource Development - Benefit Agreements Phase II	Y	N
2017	Alternative Heating Sources for Remote Northern Communities	Y	Unknown
2017	Regional Northern Data: Implications for Understanding and Advancing Development in the North	Y	Y
2017	Labour Force Development (Panel Discussion)	N	Unknown
2019	Government Service Delivery in the Northern Communities (Discussion document)	N	N

2019	Assessing Economic Growth Potential for Northern Communities	Y	N
2019	Economic Resiliency: Helping Northern Communities and Businesses Prepare for and Recover from Disasters	Y	N
2019	Growing the Digital Economy in Rural and Remote Northern Communities	Y	Y

Of the 16 projects, 75% (12) included recommendations. The 25% (4) without recommendations were mainly attributed to the project being a discussion document or delivery through a discussion panel or presentation during the Forum.

Conversely, jurisdictional responses regarding recommendation follow-up for the 16 projects, resulted in substantially fewer ‘yes’ votes at 25% (4). The remaining ‘no’ and ‘unknown’ responses were split with 37.5% (6) each, suggesting an important opportunity to strengthen follow-up processes related to project recommendations and information sharing.

2. NDMF MANDATE

The Forum provides an opportunity for federal, provincial and territorial Ministers representing Canada’s North to collectively gather and advance issues of common interest and raise awareness of issues pertaining to the North.

To gauge opinions on the Forum’s mandate, the survey incorporated a Likert scale to gather jurisdictional opinions related to how effective the NDMF has been with respect to the following priorities of its mandate:

- Reinforce cooperation among Federal, Provincial and Territorial (FPT) authorities in northern regions of Canada;
- Provide leadership on strategic actions that will advance the socio-economic development of the North;
- Increase awareness, share best practices on northern priorities, and where appropriate, engage relevant FPT tables; and
- Recommend actions to be implemented by Ministers in accordance with their mandate and within their jurisdictions.

The following provides the results of jurisdictional opinions based on the survey responses:

Reinforcing cooperation among federal, provincial and territorial authorities in northern regions of Canada:



Providing leadership on strategic actions that will advance the socio-economic development of the North:



Exchanging information, increasing awareness, sharing best practices on northern priorities, and where appropriate, engaging relevant FPT tables:



Recommending actions to be implemented by Ministers in accordance with their mandate and within their jurisdictions:



As far as increasing awareness and sharing information and best practices, responses of NDMF jurisdictions seem united on the positive side of the scale. However, an overwhelmingly high percentage of ‘somewhat effective’ responses were received with regards to reinforcing cooperation, providing leadership to advance action, and recommending actions to be implemented that resulted in the highest ‘not at all effective’ response rate.

To gather additional opinions on the Forum's mandate, the survey also posed some open-ended questions asking jurisdictions to identify what steps could be taken to make both the Forum and its priority projects more effective and responsive. The following key themes were drawn from jurisdictional responses:

IDENTIFIED ACTIONS TO MAKE THE FORUM MORE EFFECTIVE AND RESPONSIVE

Priorities and Emerging Issues: More input from Ministers and Deputy Ministers, more opportunities to plan and provide input, include internal departments and entities relevant to the issue, poll jurisdictions for common themes and mandate alignment, include emerging issues into the Action Plan and bring in robust speakers to discuss issues.

Governance: Review and follow the NDMF Terms of Reference, and a need to focus on enhancing the governance structure to provide greater oversight and a unified agenda.

Indigenous Participation: Active Indigenous participation to provide an enhanced perspective.

Logistics: The Forum should be held in the North, with experts and speakers invited to present.

FPT Collaboration: Consider the inclusion of all Canadian jurisdictions, provide more opportunities for Ministers to caucus, and network/share information with FPT tables.

Research: Analysis and review that moves beyond best practices and bring in experts on issue items/areas.

Communications: Communicate accomplishments of the Forum and conduct future research on innovative communication strategies to implement.

Role of the Minister: Ministers lead the focus and actively participate to help advance relevant issues of mutual importance.

IDENTIFIED ACTIONS TO MAKE PRIORITY PROJECTS MORE EFFECTIVE AND RESPONSIVE

Deputy Minister Engagement: Need to be engaged, support the identification of emerging issues and projects that impact multiple jurisdictions, and regularly brief Ministers to inform direction or decision.

Communications: Ensure communication reaches decision-makers.

Indigenous and Stakeholder Engagement: Engage Indigenous experts and incorporate Indigenous needs wherever possible.

FPT Collaboration: Develop a stronger understanding of commonly shared issues and policy challenges, and how work of the NDMF can support other FPTs or Ministries outside the portfolio of northern development.

Choosing Projects: Selected in advance, commonly shared issues across multiple jurisdictions, relevant-useful-current, move beyond economic focus, and conduct an annual jurisdictional survey/scan.

Structuring Projects: Ministries direct the projects, and increased cooperation among jurisdictions to conduct research and support project outcomes.

Tracking Outcomes and Evaluation of Projects: Need to develop follow up plans, incorporate follow up actions into a work plan, and include evaluations or methods to support continuous improvements.

3. PARTICIPATION

There are eleven jurisdictions that participate in the NDMF, including Alberta, British Columbia, Canada, Manitoba, Newfoundland and Labrador, Northwest Territories, Nunavut, Ontario, Quebec, Saskatchewan and Yukon.

This section of the survey aimed at gathering insights related to benefits of participation. The principal benefits of participation in the NDMF reported by jurisdictions related to building collaborative and productive relationships and the development of a network of colleagues and contacts across jurisdictions. Furthermore, commonly shared benefits reported by jurisdictions were associated with building awareness of issues and opportunities and learning from each other on how to manage similar challenges through cross-jurisdictional research and studies to bring more visibility to the North and strengthen policy issues.

The survey also asked jurisdictions to identify what could be done to ensure greater participation and engagement by Ministers and Deputy Ministers. The following key themes were drawn from jurisdictional responses:

OPPORTUNITIES TO INCREASE PARTICIPATION AND ENGAGEMENT

Develop an Engaging Agenda: Incorporate more private meetings and face-to-face time, include engaging speakers, presentations on local success initiatives, field trips and tours, and limit length of project presentations.

Thematic Priorities: Stronger connection with government mandates and priorities, include hot-button issues, incorporate concrete actionable recommendations, and integrate a feedback mechanism.

Minister Meetings: Private Minister meeting to engage informally, collaborate on common issues and direct the focus of priorities and projects.

Host in Northern Regions: Offer hands-on experiences and opportunity for local interactions to see first-hand impact of policy in the region.

Broaden the Mandate: Focus on regional economic issues, include all Canadian jurisdictions, enhance the governance structure, and integrate funds to support critical research or analysis.

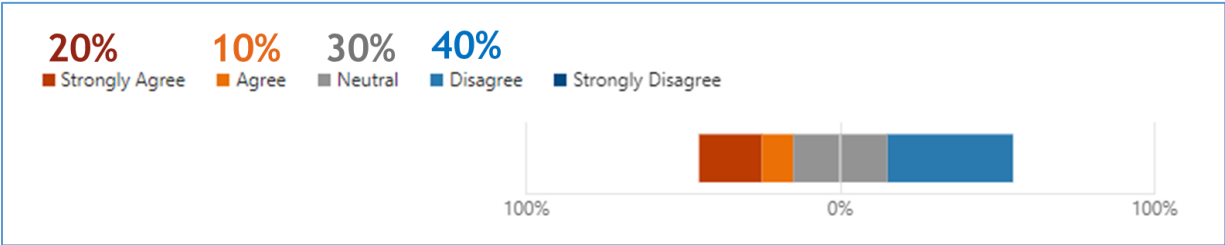
Forum Logistics: Schedule for the same time of year or well in advance to minimize travel days and ensure attendance.

4. LOGISTICS

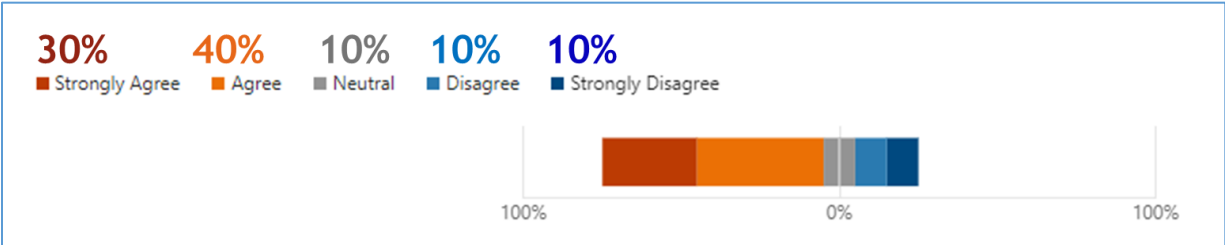
The NDMF has established a formal Terms of Reference to guide its work and endeavours to meet every 12-18 months with the host jurisdiction selecting the date and location of the NDMF.

To gauge opinions on the logistics of the Forum, the survey incorporated a Likert scale to gather jurisdictional member’s level of agreement or disagreement with respect to the following four statements related to logistics:

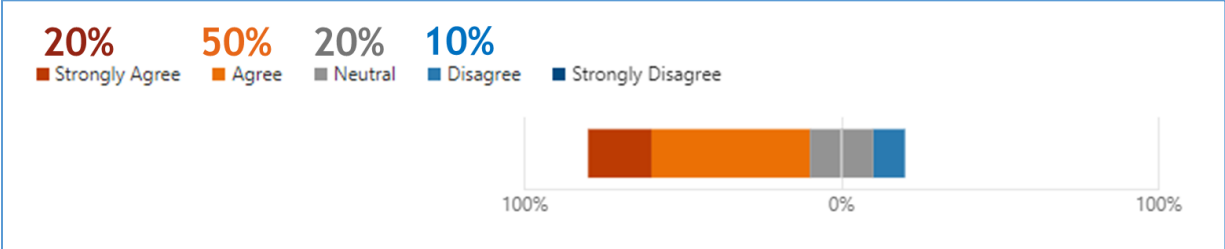
It would be more effective if a two-year Chair rotation is adopted as opposed to the current one-year rotation:



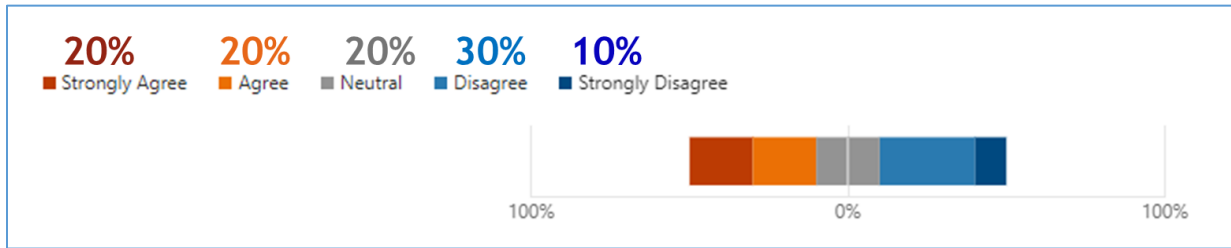
The NDMF is enhanced if it adopts a model that includes a permanent chair with a rotating co-chair:



The NDMF’s current membership is effective in allowing the Forum to pursue its mandate:



The membership of Indigenous organizations in the NDMF would enhance the Forum’s effectiveness:



As far as increasing effectiveness by transitioning to a two-year Chair rotation, the majority of jurisdictional responses fell slightly more towards the ‘disagree’ end of the scale. In addition, an overwhelmingly high percentage of jurisdictions ‘agree’ or ‘strongly agree’ that the adoption of a permanent Chair, with a rotating Co-Chair would enhance the NDMF. Jurisdictional responses also trended among ‘agree’ or ‘strongly agree’ that the NDMF’s current membership allows the Forum to pursue its mandate. However, jurisdictional responses were split as to whether the membership of Indigenous organizations in the NDMF would enhance the Forum’s effectiveness.

To gather additional opinions on the logistics of the Forum, the survey also posed an open-ended question asking jurisdictions to suggest opportunities to track the attainment of priority project recommendations and follow-up on other priority project outcomes. One jurisdiction flagged that this may not be the role of the NDMF, as its mandate does not include ensuring recommendations are attained. Apart from an alignment with the current mandate, the following key themes related to NDMF roles were drawn from jurisdictional responses:

Ministers: Direct follow up activities or put a motion forward to report back on results and information sharing.

Deputy Ministers: Incorporate an interim project check-in during the Deputy Minister’s meeting(s).

Senior Officials Working Group: Track and report on project implementations for a predetermined/minimum timeframe; ensure projects are achievable, realistic and include key performance indicators; include reporting, implementation, monitoring, tracking and follow-up within work plans; share results with relevant departments/entities; explore recommendations and outcomes particular to Indigenous communities; follow up with member jurisdictions; and identify in-progress recommendations within an appendix to the Action Plan

Chair: Work with members to produce a communication strategy for each project; and include a report back on previous project outcomes segment in each Forum.

Proposed Permanent Chair: Could form a rotating committee with both the previous and current Co-Chairs to distribute reports, track outcomes and follow up on recommendations; and maintains project recommendations in a spreadsheet to monitor progress.

5. PRIORITIES

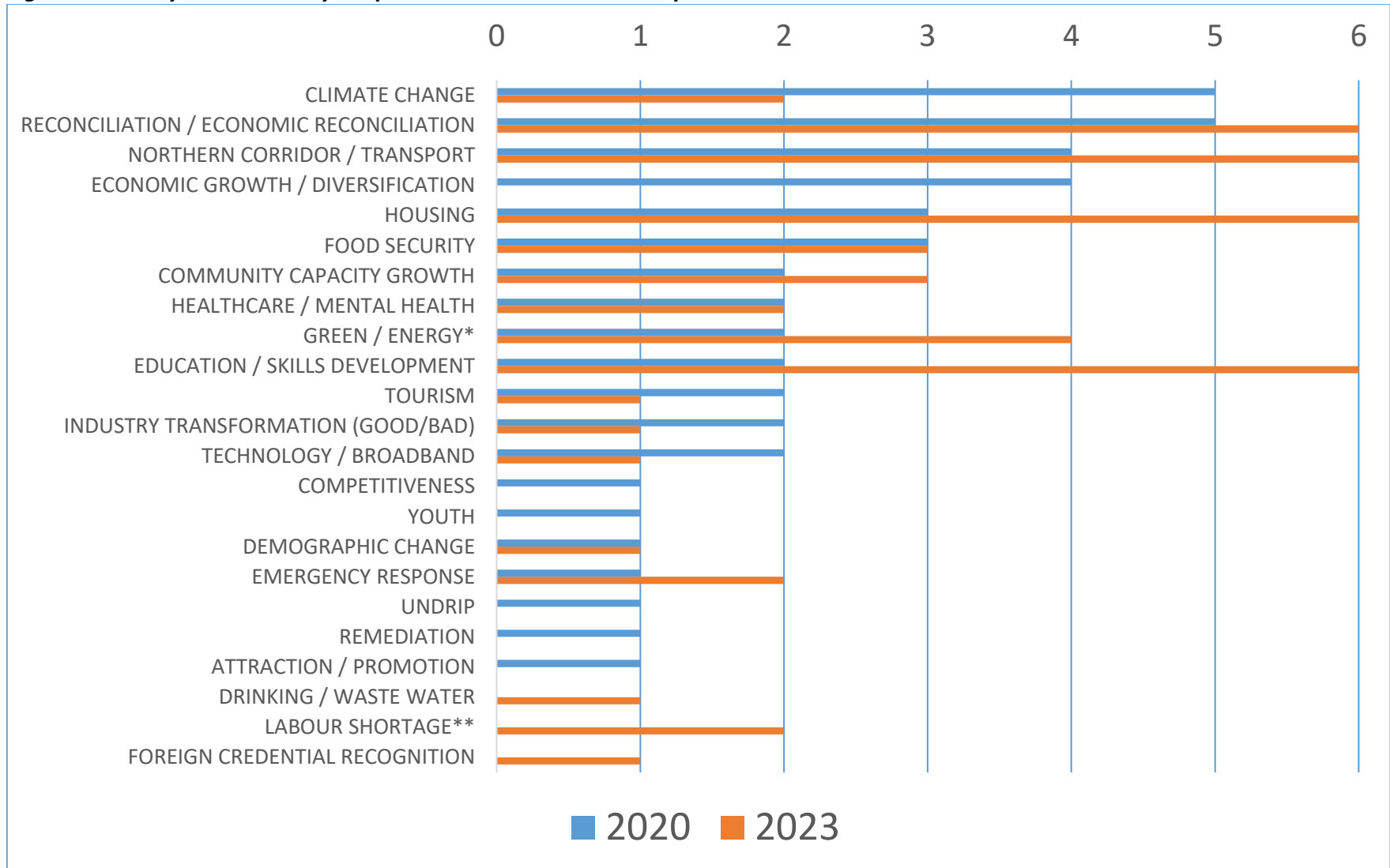
At each Forum, the Ministers confirm the priorities for the SOWG to pursue for the next Forum based on a list of emerging issues along with a brief description of each that indicates how, if it became a Priority Project, would fulfill the Forum's objectives that is compiled and brought forward by member jurisdictions.

The 2020 survey asked jurisdictions to identify the top five priorities they would like to see addressed by the NDMF over the next 1-3 years. There were 45 responses received from the 10 participating jurisdictions. From these, 20 priority themes were generated and categorized by popularity.

To ascertain if the 2020 priority themes remain relevant in 2023 and identify any new or evolving issues since, jurisdictions were again asked to identify their current top five priority themes. There were 48 responses received from the 10 participating jurisdictions in 2023.

The following graph compares the 2020 survey responses with those received in 2023.

Figure 1: Priority Theme Survey Responses - 2020 and 2023 Comparison



* One vote specifically identifying 'green transition', other three votes specifically identify 'energy'

** One vote specified labour shortage for critical minerals, the second vote stressed labour shortage across multiple sectors

Based on jurisdictional votes, the top priority themes identified during each survey include:

<u>2020 Priorities</u> (Number of Votes)	<u>2023 Priorities</u> (Number of Votes)
Climate Change (5)	Reconciliation / Economic Reconciliation (6)
Reconciliation / Economic Reconciliation (5)	Northern Corridor / Transportation (6)
Northern Corridor / Transportation (4)	Housing (6)
Economic Growth / Diversification (4)	Education / Skills Development (6)
Housing and Food Security (tied 3 each)	Green / Energy (4)

6. COMMUNICATIONS

The NDMF's objectives include directives to exchange information through the Forum and relevant Federal/Provincial/Territorial (FPT) tables, to market the results of the Forum's findings and reports, and in general to raise awareness of the North to increase investment, tourism, and export opportunities.

Each year, the host jurisdiction is responsible for forming and leading a communications committee that creates an appropriate Communications and Engagement Plan for that year's upcoming Forum.

The survey sought to gain jurisdictional insights on how the NDMF could enhance communicating its mandate to stakeholders. The following opportunities were drawn from jurisdictional responses:

OPPORTUNITIES TO COMMUNICATE NDMF MANDATE WITH STAKEHOLDERS

- Communication plan includes all jurisdictions sharing information post Forum;
- Engaging beyond the Forum - internally, communities and private sector;
- Use a variety of communications including news release, social media, department websites, and newsletters;
- Develop an official NDMF communications approach to be led and championed by the communication committee;
- Canada shares priority projects and outcomes with the Privy Council Office;
- Send mandate and results/outcomes to relevant FPT tables post Forum; and
- Conduct post-Forum meetings with Indigenous groups and relevant organizations.

7. OTHER INFORMATION

The final section of the survey asked jurisdictions to share any other comments or suggestions. The comments gathered reiterated responses in previous sections and included:

- The North has unique issues;

- Decision-makers need to collectively identify and advance initiatives;
- Focus the Forum more on engagement, knowledge exchange and dialogue;
- Focus on mutual interest areas of joint action;
- Establish a permanent Chair, Co-Chair, or Secretariat;
- Establishing a Deputy Minister/Assistant Deputy Minister Oversight Sub-Committee to increase participation, strengthen oversight and focus on relevant issues/challenges, support mandate shifts and greater impact on strategic and policy development;
- Ensure decision-makers attend and are presented with relevant topics and engaging speakers and experts; and
- Support opportunities to engage external consultants for common research (regular contributions to trust fund) or develop partnerships with organizations (i.e. Conference Board of Canada)

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDED ACTIONS

The information and jurisdictional insights that have been incorporated within this report focus on increasing the effectiveness of the NDMF and proposing recommendations for strengthening the Forum and its future undertakings to facilitate more effective, influential, and relevant outcomes.

The core questions related to NDMF format, content, and outcomes that the “Looking Back, Looking Forward” project explored include:

FORMAT

Would broadening the Forum to include all 10 provinces be worthwhile, to make it a true Federal/Provincial/Territorial Table?

According to the survey responses, 70% ‘Agree’ or ‘Strongly Agree’ that the NDMF’s current membership is effective in allowing the Forum to pursue its mandate. Since the provinces of Nova Scotia, New Brunswick and Prince Edward Island do not currently have defined territory or mandates specific to the North, their incorporation would not effectively align with the NDMF’s mission and expectedly result in further difficulty for current members to advance common interests and issues of the Forum.

It is recommended to maintain NDMF’s membership and not include all ten provincial jurisdictions.

Would broadening the Forum’s mandate to include both Northern and rural be worthwhile?

There are at least six alternative definitions of rural within national level policy analysis in Canada, each with different geographic criterion such as population size, population density, labour market context or settlement context. If the mandate is broadened, this range in designation would require the NDMF to specifically define what is meant by rural and how it correlates or supports the Forum to ensure its efforts remain focused on the North.

Furthermore, Northern regions should encompass rural, urban, and remote communities. As such, the NDMF’s mandate would presently cover rural areas of the North without specifically having to identify rural in its directive.

It is recommended to continue the NDMF’s mandate to focus on the north and not specifically include ‘rural’.

Would having a permanent Chair (perhaps with a rotating Co-Chair) be more effective? If yes, who should that be?

According to the survey responses, 70% of jurisdictions ‘agree’ or ‘strongly agree’ that the adoption of a permanent Chair, with a rotating Co-Chair would enhance the NDMF. However, various open-ended survey responses highlighted that the current hosting cycle worked well and alternatively proposed forming a rotating committee made up of past and current chairs to support stronger information sharing, outcome tracking and follow up.

Not all responses related to the adoption of a permanent lead identified who should Chair, but some named Canada as a potential Chair or Co-Chair. However, changing NDMF’s current structure would require significant considerations and a rework of the Terms of Reference, including the rolls and responsibilities and procedures related to Forum planning.

In order to avoid an immediate overhaul of the NDMF’s current governance and processes associated with establishing a permanent Chair and subsequent delays in moving forward with future Forum planning until completion, *it is recommended that Ministers direct the current host jurisdiction (Manitoba) to establish an informal rotational Chair Committee with the future host (Newfoundland and Labrador) and present on the outcomes, lessons learned and recommendations related to the implementation of a NDMF rotational Chair Committee at the next Forum.*

The proposed rotational Chair Committee would work collaboratively to compile transition materials, ensure improved follow up and tracking of initiatives and present on the enhanced processes and outcomes of the Committee during the next Forum with recommendations for new procedures for official incorporation into the NDMF.

Would having a permanent location/time of year for the Forum be more effective?

Numerous survey responses highlighted the Forum's positive benefits associated with both leadership and staff meeting in the Northern communities across jurisdictions to experience priorities and issues first-hand and to increase visibility and promotion of each NDMF member's jurisdiction. In addition, establishing a permanent Forum location was seen by members as a barrier to maintaining rotational hosting duties and would not lead to strengthening the in-person participation of Ministers and executive leadership.

Considering the 12-18 month cycle of the NDMF, it remains difficult to schedule a Forum at a time that minimizes travel delays and works with Cabinet schedules to allow all Ministers to attend. There are months of the year, such as June and November, that may be preferred by a number of member jurisdictions to make attendance workable, but this is not perceived to guarantee participation.

To support the attraction and participation of Ministers and other decision makers at each Forum, *it is recommended that each host jurisdiction endeavour to canvass all other member jurisdictions on potential Forum dates early into the planning phase to minimize scheduling conflicts and strengthen in person participation of Ministers.*

CONTENT

What steps can be taken to make the Forum more effective and responsive to the needs of provinces, territories and the federal government?

Numerous survey responses highlighted the benefits of incorporating more planning meetings of both the SOWG and Deputy Ministers to ensure initiatives advanced by the NDMF are current and useful. Additional time to discuss and review jurisdictional priorities was flagged as an asset for strengthening the Forum's ability to progress projects of mutual interest and importance among NDMF members.

It is recommended that Ministers direct the NDMF's SOWG to develop a standardized process for annually conducting a jurisdictional scan of member priorities and emerging issues to present to Deputy Ministers for ongoing discussion and direction.

As part of the recommended rotational host committee duties proposed previously, the Chair Committee would work with other members on the SOWG to develop a formal

process for advancing commonly shared priorities with standardized templates to gather jurisdictional insights, infer commonalities and track priority issues submitted on an ongoing basis. The Committee would present on the proposed processes and recommendations regarding official implementation to Ministers during the next Forum.

What steps can be taken to increase participation and engagement at the Forum?

As indicated above, ensuring that NDMF projects focus on advancing government mandates, priorities and regional/commonly shared issues will support stronger engagement by Ministers and the executive leadership. Moreover, each NDMF initiative advanced should aim to incorporate actionable recommendations and opportunities for follow up to discuss utility and considerations for further focus areas of investigation based on project outcomes and the evolution of issues overtime.

The fact that the NDMF is not a formal Federal, Provincial, Territorial Table provides an opportunity to propose a range of presentations, meetings or activities that can stimulate the interest of the Ministers and their mobilization.

Almost all survey responses identified that jurisdiction should endeavour to brief Ministers on the activities and benefits of the Forum to ensure they are informed and engaged on NDMF initiatives and planning on an ongoing basis. In addition, responses to the survey also highlighted that hosting the Forum in a Northern community and developing engaging agendas that incorporate more time for presentations, expert speakers, local experiences, and plenty of private meeting time for discussion would strengthen greater in person participation of Ministers at the Forum.

It is recommended that whenever possible, future Forums will be held in Northern communities, incorporate engaging speakers and presentations and allocate multiple opportunities for Ministers to meet privately and discuss Northern priorities and strategic actions.

OUTCOMES

How many NDMF projects or undertakings have incorporated recommendations?

According to the survey responses, from the 16 projects delivered over the past five years of the Forum, 75% (12) included recommendations. The 25% (4) without recommendations were mainly attributed to the project being a discussion document or delivered through a discussion panel or presentation during the Forum.

However, of the above 16 projects delivered over the past five years of the Forum, only 25% (4) reported that a form of follow up occurred after the Forum in relation to the

recommendation(s) or the project more generally. Based on this, a key takeaway is that initiatives of the NDMF generally include recommendations, but not specific actions related to tracking and following up to share project impacts post implementation.

One of the NDMF's objectives is to track its outcomes and the impacts the Forum and its projects have had in participating jurisdictions. However, the NDMF does not currently have a formal tracking process to gather information and report back on the recommendations and outcomes of the Forum and its initiatives and requires one to effectively meet its established objectives.

It is recommended that Ministers direct the SOWG to develop and maintain a communal NDMF Outcomes Spreadsheet to track the status of recommendations, information sharing and ongoing outcomes/impacts of all future Forum projects and initiatives. In addition, the past Chair jurisdiction will deliver an outcomes session during all future Forums to present on the status of previous project recommendations and impacts since the last Forum.

How broadly have previous NDMF projects or undertakings been distributed or shared?

As stated above, of the of the above 16 projects delivered over the past five years of the Forum, only 25% (4) reported that a form of follow up occurred after the Forum in relation to the recommendations or the project more generally. Thus, it is again highlighted that establishing formal tracking and information sharing procedures related to the Forum and its initiatives would be strengthened through the implementation of the previous recommendation noted above.

Furthermore, mechanisms that aim to strengthen the exchange of information and market the results of the Forum help advance the defined objective of the NDMF. Survey responses from several jurisdictions asserted the benefits for developing a methodology that supports the sharing and exchange of information during the planning, implementation and post-implementation stages of the NDMF's priority projects by integrating engagement processes within future project work plans.

Identifying internal and external engagement and follow up processes within each project work plan will lead to early identification of relevant Ministries, Federal, Provincial, Territorial Tables and key stakeholders to engage throughout the project. The work plan should also include a post-project plan to implement and adopt recommendations and guide information sharing and related follow up with relevant partners and stakeholders.

It is recommended that Ministers direct the NDMF's SOWG to develop a standardized work plan template that incorporates details on pre and post project engagement activities with timelines wherever possible.

APPENDIX A - LOOKING BACK, LOOKING FORWARD JURISDICTIONAL SURVEY

The Northern Development Ministers’ Forum (NDMF) was established in 2001 with the purpose of advancing the diverse and common interests of the people living in Canada’s North, while raising awareness among decision-makers and the public about the accomplishments, contributions, and potential of Northerners. The Forum provides an opportunity for federal, provincial, and territorial Ministers representing Canada’s North to collectively gather and advance issues of common interest and raise awareness of issues pertaining to the North.

The Forum is typically organized around a series of priority projects, as identified by Ministers. Priority projects focus on economic, fiscal and social issues of importance to the North.

As part of the deliberations and planning for the 2020 Forum, jurisdictions have agreed to carry out work on a “Looking Back, Looking Forward” priority project that is intended to:

- Assess past Forums to determine their overall impact and effectiveness;
- Review and evaluate the NDMF and determine the impact that priority project recommendations have had on decision-makers; and
- Make forward-looking recommendations to improve the functioning of the NDMF in future.

This survey is intended to gather information for the “Looking Back, Looking Forward” priority project.

Please complete one survey for each jurisdiction.

PART A: CONTACT INFORMATION

Jurisdiction:	
Contact Information:	Name:
	Position:
	Email:
	Phone:

PART B: PRIORITY PROJECT ASSESSMENT

Drawing from the last five forums (2013-2019), list the priority projects for which your jurisdiction was the lead and complete the following table.

Your responses will be used to guide a second stage of this priority project, which will involve working with all the jurisdictions to determine whether priority projects achieved their objectives.

Priority Project Title *	Forum Year *	Working Group Members <i>(AB, BC, CA, MB, NFLD, NWT, NT, ON, QB, SK, YK)</i>	Were recommendations made as part of the project? <i>(Yes / No)</i>	Did any form of follow-up occur with jurisdictions after the Forum in relation to the recommendations or the project more generally? <i>(Yes / No)</i>	Comments <i>(If Applicable)</i>

* A list of past priority projects is included as part of the NDMF Action Plan.

PART C: MANDATE

The Northern Development Ministers’ Forum was established in 2001 with the purpose of advancing the diverse and common interests of the people living in Canada’s North, while raising awareness among decision-makers and the public about the accomplishments, contributions, and potential of northerners. The Forum provides an opportunity for federal, provincial and territorial Ministers representing Canada’s North to collectively gather and advance issues of common interest and raise awareness of issues pertaining to the North.

1. From the perspective of your jurisdiction, how effective has the NDMF been with respect to each element of its mandate?				
	Very Effective	Effective	Somewhat Effective	Not at All Effective
Reinforcing cooperation among federal, provincial and territorial authorities in northern regions of Canada.				
Providing leadership on strategic actions that will advance the socio-economic development of the North.				
Exchanging information, increasing awareness, sharing best practices on northern priorities, and where appropriate, engaging relevant FPT tables.				
Recommending actions to be implemented by Ministers in accordance with their mandate and within their jurisdictions				

2. What steps can member jurisdictions take to make the <u>Forum</u> more effective and responsive to the needs of provinces, territories and the federal government?
•
3. What steps can member jurisdictions take to make the <u>priority projects</u> more effective and responsive to the needs of provinces, territories, and the federal government?
•

PART D: PARTICIPATION

There are eleven jurisdictions that participate in the NDMF, including Alberta, British Columbia, Canada, Manitoba, Newfoundland and Labrador, Northwest Territories, Nunavut, Ontario, Quebec, Saskatchewan and Yukon.

4. From the perspective of your jurisdiction, what are the principal benefits of participation in the NDMF?
•

5. What can be done to ensure greater participation and engagement by Ministers and Deputy Ministers?
•

PART E: LOGISTICS

The NDMF meets every 12-18 months and the host jurisdiction selects the date of the NDMF meeting. The NDMF has established a formal Terms of Reference to guide its work.

Please rate your jurisdiction's level of agreement or disagreement with the following statements:	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
6. It would be more effective if a two-year Chair rotation is adopted as opposed to the current one-year rotation.					
7. The NDMF is enhanced if it adopts a model that includes a permanent chair with a rotating co-chair.					
8. The NDMF's current membership is effective in allowing the Forum to pursue its mandate.					
9. The membership of Indigenous organizations in the NDMF would enhance the Forum's effectiveness.					

10. Going forward, what do you suggest would be a way to track the attainment of priority project recommendations and follow-up on other priority project outcomes?
•

PART F: PRIORITIES

The NDMF focuses on current economic, social and environmental issues of importance to the North, considering the lens of Indigenous and youth inclusion, derived from each jurisdiction's emerging issues and priorities.

At each Forum, NDMF Ministers confirm the priorities for officials to pursue for the next Forum based on a list of emerging issues brought forward by member jurisdictions that may also include a recommendation from the next host jurisdiction.

11. What are the top five priorities your jurisdiction would like to see addressed by the NDMF in the next one to three years? Please list the priority, provide a brief description of the issue and indicate how the NDMF could help advance or address the priority.			
#	Priority	Description	NDMF Role
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			

PART G: COMMUNICATIONS

The NDMF's objectives include directives to exchange information through the Forum and other FPT tables, to market the results of the Forum's findings and reports, and in general to raise awareness of the North to increase investment, tourism and export opportunities. Each year, the host jurisdiction is responsible for creating a communications committee of the Senior Officials Working Group that will create an appropriate Communications and Engagement Plan for that year's upcoming Forum.

12. In the opinion of your jurisdiction, how might the NDMF do a better job of communicating its mandate with other stakeholders?
<ul style="list-style-type: none">•

PART H: OTHER INFORMATION

13. Do you have any other comments or suggestions on the NDMF that your jurisdiction would like to share?