



Sector Councils

To meet the needs of a 21st-century economy, Canada will require a highly skilled and adaptable workforce.

Currently, employers and workers are experiencing the pressures of skills and labour shortages related to rapid demographic and technological changes affecting the Canadian economy. Countries around the world are facing similar challenges.

A key element of the Government's strategy to build an even more globally competitive and sustainable economy is to invest in people. The Government is investing on three main fronts to ensure that Canada has the work force it needs - updating the skills of our existing work force; addressing the needs of groups with special needs, such as youth and our Aboriginal population; and ensuring foreign trained professionals and newcomers can fully participate in the labour market and Canadian society.

Sector councils

Sector councils embody the principles of partnerships and are key to the Government of Canada's strategy to ensuring that our economy succeeds in the 21st century. Sector councils help employers and workers in key industries collaborate to address workplace skills issues. These pan-Canadian organizations bring together business, labour and learning stakeholders to share ideas, concerns and perspectives about human resources and skills issues, and to find solutions that benefit the sector. They help ensure that workers and those seeking employment are well prepared for the challenges of the rapidly evolving labour market.

Sector councils are a proven method of meeting emerging skills requirements, addressing skills and labour shortages, and building essential skills in the workplace—the foundation for continuous learning.

There are currently 29 national sector councils representing traditional industries, such as mining and textiles, and emerging industries, such as biotechnology and the environment. The current national sector council network covers approximately 40 percent of Canada's labour market. The Government of Canada is committed to strengthening and expanding the network of sector councils so that more Canadian workers benefit from them.

The objectives of sector councils are as follows:

- Define and anticipate skills and human resources issues related to the rapidly evolving workplace;
- Promote lifelong learning in the workplace to help workers gain the skills and knowledge they need in the changing economy;



- Encourage the learning system to be responsive to the labour market;
- Facilitate labour mobility and market transitions; and
- Encourage the private sector to invest in solutions that address skills challenges.

Ultimately, sector councils look at their industry's human resources issues and find solutions that are right for them.

Sector Council Program

Human Resources and Skills Development Canada is the federal department that houses the Sector Council Program.

Through the program, the Government of Canada supports a range of activities, including the following:

- Diagnostic studies on workforce trends; and
- Projects to foster industry-wide skills development, such as occupational standards development, curricula and distance learning initiatives, expanding efforts to recognize prior learning and workplace essential skills development.

The Sector Council Program is working to achieve certain key goals, including the following:

- Increasing coverage and penetration of the labour market;
- Focusing on performance and demonstrating results; and
- Increasing sector councils' engagement and profile with industry players and post-secondary institutions.

History of Sector Councils

The Sector Council Program, originally called the Sectoral Partnerships Initiative, was launched in 1993 to foster the development of a training culture in the private sector by matching employers' training investments. Prompted by labour market development agreements (1995-1999), sector councils evolved from purchasers of training and learning opportunities for workers to influencers of the learning system. In addition to influencing the learning system, sector councils continue to focus employers' attention on the importance of training as well as to promote issues such as recruitment, retention, and most recently, the integration of foreign-trained professionals.

Workplace Skills Strategy

The Sector Council Program is linked to Canada's Workplace Skills Strategy, aimed at helping Canadians to become the best trained, most highly skilled workers in the world, as well as ensuring that employers' needs are met. The Government of Canada recognizes that Canada's future competitiveness depends on a highly skilled work force and on high-performance workplaces that focus on skills development. It will work with business, unions, provinces and territories, sector councils and workers to ensure that all Canadians have the opportunity to develop their skills so that they can obtain meaningful and productive jobs.

For more information on the Government of Canada's Sector Council Program, please visit the HRSDC Web site at www.hrsdc.gc.ca.