

Socio-Economic Agreements

What is a Socio-Economic Agreement (SEA)?

A socio-economic agreement is an environmental assessment follow-up program. It is the only way the Government of the Northwest Territories (GNWT) can carry out its promise and responsibility to ensure the wise use of our natural resources.

Under legal requirements in the Northwest Territories, when a company wants to construct and operate a major project it must seek public approval for the project through an environmental assessment. This gives NWT residents a chance to clearly understand what the project will mean to them and to the Northwest Territories. The project might be a mine, a pipeline, or any development that could have an important impact on NWT lands, resources, and people.

It is common for a company to describe the job and business opportunities its project will bring, and also to describe the steps it will take to help make this happen. A socio-economic agreement captures those commitments. Since companies can't do everything by themselves, an SEA also outlines steps the territorial government will take to assist. An SEA aims to give some certainty that for as long as it lasts, a project will be for the good of the people of the Northwest Territories.

Socio-economic agreements create significant benefits for the Northwest Territories and for all northerners. The diamond mines' socio-economic agreements provide priority opportunities to Aboriginal and other communities in their local areas. Government uses the revenues that mining and other businesses generate to help provide community and public services including health care, transportation and education.

How do SEAs differ from IBAs or PAs?

Impact Benefit Agreements (IBAs) or Participation Agreements (PAs) are somewhat similar to SEAs, but they are private contracts negotiated directly between project developers and Aboriginal groups. IBAs and/or PAs may also address socio-economic benefits, and in so doing, also benefit the north. However, the benefits are focused on Aboriginal groups residing in the project's immediate area.

Which mines have Socio-Economic Agreements in place?

Socio-economic agreements are in place for the following mining projects:

- BHP Billiton Ekati Diamond Mine
- Diavik Diamond Mine
- De Beers Snap Lake Project