



UNDERSTANDING FCSS

FCSS came into being in 1966 under the Preventive Social Services (PSS) Act and Conditional Regulation. At the time, a dozen or so municipalities had PSS programs. To this day, no other province or territory has legislation similar to FCSS. Administered as a municipal program in partnership between the province and municipalities or Métis settlements, FCSS is mandated to engage in community development and provide preventive social projects and services.

Initially, FCSS program directors were supported by a provincial FCSS Director and FCSS consultants, employed by the Ministry.

In 1981, Preventive Social Services was changed to Family and Community Support Services, under a new FCSS Act. The new Act still assured the 80/20 funding split, but provided more emphasis on community decision-making and an increase in local responsibility. The FCSS consultants also moved from working in ministry offices out to the field - they lived in the regions where they worked and their time was spent meeting with program directors and local FCSS advisory boards to provide support. There were 6 FCSS regions and 6 consultants.

Between 1966 and 1996, PSS/FCSS was moved to at least 5 different ministries and was subject to at least 2 government reviews.

In 1994, FCSS became part of Alberta Municipal Affairs, and the provincial FCSS Program infrastructure was disbanded. This included abolishing the provincial Director and consultant positions. FCSS funding fell under the "Unconditional Municipal Grant Program", allowing municipalities and Métis settlements to use their FCSS funding on whatever they deemed a priority, including physical infrastructure.

In 1996, FCSS was returned to Alberta Family and Social Services. The FCSS Act remained the same, but a new "Conditional Agreement Regulation" specified that FCSS funding must be used for FCSS preventive social services and not for general municipal revenue. The FCSS Unit was also re-established in the ministry and a new provincial director position was created.

In 1999, the provincial government announced a new organizational structure and FCSS became part of the newly created Alberta Children's Services, where it remains today; the ministry was re-organized in 2011 and is now Alberta Human Services.

The FCSS funding allocation model was also reviewed in 1999 and a new modified per capita model was implemented. That model, still used, takes into account median incomes of municipalities and Métis settlements as weighting factors, rather than just populations.

In 2003, slight changes were made to the Conditional Agreement Regulation and its title was changed to the FCSS Regulation.

In 2006, a review of the provincial FCSS Program recommended that FCSS should no longer be responsible for funding out-of-school care. In May 2008, the Ministry becoming directly involved in out-of-school care with the announcement of the *Creating Child Care Choices* plan.

With the ministry now funding out-of-school care subsidies, approximately \$11 million previously invested in out-of-school care by FCSS programs locally, was freed up to reinvest in other priorities. The full *FCSS Program Review Report* and government's response is posted on the ministry's website at <http://humanservices.alberta.ca/family-community/15537.html>

The sunset clause for the FCSS Regulation was June 2013 and a comprehensive consultation with FCSS program directors, advisory board members and the FCSSAA Board occurred throughout 2012. Amendments, mostly related to administration of the Program, were proposed. The Regulation was subsequently extended to June 2015, to allow for possible further amendments related to the Results-Based Budget (RBB) review process.

The RBB review of all government programs began in 2013. The purpose is to ensure all programs align with the province's Social Policy Framework, and are effective, efficient and relevant to achieving the outcomes of the Framework.

THE FCSS MANDATE

FCSS is an 80/20 funding partnership between municipalities or Métis settlements, and the Province, provided through the FCSS Act and Regulation. The Regulation sets out the service requirements that a municipality or Métis settlement must meet to be eligible for funding. (Slight changes may be made to the service requirements under the amended FCSS Regulation).

The FCSS Regulation states that: "Services under a program must be of a preventive nature that enhances the social well-being of individuals and families through promotion or intervention strategies provided at the earliest opportunity." FCSS does not provide crisis intervention or rehabilitative services.

In providing an FCSS program, municipalities and Métis settlements are responsible for:

- engaging citizens in the planning ,delivery, evaluation and governance of programs
- effectively and efficiently using resources, based on identified community needs and priorities
- coordinating and cooperating with government and community organizations

Services and projects provided under a local FCSS program must result in one or more of the following outcomes:

- people are self-reliant, resilient and function in a positive manner
- people have positive social relationships
- people are socially engaged and contribute to their community
- people are supported to remain active participants in their communities, and
- people address social issues and influence change

At the local level, a municipality or Métis settlement council chooses whether to establish an FCSS program and enters into an agreement with the Government of Alberta to jointly fund projects/services. These projects/services depend on community resources, often involving volunteers in management and delivery. They work in partnership with other service providers in the community to try to prevent the need for intervention and rehabilitative services.

One key principle of the FCSS Program is local responsibility for decision-making. The Province provides funding, but it's up to municipalities and Métis settlements to decide how to allocate the funding to best meet the needs and priorities of the community - within the FCSS mandate. Local FCSS programs are part of the larger provincial Program that collectively helps to ensure that Albertans have access to a strong network of prevention supports.

The other key principle or way of doing business for FCSS is community development. The principle is based on a belief that self help contributes to a sense of integrity, self-worth and independence, and a “people helping people” approach to improving quality of life and build the capacity to prevent and or deal with crisis situations should they arise.

A number of FCSS resources and publications to support FCSS programs in Alberta are available on the ministry’s website at <http://humanservices.alberta.ca> and the FCSSAA website at <http://www.fcssaa.org>.

ELIGIBLE SERVICES

FCSS uses a “people helping people to help themselves” approach and offers a wide range of programs and services at the community level. Please refer to the *FCSS Program Advice Inventory Listing* (included in chapter five of the *FCSS Program Handbook*) for additional information.

Examples of the services and projects offered at the local level through FCSS are:

1. Services to assist communities to identify their social needs and develop responses to meet those needs, including:
 - raising public awareness around community issues,
 - developing strategies for community advocacy,
 - developing comprehensive community social plans and initiatives,
 - environmental scans, service reviews, strategic planning, program planning,
 - in-kind support to community-based groups (until they are able to sustain themselves) such as provision of office space, printing, photocopying, help with preparing proposals, etc;
2. Services to promote, encourage and support volunteer work in the community, including:
 - recruitment, training and placement services,
 - resources to support volunteers,
 - volunteer recognition,
 - coordination of volunteer services;
3. Services to inform the public of available services, including:
 - information and referral services,
 - community information directories,
 - newcomer services,
 - interagency coordination;
4. Services that promote the social development of children and their families, including:
 - parent-child development activities,
 - early childhood development services for children aged 0-6 (excluding child care),
 - support services for young children aged 6-12;
5. Services that enrich and strengthen family life by developing skills so people can function more effectively within their own environment, including:
 - mentoring programs,
 - parenting and family life education and development programs,
 - programs for single adults and single parents,
 - courses designed to enhance self-awareness and personal growth,

- individual, family and group counselling services that are educational and not treatment oriented, or
 - youth development and leadership services;
6. Services that enhance the quality of life of the retired and semi-retired, including:
- home support services,
 - education and information services,
 - coordination of seniors services and programs, or
 - self-help socialization activities.

INELIGIBLE SERVICES

Services provided under an FCSS program must not:

- provide primarily for recreational needs or leisure time pursuits
- offer direct assistance, including money, food, clothing or shelter, to sustain an individual or family
- be primarily rehabilitative in nature, or
- duplicate services that are the responsibility of government or government agency.

Section 4 of the FCSS Regulation states that expenditures of the program shall not include

- (a) the purchase of land or buildings,
- (b) the construction or renovation of a building,
- (c) the purchase of motor vehicles,
- (d) any costs required to sustain an organization that do not relate to direct service delivery under the program,
- (e) municipal property taxes and levies, or
- (f) any payments to a member of a board or committee other than reimbursement for expenses referred to in Section 3(l).

ELIGIBILITY ASSESSMENT TOOL

Here's a four-stage eligibility assessment tool that can be used to assist in determining if a project or funding request fits the FCSS eligibility criteria:

1. Is the project or service preventive? Does it enhance the social well being of families and individuals? Does it have preventive social support outcomes?
(The answer to all of the above should be "yes".)
2. Does the project or service result in at least one of the following outcomes?
 - self-reliance, resiliency and ability to function in a positive manner
 - development of positive social relationships
 - community engagement and inclusion
 - support to remain an active in the community
 - address social issues and influence change*(The answer should be "yes" to at least one of these outcomes.)*
3. Is the service or project:
 - primarily a recreation, leisure, entertainment or sporting activity or event?
 - offer direct assistance, including money, food, clothing or shelter?
 - primarily rehabilitative, therapeutic or crisis management?
 - a duplication of a service provided by any level of government?
 - a capital expenditure like the purchase of a building or vehicle?*(The answer should be "no" to all of these questions.)*

4. Do the proposed expenditures of the project or service comply with allowable municipal costs?
(The answer should be "yes")

FCSS PROGRAMS IN ALBERTA

As of January 1, 2015, 319 municipalities and Métis settlements, organized into 207 local FCSS programs, provide FCSS services throughout Alberta. *(Note: The number of participating municipalities and Métis settlements and the number of Programs may fluctuate because of changes in municipality status and/or local decisions regarding program administration.)*

In 2014, nearly 100% of the total population of Alberta resides in municipalities and Métis settlements participating in FCSS. The total population residing in municipalities not participating in FCSS is less than 3,800.

FCSS REGIONS

There are 8 FCSS regions in Alberta: Northwest, Northeast, Yellowhead, Edmonton-Evergreen, East Central, West Central, Calgary-Bow River, and South.

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

For more information about the Family and Community Support Services Program, please contact:

Alberta Human Services

Joyce Mellott, Senior Manager
FCSS Unit
780-415-6285
joyce.mellott@gov.ab.ca

FCSS Association of Alberta

Deborah Teed, Executive Director
780-422-0133
director@fcssaa.org