

**ABORIGINAL TRAINING
AND EDUCATION
FUNDING**

Prepared for the
Northern Labour Market Information Clearinghouse

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Aboriginal Training and Education Funding

The Northern Labour Market Information Clearinghouse Project was created in 1995. Partners in the Clearinghouse, a consortium of four northern Alberta colleges and the Northern Alberta Development Council require ongoing research relevant to the northern Alberta labour market to keep them abreast of training and employment needs and trends. The college partners are Fairview College, Grande Prairie Regional College, Keyano College and Northern Lakes College.

One priority piece of research is the investigation of sources of funding for Aboriginal training and education.

Background

The colleges that are part of the Northern Labour Market Clearinghouse Project are situated in geographical areas populated by much of the province's Aboriginal people. Many members of the Aboriginal population successfully enroll in regular college programs.

However, there is a general understanding that needs exist within those communities where the local college could provide program assistance not filled by regular programs.

The colleges requested an examination of available funds for special programs. This is an attempt to streamline access to funding for both the colleges and their neighbouring communities.

Approach

The approach to the investigation for this report was an iterative one, involving first obtaining the literature for the obvious funding sources. Representatives of the funding agencies were then interviewed to validate the understanding of their programs. This led to information about less well-known programs. Aboriginal stakeholder groups were contacted in order to determine which of the funding sources they accessed and to discuss their experiences with them. Representatives of both funding agencies and stakeholder groups were re-interviewed for confirmation of the findings.

Websites for both government and stakeholder groups were searched for relevant information. Relevant information is referenced in this report.

Finally, community-based program administrators were interviewed to obtain comments on issues arising from funding access, delivery of programs and interactions with training delivery organizations.

Findings

Program funding agencies have differing missions and program guidelines to support the mission. The findings that follow are reported by funding source. Comments from Aboriginal stakeholders concerning the effectiveness of existing programs and their observations about programming gaps are also included.

The Federal Government

Human Resources Development Canada (HRDC) maintained control of labour market funding for Aboriginals when the department divested responsibility and funding for regional programs to the provinces under the Labour Market Development Agreement. However, the department does not undertake direct programming. Rather, each HRDC Region reaches

Aboriginal Human Resource Development Agreements (AHRDA's) with Aboriginal organizations who then assume responsibility for the design and delivery of labour market programs. These organizations are commonly referred to as AHRDA holders.

Employment Insurance, Part 11, continues to provide the usual employment benefits and support to eligible Aboriginal people. The Employment Insurance Account provides 30% of the total funding; the remaining 70% comes through the Consolidated Revenue Fund (CRF).

There are 11 AHRDA holders in Alberta, funded through the Consolidated Revenue Fund and the Employment Insurance Account. The current agreement expires in 2004. Discussions are underway regarding a future agreement.

Basically, an AHRDA agreement:

- Focuses on labour integration/participation;
- Calls for measurable results in terms of clients served, return/integration into the workplace and dollar return on investment;
- Is treated as a government to government arrangement; and
- Has detailed reporting requirements.

The Aboriginal Human Resource Council of Canada provides services to AHRDA holders. Services are designed to assist holders to provide programming that is based on sound research and established best practices.

Services include:

| | |
|-----------------------|---|
| Research | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Establishing model HR practices- In Aboriginal Diversity and inclusion strategies- On labour markets |
| Creating Partnerships | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Reaching into the corporate sector- Aligning labour market needs with Aboriginal labour pools- Encouraging industry investment in inclusion and employment strategies |

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| Communications and Advocacy | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- The Council's corporate communications campaign- Meetings- Organizing round tables- Presentations (public awareness) |
| Information Services | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Human resource models and templates- Reports such as career awareness research- Case studies |
| Pilot Projects | <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Career development initiatives- Training-to-employment assessment models- Employment and inclusion strategies |

Alberta Human Resources and Employment (AHRE)

The broad principles governing AHRE funding for Aboriginal training are as follows:

- The focus is on labour market integration and/or participation;
- Agreements are treated as government to government arrangements;
- Agreements call for measurable results in terms of clients served, return or integration into the work place and return on investment; and
- Reporting requirements are detailed and specific.

Projects involving partnerships are preferred.

AHRE has entered into a number of formal agreements with Aboriginal organizations. The agreements clearly conform to the above principles. Two representative agreements are summarized here.

The first agreement is the First Nations Training-to-Employment Partnerships (August, 2002).

AHRE will support the development of partnerships between First Nations people, the private sector, industry, unions, training providers, the federal government and AHRE. The partnership's core function is to provide First Nations people with skills and knowledge leading to obtaining and maintaining employment. Sustainable employment is the expected outcome of all partnered projects.

Funding was provided for the 2002-03 fiscal year. Provisions have been made for additional funding for 2003-04.

The program guidelines support the overall goals. A summary of the guidelines follows.

- A preferred program philosophy is an integrated approach that should include: a focus on life management and employment coping/job readiness skills, employability skills, work related literacy skills, specific occupation skills, paid work experience or training-on-the-job, placement and follow-up and employment support (maintenance) for program graduates.

- Projects should not duplicate existing training and employment activities available to First Nations through federal or provincial programs.

- Requirements for partnerships are specific. Without the first two principal partners, a joint partnership project cannot proceed. Each partnership should include a minimum of three principal partners as follows:

- At least one First Nations, Tribal Council or Treaty organization (although multiple representation is encouraged).
- An employment provider (Industry, Business, Union or Labour Organization).

- AHRE and other provincial government departments as deemed necessary.

(Partnerships will be developed with First Nations organizations but can be broadened to include other Aboriginal Groups representing Metis and non-status Indians with the agreement of the principal partners.)

AHRE's funding cannot be used to support living allowance costs, nor can the funds be used to purchase equipment or any form of permanent asset. Funding can be used to support direct training costs including instructor fees, training manuals, equipment rental, tutors and project management and/or coordination costs.

The full requirements for completing project proposals are available from AHRE.

The Partnership Framework on Metis Employment (between Edmonton Region AHRE and Metis Nation of Alberta Association Zone IV) provides the second example of funding arrangements. The Framework appears to be designed to avoid duplication in program funding and to provide a formal vehicle for joint needs assessments, planning and cross communication.

The vision statement for the agreement addresses the belief that *all Metis people are able to participate in the social and economic opportunities in society including the labour market*. The shared activities included in the document support the vision statement.

The Oteenow Employment and Training Society is an example of the results that are possible through the Agreement. The Oteenow Employment and Training Society is an Edmonton First Nations AHRDA holder representing Treaty #6 and #8.

The focus of the services provided through the Society is on the needs of Edmonton area Aboriginal people, but the service is available to others in the community who fall within the guidelines.

AHRE also administers the provincial Support for Independence (SFI) program. Under SFI, there is provision for Off-Reserve Income and Employment Program Delivery.

Funding and consultation is available through AHRE Regional Offices listed in the Contacts section of this report.

Metis Nations of Alberta

Metis Nations of Alberta (MNA) has a formally organized Labour Market Development Division with a centralized administration system and a Labour Market Development Manager in each of the six Regions. The mandate is to *...assist off-Settlement Metis achieve employment self-sufficiency with informed options in collaboration with the Metis community and external partners in facilitating quality career and employment opportunities.*

(Labour Market Development Annual Report 2001 - 2002)

Primary funding for MNA's labour market activities comes through Human Resources Development Canada Aboriginal Human Resource Development Agreement.

The role of the Labour Market Development Unit head office is to be responsible for the overall management of the AHRDA. The LMD Office establishes service delivery models and program offerings for the MNA and develops functional policy and operational guidelines for the LMD Unit. It facilitates and promotes partnership development and introduces labour market initiatives that are usually provincial in scope. It also provides

administrative support involving finances, partnership liaison, program evaluation and contractual arrangements.

The six regional offices are responsible for the delivery of programs, including the monitoring of local contractual agreements, development and evaluation of training projects, assessment of individual funding applications, and monitoring the case management of those individuals approved for participation in programs. As part of this responsibility, each regional office has established a Project Selection Committee with members appointed by their respective Regional Councils.

Project proposals are approved or declined based on the following standards:

- All MNA Labour Market Development programming shall reflect identified economic development needs of a geographic region or community including the current and emerging needs of a particular industry or occupation.
- Appropriate career and employment counselling shall be available to all participants to ensure an informed and appropriate choice of training program.
- Wherever possible, all training provided shall establish solid links between the classroom and the workplace by providing internship or co-op experiences, apprenticeship and job shadowing or work placements.
- All training programs shall demonstrate financial, legal and ethical accountability through a transparent (sic) evaluation process.
- Labour Market Development Programs Offered by the MNA are for targeted clients who have committed to an action plan and have had their employment needs assessed. Targeted clients are:
 - Metis individuals who are unemployed, underemployed or employment threatened;
 - Those who lack employable skills;
 - Metis youth 15-30 years; and
 - Metis people with disabilities.

Employment Program Descriptions and Objectives

1. Project-based training: Quality training projects delivered and coordinated by a third party based on targeting a specific labour market need under the objectives of the MNA LMD, with the intent of placing the clients in meaningful, long-term employment. Project Selection Committees recommend projects in each region.
2. Individual training: Purchase of training from recognized training providers based on MNA LMD criteria. Up to 52 weeks of skills training can be supported. This program supports training for individuals who lack employable skills. The training must be certified and result in employment self-sufficiency.
3. Post-secondary support: Support offered to individuals seeking assistance in completing the final requirements of a diploma or degree program under the MNA LMD criteria. A two-year college diploma program may be funded for occupations designated as high priorities in each region. A maximum of two semesters of the final year of university level education may be funded in career-oriented programs.
4. Job creation program: Supports the development of regional economic development opportunity by entering into leveraged cost agreements with public and private sector partners with the objective of creating jobs for Metis people.
5. Local labour market partnerships: Supports the development of local partnerships in a community to develop and implement strategies for dealing with labour force adjustments and meeting human resource requirements. Produces employment for Metis people by facilitating research, planning and liaison with industry. Projects are generally cost-shared.
6. Targeted wage subsidy: Employer receives a wage subsidy to hire a targeted individual and provide a direct work experience which will lead to sustainable employment. Assists Metis individuals who have skills but lack work experience.
7. Metis entrepreneurial program: Participant receives various types of support during the period when they start up a business and create a job for themselves. Provides entrepreneurial counselling and training and business development support.

8. Youth career internship program: Supports internships for Metis youth with employers who provide career-related work experience to secondary or post secondary graduates. The internships provide youth with skill enhancement work experience and entrepreneurial assistance to help them make successful transition to the labour market.

Note: MNA programming is restricted to off-settlement individuals.

Metis Settlements General Council (MSGC)

MSGC is an AHRDA holder. Activities undertaken stem from a five-year strategy designed to address labour market needs. Services are provided to individuals as well as for group training project development and delivery.

Services to individuals are confined to those residing on a settlement. MSGC buys a “seat” on behalf of an individual, contributing up to \$5,000. Support can be provided to students enrolled college and university programs. As with all programs the goal of the training support is employment for the student.

Services to the settlements are for community labour market priorities. Each community is allotted up to \$300,000.00 yearly to develop and deliver short-term skill development programs that are related to industry needs in the geographical area.

Comments of AHRDA Program Delivery Stakeholders

Program delivery staff were extremely helpful in sharing experiences and providing comments regarding strengths and weaknesses of existing funding programs. The comments focus primarily on AHRDA funding. There is apparently little familiarity with provincial programs among this group.

There was general concurrence that the existing ARDHA is a good first step that has encouraged relevant programming for some of a diverse client group. The ability to provide staff development for program delivery has added considerably to the self-reliance in Aboriginal communities. Also, the guidelines that allow CRF funds to be used for both individual support and project development and delivery offer welcome flexibility.

A number of limitations were identified. Two important issues in many of the communities are the lack of high school completion and low literacy rates. The ARDHA guidelines clearly limit funding to employment programs. Those fund administrators who were familiar with AHRE programs pointed to a similar limitation in those guidelines. Unless a program can imbed literacy or academic upgrading within an employment program, this instruction cannot be funded. None of the individuals interviewed have been able to identify a funding source, creating a serious unmet need.

Neither AHRDA nor AHRE funding covers capital expenditure. Many of the communities expressed concern over their lack of instructional infrastructure and their inability to acquire it through existing funds.

A number of individuals indicated that AHRDA guidelines were general in nature. While they appreciated that this condition offers some program flexibility, confusion led to situations where expenditures were not approved that were deemed to fall outside of the guidelines.

Both funding sources require labour intensive reporting and follow-up. Stakeholders recognize the value in reporting but they have not been able to rationalize this with their need to be involved in program planning and day-to-day administration.

Concern about inability to conduct effective program promotion was a common theme among those interviewed. This group is convinced that numbers of community people who could have benefited from participation either did not know or found out too late about a program.

In terms of community members who are supported to attend posts secondary programs, local administrators are concerned with the lack of any relationship with the Student Finance system. They reported that their students are generally uncomfortable with the notion of borrowing. The administrators would prefer to assist the prospective student in developing a sound financial plan in the community, prior to leaving for school.

The relationship with local colleges was reported to be positive. A number of processes to assist Aboriginal students to successfully integrate into college life were identified. One individual suggested that greater success could be achieved through attendance at workshop style sessions where new students would be more likely to raise concerns in a small group.

Some concern about the tracking of students' attendance and progress was expressed. If a student is not succeeding or is not attending, the sponsoring organization would prefer to transfer that student's funding to someone who can succeed.

Conclusions and Discussion

There appears to be untapped potential for college involvement in delivering Aboriginal programs. In the past decade, colleges have developed considerable expertise and experience in developing community partnerships to achieve specific instructional goals. That experience shared with local Aboriginal AHRDA holders could produce positive results for both parties.

AHRE funding requires a partnership arrangement for funds to be approved. Aboriginal stakeholders did not appear to be knowledgeable about either the existence of the Partnership program or how it could be applied in their community. This void could be another opportunity for colleges.

The lack of funding for academic upgrading and life/work skills instruction for adults is a significant concern among the communities surveyed. Whether this instruction will be included in the negotiations of the “new” AHRDA is unknown. The guidelines for both federal and provincial funding appear to support remedial curriculum within an employment-focused program.

There are several excellent models for integrated programming among the Clearinghouse partner colleges. Increased application of integrated programming could be of benefit to both the colleges and to surrounding Aboriginal communities.

Several of the Aboriginal stakeholders indicated a desire for regular information exchange with northern colleges. AHRDA holders have formed an AHRDA caucus that meets at least yearly. The caucus meeting is an excellent forum for interested colleges to further develop relationships with their Aboriginal communities.

Appendix A: Sources

The Aboriginal Human Resource Development Council of Canada.
http://ahrdcc.com/ahrdah/ahrdah_brief007.htm

First Nations Training-to-Employment Partnerships. Interim Program Guidelines. Alberta Human Resources and Employment, August, 2002.

Labour Market Development Program
Human Resources Development Canada/Metis Nations of Alberta
Annual Report, 2001-2002

Partnership Framework on Metis Employment Between Metis Nation of
Alberta Association and Edmonton Region Alberta Human Resources and
Employment, July, 2002.

Appendix B: Contacts

Clayton Kootenay, Oteenow Training and Employment Society. Telephone: (780) 444 – 0911

Don Gardener, Manager, Alberta Human Resources and Employment. Telephone: (780) 422 – 0012

Doris Nashim LMD Manager MNA, Lac la Biche. Telephone: (780) 6223 – 3883

Gloria Anderson, HRD Administrator, Big Stone Cree Nation. Telephone: (780) 891 – 3836

Jennifer Elgie LMD Manager MNA, Peace River. Telephone: (780) 624 – 0691

Ralph Bellstadt, Manager Aboriginal Human Resource Development Agreements. Human Resources Development Canada. Telephone: (780) 495 – 5653

Roseanne Mustus, HRD Administrator, Western Cree Tribal Council. Telephone: (780) 524 – 5878

Joan Isaac, Provincial Coordinator, Labour Market Development. Metis Nation of Alberta. Telephone: (780) 455 – 2200

Ken Shewchuk, N.E. Regional Director Alberta Human Resources and Employment. Telephone: (780) 623 – 5102

Tom Clark, N.W Regional Director Alberta Human Resources and Employment. Telephone: (780) 324 – 3236

Tom Ghostkeeper Metis Settlements General Council. Telephone: (780) 822 – 4096

Appendix C: MNA Labour Market Development Unit Offices

LMDU Head Office

#100, 11738 Kingsway Avenue

Edmonton, AB T5G 0X5

Telephone (780) 455 – 2200

LMDU Region 1 Office

Box 1350

Lac La Biche, AB T0A 2C0

Telephone (780) 623 – 3039

LMDU Region 2 Office

Box 6497, 5102 – 51 Street

Bonnyville, AB T59 2H1

Telephone (780) 826 – 7483

LMDU Region 5 Office

Box 1787

Slave Lake, AB T0G 0A2

Telephone (780) 849 – 4654

LMDU Region 6 Office

9615 – 11 Street

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Telephone (780) 624 - 0691