

OPERATIONAL INFORMATION ABORIGINAL SKILLS AND EMPLOYMENT PARTNERSHIP (ASEP)

BACKGROUND

The 2002 Speech from the Throne committed to promoting entrepreneurial skills and job creation among Aboriginal people by tailoring and targeting its training programs to help Aboriginal people participate in economic development such as Voisey's Bay, northern gas pipelines, and similar projects throughout Canada. This commitment was confirmed in the 2003 Budget. Treasury Board has approved the submission for Aboriginal Skills and Employment Partnership (ASEP) for \$85 million over five years.

ASEP PRINCIPLES & OBJECTIVES

The ASEP program is a five-year initiative with a funding total of \$85 million. It is targeted at developing the skills of Canada's Aboriginal workforce, promoting maximum employment for Aboriginal people on major economic developments across Canada and providing lasting benefits for Aboriginal communities, families, and individuals. The entire initiative is geared to providing Aboriginal people with the skills needed to participate in economic opportunities such as northern mining, oil and gas, and hydro development projects across Canada.

Funding available through ASEP will help finance Aboriginal training-to-retention plans for major economic developments and resource-based projects. Such plans will cover a broad continuum ranging from basic skills, literacy and academic upgrading, through job-specific training and apprenticeships to retention counseling and other on-the-job supports.

As an opportunity-driven program, ASEP will operate on a collaborative partnership basis with a significant funding contribution expected from the private sector, Aboriginal groups, and the province or territory comprising the partnership consortium where the large scale economic project is located. Other key partners include learning institutions, sector councils, labour and other Government of Canada departments and agencies.

The partnership is instituted to achieve the following goals:

- be a new "partnership focused" approach;
- be workable for all partners, especially for the Aboriginal peoples within the labour market catchment area;
- primarily support the lead employer company and other employers as appropriate in the long-term hiring of Aboriginal people;
- lead to sustainable jobs with the lead employer and with other employers providing services;

- involve provincially accredited transferable skills;
- include linkages to other involved parties (e.g. Labour Market Development Agreement);
- provide role models within Aboriginal communities; that lead to,
- healthier and more resilient individuals and communities.

ASEP PARTNERSHIP GOVERNANCE MECHANISM

Each proposal must meet the basic program criteria:

- A partnership that includes a significant funding contribution from the private sector, the provincial or territorial government as well as a commitment from all of the local Aboriginal communities to participate where the large scale economic project is located. Other key partners could include, but not be limited to, learning institutions and other federal or provincial departments and agencies. Federal funding of the project cannot exceed 75% of the total value of the project.
- A comprehensive Aboriginal human resources training-to-employment plan for the large scale economic development project will cover a broad continuum ranging from basic skills, literacy and academic upgrading, through job-specific training and apprenticeships to retention counseling and other on-the-job supports. The plan must have a commitment from the major employer to provide at least 50 long-term, sustainable jobs for Aboriginal people.

The implementation shall be the responsibility of the ASEP partnership which for the purpose of entering into a contribution agreement will need to be incorporated legal entity. The ASEP partnership will be responsible for the sound financial administration of HRDC's investment in this emerging economic opportunity. This investment will be executed by contribution agreements between HRDC and the ASEP partnership.

ASEP will require an HRDC team approach with Aboriginal Relations Office (ARO)-ASEP staff working closely with their regional colleagues in the negotiation and implementation of these new and unique partnerships in different parts of Canada

THE ASEP PARTNERSHIP'S DELIVERABLES AND OPERATIONS

The primary deliverable of the ASEP Partnership will be a multi-year skills development plan that ensures sustainable employment through the operations phase for Aboriginal peoples within the labour market catchment area. The

plan's focus will be the provision of a trained Aboriginal workforce to meet employment opportunities related to the emerging economic opportunity.

The plan must be acceptable to HRDC and will form the basis of a series of annual activity, expenditure and outcome plans for which the ASEP Partnership will be held accountable. These plans will include firm targets for employment and training.

RESPECTIVE ROLES OF THE PARTIES

The Consortium will:

1. manage the combined resources of the project;
2. implement the skills development plan;
3. enter into sub-agreements, ensuring they maintain accountabilities back through to HRDC;
4. manage sub-agreements in a fashion consistent with the accountability requirements of HRDC;
5. secure provincial approval of curriculum consistent with provincial accreditation standards;
6. maintain a client case management and a contract management system (to be provided by HRDC);
7. provide reports to HRDC reconciling activities, expenditures and results with the HRDC approved plan;
8. monitor and evaluate sub-agreement performance.

Aboriginal Partners will:

1. fully participate in the operations of the project;
2. facilitate the dissemination of employment skills development information;
3. assess and refer candidates to programs, services and employment opportunities;
4. provide financial assistance from within their AHRDA resources.

Provincial government departments and educational institutions will:

1. provide guidance regarding training requirements;
2. provide institutional training;
3. provide on-the-site and on-the-job training;
4. ensure all training / skills development complies with provincial accreditation / diploma standards;
5. validate prior learning assessments.

The corporation will:

1. provide on-going demand side information;
2. facilitate on-the-site and on-the-job training / work experience opportunities;
3. provide tools and equipment to facilitate training and work experiences;
4. utilize an “essential skills” approach and prior learning assessments to facilitate Aboriginal participation;
5. provide ongoing monitoring and evaluation of participant performance while on-the-site and on-the-job;
6. foster employment (through the operations phase) for participants funded under this initiative.

HRDC will:

1. participate in a senior advisory role to the partnership;
2. exert sound financial management on this contribution agreement by:
 - a. conducting a risk assessment and implementing mitigation strategies for those risks (to be up-dated annually);
 - b. providing monthly advances and reconciling monthly claims against the activities and expenditure plans;
 - c. reconciling uploads on participant data (interventions; completion rates; jobs; etc., consistent with the ASEP accountability framework.
 - d. on-site and off-site monitoring to validate achievements;
 - e. applying the accountability requirements consistent with ASEP requirements (e.g. third party annual audit requirements);
 - f. holding the partnership accountable for ensuring sustainable employment (through the operations phase) for participants of this initiative

HRDC will advance funds based on acceptable plans of activities, expenditures and outcomes with on-going advances based on the submission of monthly activity, expenditure and participant outcomes data acceptable to HRDC through reconciliation of achievements against negotiated targets.

EVALUATION AND ASSESSMENT

The ASEP initiative will complement the Aboriginal Human Resources Development Strategy (AHRDS). As part of the Treasury Board approval of the Voisey's Bay project, HRDC committed to have an evaluation strategy in place by December 2003. This Voisey's Bay evaluation will be the foundation for the ASEP evaluation strategy.

In support of the audit and accountability regime, all contribution agreements will specify the requirement for the recipients to keep books and records in accordance with normally accepted accounting practices and the right of the Crown to audit those books and records, as well as the obligation of the recipient to cooperate in evaluation related activities.

HRDC has set aside sufficient funds from its operating budget for the planned evaluation and audit of the ASEP. The department will ensure that departmental systems, procedures and resources for ensuring due diligence in approving transfer payments and verifying eligibility and entitlement and for the management and administration of the ASEP are in place.