

A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO IMPLEMENTING
ABORIGINAL EMPLOYMENT PARTNERSHIPS

INTRODUCTION



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Why the Guide Was Developed

This guide has been developed as a tool to help employers work in partnership with Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal organizations to expand job opportunities for Aboriginal people.

The Speech from the Throne reaffirmed the federal government's commitment to ensuring equitable access to employment and economic opportunities for Aboriginal people in Canada.

Much still needs to be done. The latest Parliamentary review of the Employment Equity Act by the Standing Committee on Human Resources Development notes that greater access to employment must be realized for Aboriginal people, particularly in the private sector. While many companies want to improve the representation of Aboriginal people in their workforces, they often don't know how. The Committee believes that greater success can be achieved by providing employers with more guidance, technical support and advice.

AWPI's Employment Partnership Strategy is designed to help Aboriginal people achieve a representative workforce in which they participate at all occupational levels. Through a process of voluntary partnerships with Aboriginal organizations and other stakeholders, employers are encouraged to initiate a systematic approach that brings about change in their workplaces. The partnerships also encourage and enable improvements in the knowledge and skill levels of Aboriginal job seekers.

An Innovative Resource

AWPI has a track record of producing effective and highly valued resources aimed at helping its partners improve the participation of Aboriginal peoples in the workplace.

One of the most important resources produced by AWPI is the *AWPI Employer Toolkit*. This Toolkit provides a comprehensive source of background information on Aboriginal employment issues, including demographic, statistical and legislative information on Aboriginal peoples in Canada; the business case for employing Aboriginal peoples; best practice checklists; and information to develop awareness and understanding of Aboriginal history and culture.

The *AWPI Employer Toolkit* has been widely disseminated and is being used by employers, Aboriginal organizations, governments, and educational institutions across the country.

The purpose of this Partnership Guide is to:

- raise awareness of the employment partnership strategy and how it contributes to the fair representation of Aboriginal people in the Canadian workforce.
- help both Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal organizations initiate, develop and implement employment partnerships.
- provide guidance on the partnership process, including specific advice on getting started and achieving results.

The AWPI Partnership Guide both complements and extends the *AWPI Employer Toolkit*

- the Guide takes a “how-to” approach to developing partnerships, and fleshes out the concepts and ideas outlined in the *AWPI Employer Toolkit*.

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- the Guide provides detailed information about the processes involved in building partnerships, and elaborates the broader, more general approaches presented in the *AWPI Employer Toolkit*.
- the Guide assumes a base of knowledge about Aboriginal issues – such as Aboriginal demographics, Aboriginal awareness concepts, business case arguments for Aboriginal employment partnerships – that are explored in depth in the *AWPI Employer Toolkit*.

While the AWPI Partnership Guide has been developed as a stand-alone resource, many users will benefit from using it in conjunction with the *AWPI Employer Toolkit*. To facilitate this, appropriate cross-references are noted in the Guide and hot links are provided on the web-version.

Who Should Use the Guide

The guide is designed to be used by both corporate employers and their Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal partners.

Within the company, the Guide should be of use to a wide range of managers and staff specialists. These could include senior management, line managers, HR staff, Aboriginal Relations staff, and purchasing officers.

Aboriginal partners that should find the guide useful include Aboriginal training organizations and Aboriginal communities.

In addition, the guide should be useful to non-aboriginal partners, such as post-secondary educational institutions and other training organizations

How to Use the Guide

The guide is designed to provide fast and easy access to information and issues linked to the development and implementation of Aboriginal employment partnerships.

It is designed to help different organizations find their own path towards partnership. The material is organized into discrete themes. It is not necessary to read the whole guide.

The material in this guide is divided into three sections.

Section I addresses the Framework for Partnerships. It provides insights into the following key issues:

- Why a partnership approach makes sense and how it benefits the partners and other key stakeholders. These are discussed in Chapter 1 of this Section.
- How to structure and manage the partnership effectively. Chapter 2 provides a general overview of the partnership process. Chapter 3 provides guidance on forming a partnership, including finding the right partners and structuring a Partnership Agreement. Chapter 4 sets out considerations for managing the partnership, including setting up a Steering Committee.

Section II deals with Implementing the Partnership. It provides guidance on the following themes:

- How to identify barriers to and opportunities for Aboriginal employment in the workplace and through contracting. Chapter 1 of this Section outlines the steps needed for an integrated approach to planning and goal setting.

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- How to achieve positive results in recruiting, advancing and retaining Aboriginal employees. These issues are dealt with in Chapter 2.
- How to expand indirect job opportunities for Aboriginal people through Aboriginal contracting. Chapter 3 outlines the purchasing initiatives and supplier development initiatives that can achieve effective results.
- How to work with unions to address issues in the collective agreements that limit opportunities for Aboriginal job seekers. This is examined in Chapter 4.
- How to monitor and evaluate the results of the partnership. Data needs and suggestions for data retrieval systems are set out in Chapter 5.

Section III provides a sample of Resources available and suggestions for other sources of information on partnerships.