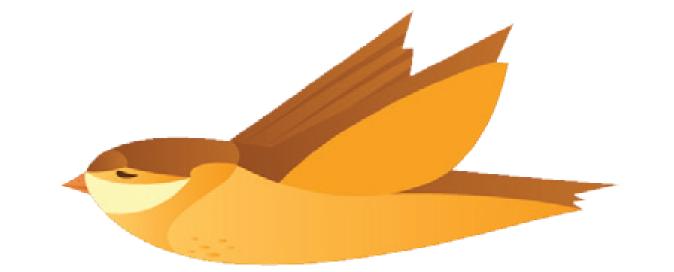


## FOSTERING EARLY CHILDHOOD DEVELOPMENT THROUGH CONCERTED ACTION

## STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS WITH FIRST NATIONS COMMUNITIES





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## WHY THE NEED FOR EARLY ACTION?

## Children's first few years are a critical period for their future development

Children's brains develop at an incredible rate during the first few years of their lives. From the age of 0 to 3, more than 700 neuron connections are formed every second (Center on the Developing Child, 2007).

In their early years, children acquire a lot of fundamental knowledge that will be useful to them well into adult age. But when they experience a number of challenges during these early years, this window of opportunity may go to waste, leaving lasting effects for the rest of their lives (Phillips & Shonkoff, 2000).

According to the 2012 Québec Survey of Child Development in Kindergarten, one in four Québec children are deemed vulnerable in at least one developmental aspect when starting out in school (Simard et al., 2013). This poses a risk for their future educational success and achievement (McCain & Mustard, 1999).

Because educational achievement is closely associated with general, physical and mental health, it is one of the crucial factors affecting a person's quality of life (Cutler & Lleras-Muney, 2006), job stability (Janz, 2004) and civic involvement (Uslaner & Brown, 2005).

# AVENIR D'ENFANTS' PARTNERSHIP WITH FNQLHSSC (2012-2018)

Agreement governing partnerships with First Nations and Inuit – First Nations section

The THE FIRST NATIONS OF QUEBEC AND LABRADOR HEALTH AND SOCIAL SERVICES COMMISSION (FNQLHSSC) is a non-profit organisation that is responsible for supporting the efforts of the First Nations of Quebec in order to, among other things, plan and deliver culturally-appropriate and preventive health and social services programs.

AVENIR D'ENFANTS's mission is to help foster local community mobilization initiatives and thereby contribute to the overall development of children aged five years and under living in poverty so that each and every child has the same opportunity for getting a good start in life.

### GOALS:

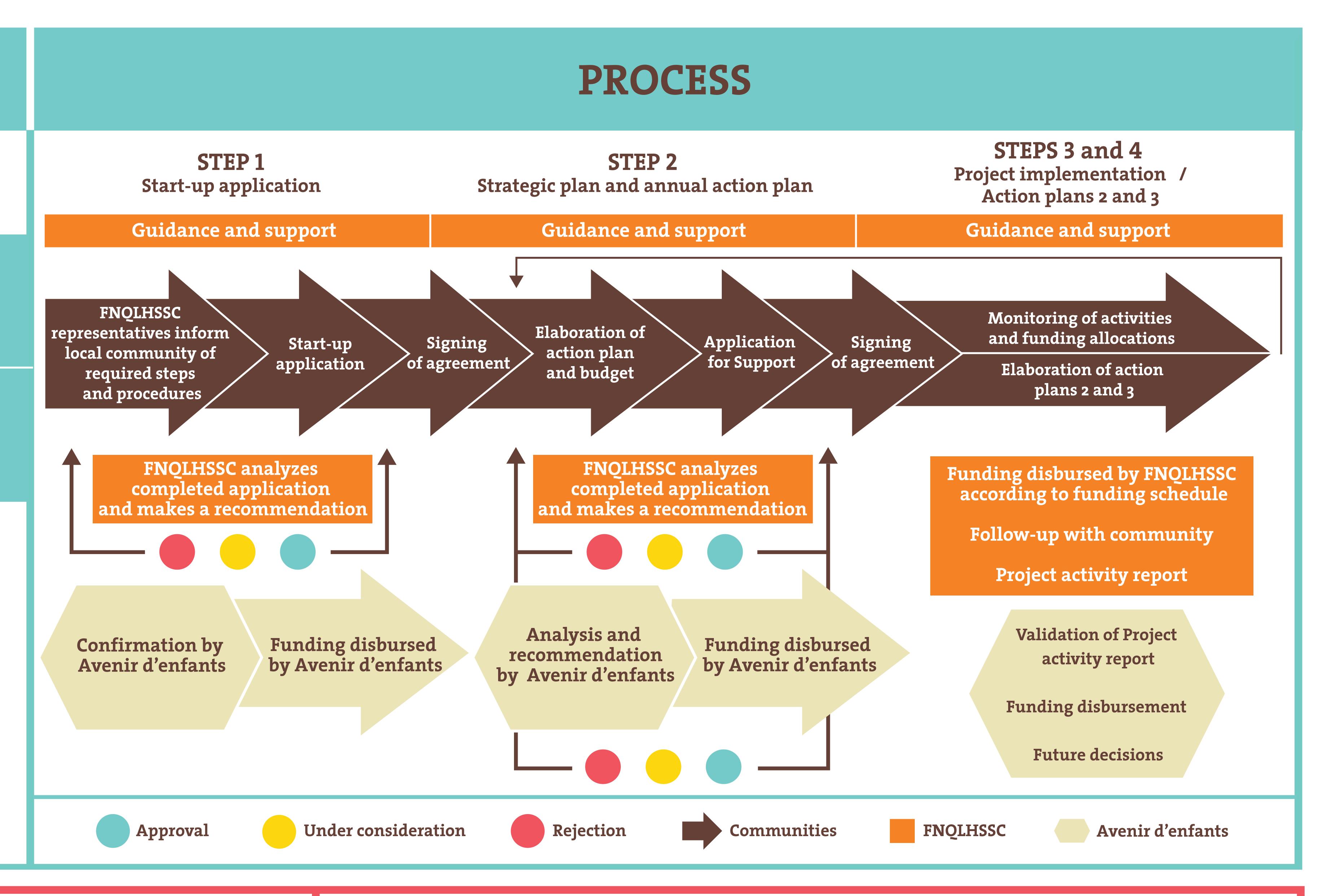
Build concerted action capacities for elaborating strategic plans and action plans

Encourage and help sustain local community mobilization initiatives focused on early childhood development

Assist in the elaboration of preventative interventions in early childhood development

#### **OUR APPROACH:**

We adapt our guidance services to allow for First Nations communities' specific contexts and needs



## OUTCOMES

5 communities receiving guidance to help conceive a first project (Step 1)

8 communities receiving guidance to help elaborate their strategic plan and action plan (Step 2)

6 communities receiving guidance to help implement their plans (Steps 3 and 4)

3 full-time guidance service representatives to help communities carry out projects

First Nations communities welcome guidance services delivered by FNQLHSSC staff who are already familiar with local contexts, priorities and needs

Some communities view their projects as an instrument to help consolidate or further enhance existing early childhood services

Regular early childhood roundtable meetings, for example, can help all stakeholders and actors recognize the benefits of collaborative practices. This in turn may help inspire improved child-family policies

## ONGOING CHALLENGES

pre-existing issues in the local context (e.g. internal rivalries or conflicts)
resistance against collaborative practices (centralized power structures)
existing relationships between individual actors can be too close



