

I. THE FRAMEWORK FOR PARTNERSHIP



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1. AWPI PARTNERSHIP STRATEGY

1.1 AWPI Mandate

The Aboriginal Workforce Participation Initiative (AWPI) is designed to increase the participation of Aboriginal peoples in the Canadian labour market. Launched in 1991, and enhanced in 1996, it supports the commitment of the Government of Canada to forge new relationships with Aboriginal peoples.

AWPI's mission is "to facilitate the process of equitable participation of Aboriginal peoples in the Canadian workforce through enhancing awareness, capacity and partnerships between Aboriginal peoples and all sectors of the economy. This process is built upon a foundation of mutual respect, innovation and the pursuit of excellence."

AWPI is aimed at helping its stakeholders -- Aboriginal peoples, employers, and other governments -- take steps to enhance the participation of Aboriginal people in the workforce. AWPI was not designed as an employment program supported by funding for employment. Rather it was designed as an initiative that would break down the barriers to Aboriginal employment, and increase the opportunities for the recruitment, retention and advancement of Aboriginal peoples.

1.2 The Need for an Employment Partnership Approach

The looming skills gap (as baby boomers retire), together with the demographics of a young and growing Aboriginal population, means that those Aboriginal people who possess the right mix of education, skills and experience should be well positioned to meet the future needs of the Canadian labour force.

However, the potential will only be achieved if employers take steps to remove barriers to Aboriginal workforce participation and if opportunities about specific jobs are communicated to Aboriginal students and job seekers in a timely fashion.

1.21 Opportunities

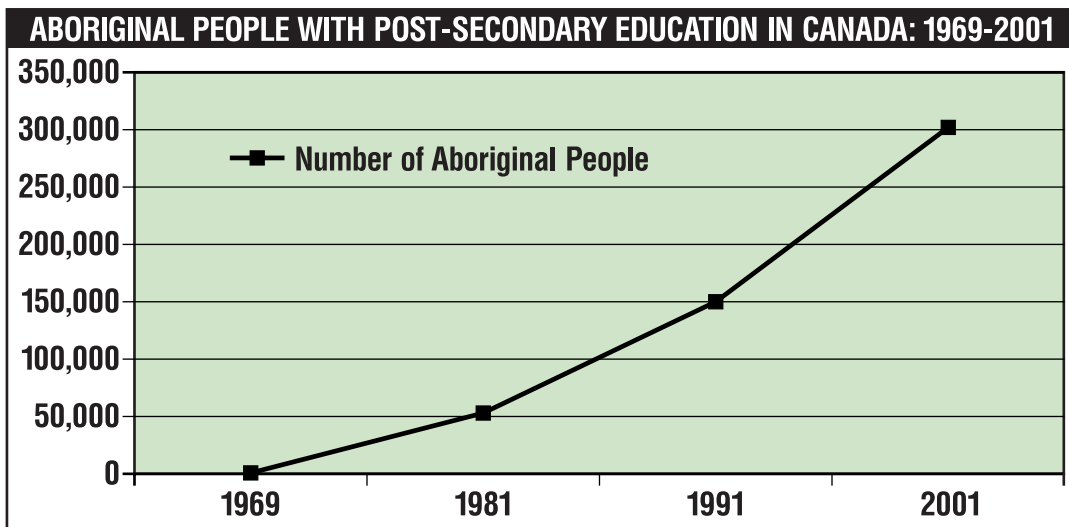
As the Canadian economy continues to grow over the next few years, so too will the number of job opportunities. In addition a significant number of jobs will come open as baby boomers retire. The Aboriginal population is young and growing at a rate almost twice that of the Canadian population. Aboriginal people will be an important part of solving the potential shortage of skilled workers in the Canadian labour force.

- More than half the First Nations population is under the age of 25, with one-third aged 14 and under.
- In contrast the 2001 census indicates that the non-Aboriginal population in Canada is getting older and many people are nearing retirement age. The median age for non-Aboriginal people is 37.7 years compared to 24.7 years for the Aboriginal population.

Aboriginal people are slowly and steadily closing the education gap between themselves and other Canadians:

- The proportion of working-age Aboriginal people (ie. those aged 25-64) who have post-secondary qualifications increased from 33% in 1996 to 38% in 2001.
- The proportion of Aboriginal people with trade certificates surpasses that in the non-Aboriginal population. For example, in 2001, 16% of working-age Aboriginal people held a trade certificate, compared with 13% in the non-Aboriginal working population.

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SOURCES: AWPI Employer Toolkit; 2001 Census

The number of Aboriginal peoples with a post-secondary education has increased dramatically over the past four decades. In 2001, over 300,000 had some post-secondary education, up from 800 in 1969 and 53,000 in 1981. As Aboriginal children move through the education system and into the labour market in coming years they will represent an increasing part of the growth of the Canadian working-age population.

Aboriginal people have also made significant progress in the workplace. Aboriginal representation in organizations covered by the federal Employment Equity Act has increased from 0.7% in 1987 to 1.6% in 2001.



SOURCE: 2002 Employment Equity Act Annual Report

Aboriginal people should also benefit from the dramatic shift to outsourcing in both the public and private sectors. This trend will continue and should result in an increasing range of opportunities for Aboriginal suppliers of goods and services. Aboriginal people are already benefiting from some outsourcing opportunities, particularly through service contracts and construction contracts. The challenge will be to ensure that they get the opportunity to participate fully in all emerging opportunities.

[See Also: *AWPI Employer Toolkit: Demographic and Statistical Information*]

1.22 Challenges

Despite significant progress, Aboriginal people are still not represented in the Canadian workforce to the extent of their labour market availability.

- The labour force participation rate for people of Aboriginal origin is 65% compared with 67% for non-Aboriginal people.
- The unemployment rate for Aboriginal people is 16% compared to only 7% for non-Aboriginal people.
- Despite steady progress since 1987, the representation of Aboriginal people in organizations covered by the federal Employment Equity Act still falls short of their labour market availability. In some sectors, such as banking, there has been no increase in the Aboriginal share of the workforce since 1996.
- Aboriginal people remain severely under-represented in management positions in all industry sectors.

This is the result of two key realities: Aboriginal people continue to face significant workplace barriers that limit their awareness of and access to jobs and contracts; and there are still too many Aboriginal people in the labour force who do not possess the education, skill and experience that employers need.

Workplace Barriers

There are a number of barriers in the workplace that limit the hiring of Aboriginal workers. For example, the tendency to request qualifications higher than necessary to do the job keeps lowered skilled Aboriginal job seekers from getting a foothold in the workforce. Managers making hiring decisions often recruit from networks of individuals from similar social, cultural and economic backgrounds; Aboriginal people are seldom part of these networks. In some workplaces, Aboriginal people are confronted with racism, overt discrimination, stereotyping, insensitivity or indifference, which makes them feel uncomfortable and not valued as employees.

FIVE COMMON TYPES OF WORKPLACE BARRIERS	
Job Classifications	✓ Employers request qualifications higher than necessary for job
Cultural Biases in Hiring	✓ Recruiting managers select employees from similar social, cultural and economic backgrounds
Unsupportive Workplaces	✓ Racism and stereotyping in the workplace make Aboriginal people uncomfortable and not valued as employees
Recruitment Practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Many jobs are not advertised ✓ Jobs not posted in publications or locations frequented by Aboriginal job seekers.
Union Barriers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Seniority provisions in the collective agreement, ✓ Promotion, layoff and recall practices

In other cases, many jobs are not advertised or they are not posted in publications or locations frequented by Aboriginal job seekers. In unionized workplaces, seniority provisions in the collective agreement, together with promotion, layoff and recall practices act as barriers to the employment and advancement of Aboriginal people.

Education and Skills

Despite significant and steady improvements in the level of education and skill of the Aboriginal population, the dropout rates for Aboriginal students, beginning in grade nine, are alarming. According to the *Taking Pulse Discussion Paper* put out by NAAF in 2001:

- only 34% of Aboriginal youth complete high school. High school completion rates among those living on reserve are lower still: only one quarter completes high school.
- on average only 14% of Aboriginal students earned a post-secondary degree or diploma, compared with a national average of 28%.

In future, many new jobs will require skills that only come with post-secondary diplomas.

Contracting Barriers

Despite the fact that contracting has emerged as an effective tool to provide employment and business development opportunities for Aboriginal suppliers, relatively few Canadian organizations have introduced Aboriginal contracting strategies. The result is that Aboriginal people continue to face a number of barriers in competing for outsourcing contracts by both the private and public sectors in Canada. These include:

- Aboriginal contractors are not included on bid lists.
- Information on upcoming contracts is not disseminated early enough for Aboriginal contractors to prepare a bid.
- Contracts may be too large for Aboriginal businesses to handle.
- Aboriginal contractors may be unfamiliar with the procurement process.
- Bid and performance bonds may be difficult for Aboriginal contractors to arrange.

1.3 AWPI's Employment Partnership Strategy

As the current Canadian workforce ages, the young and growing Aboriginal population should be well positioned to meet the future labour force needs of the Canadian economy. However, the equitable participation of Aboriginal people in the workforce will depend on three key factors:

- First, employers must take actions to remove existing barriers to Aboriginal employment and contracting in the workplace.

AWPI'S ROLE IN PROMOTING EMPLOYMENT PARTNERSHIPS

- ✓ Plays a leadership role in bringing together partners to improve employment opportunities for Aboriginal people
- ✓ Targets high potential sectors and employers
- ✓ Encourages employers to commit to Aboriginal workforce development through a voluntary Partnership Agreement
- ✓ Acts as coach, facilitator and advisor to assist employers and partners implement partnership agreements

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- Second, employers must ensure that information on existing and prospective job and contracting opportunities are communicated fully to students, job seekers and entrepreneurs in the Aboriginal community.
- Third, education and training institutions should work with Aboriginal people to help them acquire the knowledge and skills needed by specific employers.

AWPI recognizes that the achievement of a representative Aboriginal workforce requires a focused and comprehensive employment initiative that encourages changes in the workplace together with improvements in the supply of Aboriginal people who possess the education and skills needed by employers.

Under its employment partnership strategy, AWPI targets high potential sectors and identifies and works with specific companies to encourage them to work in partnership with AWPI and relevant (Aboriginal) stakeholders to build a representative workforce.

AWPI encourages employers to commit to voluntary partnership agreements that take a systematic approach to enabling change in the workplace; help potential Aboriginal workers acquire the knowledge and skills to fill specific job openings; and assist Aboriginal businesses to participate in contracting opportunities. The initiative seeks to develop workplaces that support fairness, respect and dignity, trust and open communication.

CORE ELEMENTS OF SUCCESSFUL EMPLOYMENT PARTNERSHIPS

- ✓ Develop a bilateral or multilateral process that promotes fairness, equity, trust, respect, dignity and consistency
- ✓ Involve key stakeholders (the Aboriginal community, unions, employees, training institutions) in finding solutions
- ✓ Implement programs to facilitate constructive cultural and race relations
- ✓ Take active steps to promote Aboriginal employment and career development
- ✓ Encourage business development opportunities that create indirect jobs for Aboriginal people

1.4 Benefits of a Partnership Strategy

The Employment Partnership Strategy will result in a wide range of benefits to key stakeholders:

Employer Benefits:

Employment partnerships help companies tap into the fast growing Aboriginal labour market, now and in the future, and find new local suppliers for goods and services.

Employers find that hiring Aboriginal employees helps them reach and serve Aboriginal markets and Aboriginal clients more effectively.

Partnerships help companies benefit from increased community support and acceptance, thereby improving their access to Aboriginal traditional territories and to the continuity and stability of their operations in those territories.

Aboriginal Community Benefits

Employment partnerships can facilitate sustainable community development by increasing the number of people in the Aboriginal community who are gainfully employed and self-sufficient.

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Partnerships can help strengthen Aboriginal business capacity through outsourcing and contracting initiatives that create opportunities for Aboriginal suppliers.

Government Benefits

Governments benefit from the increased spending power of Aboriginal people in the workforce and from lower social service costs and transfer payments.

Union Benefits

Employment partnerships help unions remove long-standing irritants with the Aboriginal community, increase their Aboriginal membership, and meet key social justice goals.

Benefits to Education and Training Institutions

Partnerships help education and training institutions develop and deliver training more efficiently and effectively based on providing Aboriginal people with training that reflects specific labour market demands.

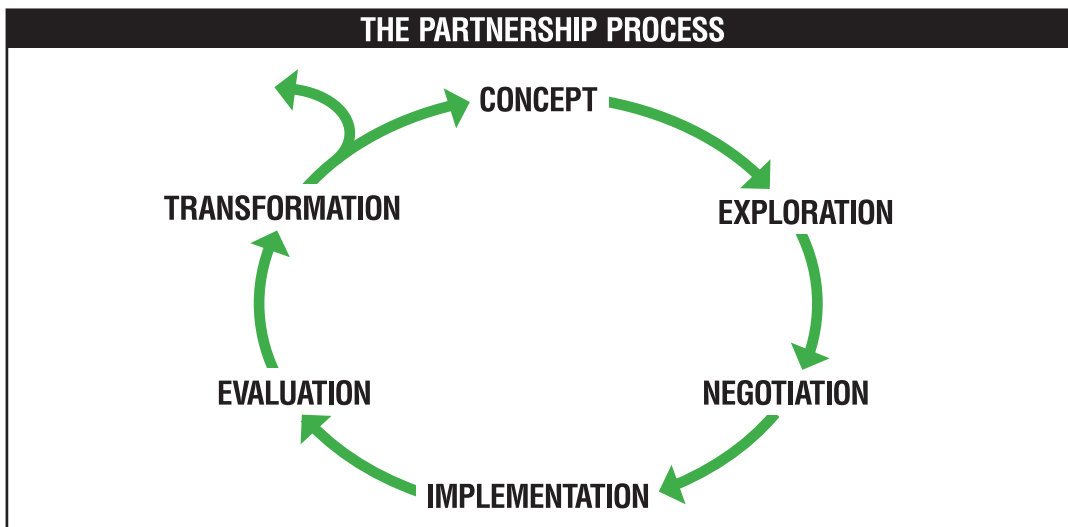
2. THE PARTNERSHIP PROCESS

2.1 Overview of the Partnership Process*

Partnership is a process. It has identifiable stages and many commonly accepted practices.

There are stages to every partnership arrangement. Partnerships flow out of ideas and relationships. They become clarified through discussion and negotiation. Commitments of resources and other investments make them operational. Over time, they need to be evaluated, and based on the results, renewed or modified as appropriate.

In general there are six stages to a partnership arrangement.



2.2 Stages of the Partnership Process*

Concept

Most partnership arrangements begin as concepts or ideas. Most are generated by one of the partners as a response to the realization that a partnership or alliance strategy may help it achieve key marketing, growth or efficiency goals. Sometimes a third party introduces the concept of a partnership. This is the case in Saskatchewan's Aboriginal Employment Development Program and also under AWPI's Employment Partnership Strategy.

Exploration:

Finding the right partner is a critical part of the process. Many organizations look to existing relationships for opportunities. The search for prospective partners involves asking the following key questions: Who can help us achieve our goals? In what ways are our goals compatible? Are our values compatible? How do we strengthen and complement one another? Can we work together?

Negotiation

The process of negotiation defines how the partners will work together. It clarifies the goals and expectations of each partner. Negotiation also establishes the roles and responsibilities of each partner.

Implementation

Each partnership is different in its implementation. In general, this stage involves all of the operational aspects of the partnership, such as the management structure, resourcing, planning and goal setting, targeted actions and communications.

Evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation are essential parts of any partnership. Partners need to ask: Are we meeting our goals? Are our expectations being fulfilled? What have we learned? Have we solved problems that have emerged? Have circumstances changed since we began?

Transformation

Partnerships change over time. They can grow and be renewed. They can lead to new arrangements. They can also end. Recognizing the dynamic nature of a partnership helps the appropriate transformation to occur.

* Source: *The Power of Partnerships: New Opportunities for Aboriginal Peoples and Ontario Business*, Ontario Native Affairs Secretariat. © Queen's Printer for Ontario, 2001. Reproduced with permission.

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2.3 Types of Employment Partnerships

Employment partnerships are emerging in many sectors of the economy and can be structured in a variety of ways.

Some partnerships take the form of strategic alliances, some are joint ventures, some are ad hoc arrangements and others are formal partnership agreements. The following table describes examples of these different arrangements.

EXAMPLES OF PARTNERSHIP ARRANGEMENTS	
Type	Characteristics
Joint Venture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ new legal entity created ✓ formed for specific set of purposes ✓ usually complex, long-term arrangements ✓ found in many different economic sectors
Strategic Alliances	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ partners remain legally separate ✓ focused set of purposes ✓ joint collaboration in one specific area over an extended period of time ✓ used for contracting, marketing, service provision, construction projects, etc.
Comprehensive Partnerships	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ partners remain legally separate ✓ make a joint commitment to collaborate in a number of inter-related areas ✓ often involve long-term economic and community development activities
Partnership Projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ partners remain legally separate ✓ focused set of objectives and activities for a definable time/project period ✓ can involve multiple stakeholders ✓ applicable across many economic sectors

3. GETTING STARTED

3.1 Finding Partners

The three most common ways in which corporations and Aboriginal organizations can make initial contact is through networking; using intermediaries; or making a direct approach.

Networking

Networking is the most informal method of relationship building. Aboriginal organizations should find good networking opportunities by participating in seminars, workshops, breakfast meetings, conferences and trade shows organized by local Chambers of Commerce, trade associations and industry associations. For corporate employers participating in Aboriginal organizations and events can be a good way to meet key local Aboriginal contacts and increase knowledge and understanding of Aboriginal issues and priorities.

Intermediaries

There are a variety of intermediaries who can help corporate and Aboriginal organizations find potential partners.

Private sector intermediaries would include accountants, lawyers, consultants who might be able to provide suggestions and make introductions.

There are also a number of federal and provincial government programs that have staff specialists who can help with advice and contacts. These are listed in Section III of this guide under *Section III: Resources*

GOVERNMENT PROGRAMS PROMOTING PARTNERSHIPS	
FEDERAL GOVERNMENT	ABORIGINAL WORKFORCE PARTICIPATION INITIATIVE
ONTARIO	WORKING PARTNERSHIPS PROGRAM
SASKATCHEWAN	ABORIGINAL EMPLOYMENT DEVELOPMENT PROGRAM
BRITISH COLUMBIA	ABORIGINAL EMPLOYMENT PARTNERSHIP INITIATIVE

Direct Approach

Many organizations know what they are looking for in a partner and undertake the search themselves. This often involves developing specific criteria and then searching for a partner that meets the criteria. A variety of techniques can be used including retaining consultants; researching databases, resource lists and directories; advertising for partners; and using requests for proposals.

3.2 The Qualities of a Good Partner

Choosing an appropriate partner is one of the key decisions in creating a successful partnership. There are three fundamental qualities that are essential in both partners: respect, motivation, and commitment. Partnership is a two-way street and the qualities that are desirable on one side of the partnership are just as desirable on the other side.

QUALITIES OF A GOOD PARTNER*		
Aboriginal Partner	Essential Qualities	Corporate Partner
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Respect for corporate values ✓ Respect for corporate decision process 	Respect	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Respect for Aboriginal values ✓ Respect for Aboriginal decision process
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Partnership helps attain community goals ✓ Fits with community strategy 	Motivation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Partnerships helps attain business goals ✓ Strategic fit with corporate priorities
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Willingness to share goals ✓ Willingness to allocate resources ✓ Willingness to sustain effort 	Commitment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Willingness to share goals ✓ Willingness to allocate resources ✓ Willingness to sustain effort.

* Source: *The Power of Partnerships: New Opportunities for Aboriginal Peoples and Ontario Business*, Ontario Native Affairs Secretariat. © Queen's Printer for Ontario, 2001. Reproduced with permission.

3.3 The Partnership Agreement

Partnership Agreements are formal agreements that set out the principles on which the implementation strategy is based and identify the commitments of each partner to the Agreement.

Basic principles underlying the partnership could include:

- a commitment to fairness and equity.
- mutual respect.
- open communications.
- mutual trust.
- shared commitment.

The core objective of the partnership would be to increase Aboriginal employment and career development opportunities. In addition the Partnership Agreement could commit the partners to other complementary goals, such as:

- initiatives to build organizational commitment.
- initiatives to create a supportive workplace for Aboriginal employees.
- business development initiatives for Aboriginal contractors and suppliers.
- a timeframe for achieving specific goals.
- a framework for monitoring and evaluation.

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ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES OF KEY PARTNERS	
Partner	Partnership Role
Employer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ undertake a workforce review, employment systems review and procurement review to identify barriers and opportunities ✓ take steps to remove barriers ✓ prepare the workplace for qualified Aboriginal employees ✓ communicate information on the types of skills and qualifications the organization needs to Aboriginal communities and training organizations ✓ take proactive measures to improve Aboriginal recruitment, retention and advancement in the workplace ✓ inform Aboriginal community and businesses about goods and services needed ✓ assist Aboriginal suppliers to capture contract opportunities ✓ work with the unions to address barriers in the collective agreement.
Aboriginal Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ identify candidates for employment ✓ encourage and support Aboriginal youth to obtain necessary workforce education and skills
Unions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ open up opportunities for Aboriginal people through Aboriginal-specific provisions in the collective agreement
Aboriginal Training Organizations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ develop cost-efficient program for Aboriginal participants that are geared to needs of the workplace
Governments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ facilitate the process of partnership formation ✓ provide advice and assistance to partners

The employer plays the central role in the partnership with the responsibility to address barriers, identify employment needs and opportunities, and communicate these to Aboriginal job seekers, organizations and communities.

At the same time, the role of other partners can be very important. The Aboriginal community and training organizations can help identify potential candidates for job openings. Unions can help open up opportunities for Aboriginal people through Aboriginal-specific provisions in the collective agreement. Governments can facilitate the partnership process through advice and funding, if necessary. The table above sets out some of these key roles and responsibilities in more detail.

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MODEL EMPLOYMENT PARTNERSHIP AGREEMENT

Partnership Agreement between

and

The parties in this agreement agree to work together in the development of a partnership for Aboriginal employment.

The parties further agree the development of such a partnership will require the establishment of a relationship involving close co-operation between the parties having individual and joint priorities, responsibilities and authorities in an environment that reflects and fosters:

- ✓ Fairness and equity
- ✓ Consistency of approach
- ✓ Mutual respect and dignity
- ✓ Open communication
- ✓ Trust

The parties agree to work with the Aboriginal community, unions (if applicable), and employees to find ways to:

1. Facilitate constructive cultural relations.
2. Enhance linkages to the Aboriginal labour force.
3. Promote employment, retention and career development opportunities for Aboriginal people.
4. Identify potential business development initiatives of mutual benefit designed to meet Aboriginal social, economic and educational priorities within the community which generate an opportunity for Aboriginal employment.
5. Develop an action plan indicating both short and long term strategies. Also included in this are:
 - ✓ Co-ordinated progress of the agreement
 - ✓ Co-ordinated results of the agreement.

Signed this _____ day of _____, 2003

On behalf of the Employer

On behalf of the Aboriginal Partner

On behalf of Union (if applicable)

Partnership Agreements are often signed by the partners in a public ceremony. This sends a signal to the staff in the partner organizations, as well as to other stakeholders, especially in the Aboriginal community, that senior management is committed to achieving results.

4. MANAGING THE PARTNERSHIP

4.1 Allocating Resources

The success of the partnership will depend directly on the resources allocated to managing and implementing the process. Resource needs may involve:

- staff resources/time to participate in and assist a Steering Committee.
- a Coordinator to oversee development, implementation and evaluation of a representative workforce strategy and to advise and assist line units.
- funding/staff time for workplace reviews, planning, training and development, recruitment and staffing, supplier development, communications.
- time commitments from union members and other Committee members.

4.2 Establishing a Steering Committee

A Steering Committee helps to plan, develop and oversee the implementation process.

Ideally, the Committee should be made up from representatives of the various stakeholders who have a vested interest in the successful implementation of the specific employment partnership. This could include key managers, HR personnel, procurement/contracting staff, a government representative, a representative from partner Aboriginal organizations, and representatives from union or employee groups.

The role of the Steering Committee would be advisory. It would help the company to develop an implementation plan that includes:

- Operational goals and objectives
- Recommended implementation process
- An implementation schedule
- The appropriate ongoing monitoring and advisory role of the Committee
- Sources of external assistance and funding

4.3 Developing a Communications Strategy

Effective communications are essential to the success of the partnership.

Good ongoing communications are important in order to keep stakeholders informed about what is happening, build awareness about the partnership and its objectives, build understanding, and make it more likely that the partners will work in a coordinated way.

Strong internal communications should be established with employees (or community members) and people directly involved in making the partnership work.

Partner organizations should be informed about progress, issues, challenges and accomplishments. In all cases, communication networks should include key Aboriginal training organizations, educational institutions and communities in order for Aboriginal people to have timely information on job opportunities and accurate information on education and skill needs for particular jobs.

Stakeholders outside the immediate partnership framework (governments, regulators, communities) should be kept informed of developments on an on-going basis.