

## II. IMPLEMENTING A PARTNERSHIP



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### 1. ASSESSMENT, PLANNING AND GOAL SETTING

The employer should undertake a workforce review, employment systems review and procurement review to identify barriers and opportunities.

#### 1.1 Workplace Review

The purpose of the workplace review is for the employer to undertake a systematic review of all administrative policies, procedures and practices to ensure that these do not act as barriers to the recruitment, retention and promotion of Aboriginal people. This involves addressing the following issues:

- *Classification Issues:* Occupations may be over-classified, specifying education and training that exceeds the knowledge and skills required to perform the job well. In other cases, the employer may routinely hire persons who are overqualified. These practices limit opportunities for less-educated Aboriginal job seekers.
- *Recruitment Issues:* Recruitment practices may not reach out to Aboriginal job seekers. Managers responsible for specific hiring decisions of casual or part-time employees often turn to their existing informal community and social networks to fill positions. Since Aboriginal people are not part of these networks they are not made aware of opportunities.
- *Selection Practices:* The absence of clear and objective screening and selection criteria, and the failure to use selection panels with Aboriginal representatives, can both result in hiring decisions that unfairly exclude Aboriginal job candidates.
- *Training and Promotion Strategies:* The failure to accommodate Aboriginal values or measures that exclude Aboriginal people from on-the-job training and work experience opportunities will limit the access of Aboriginal people to supervisory, management and higher skill occupations.

If such barriers are identified a strategy and plan should be developed to modify or remove these barriers.

[See also: *AWPI Employer Toolkit: Barriers to Aboriginal Employment*]

#### 1.2 Occupational Survey of the Workforce

The purpose of the occupational survey is to identify the different types of occupations that exist in the workplace, the number of positions in each occupational category, and the formal knowledge, skills and experience required for each position. This then forms the basis of the Company's recruitment and training strategy. A survey can encompass the following:

- the different types of occupations in the workplace.
- the knowledge, skills, duties and responsibilities of each type of occupation.
- composition of the existing workforce.
- whether jobs are full-time, part-time, or casual.

One way to group occupations is on the basis of the following formal education/training requirements:

- those requiring only literacy or grade 8.
- those requiring partial high school.
- those requiring partial high school plus some trade, technical, vocational training.
- those requiring grade 12 plus some post secondary training.
- professional occupations.

# A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO IMPLEMENTING ABORIGINAL EMPLOYMENT PARTNERSHIPS

These findings should be organized and quantified for use in informing the Aboriginal community and education/training institutions of potential job opportunities and the kind of skills and training that will be necessary for Aboriginal candidates to compete for these opportunities. The following table provides an example of how the results could be organized.

ORGANIZING THE RESULTS OF THE OCCUPATIONAL SURVEY						
Occupation Title	Minimum qualifications	Job Status				Duties and responsibilities
		Full Time	Part Time	Casual	Total	
<b>Totals</b>						

### 1.3 Review Contracting Policies and Practices

Existing contracting policies and procedures should be reviewed to ensure that they do not act as barriers to Aboriginal suppliers. Issues to be addressed include:

- Whether the organization keeps a list of potential Aboriginal contractors.
- Whether Aboriginal contractors are informed in a timely basis of forthcoming contracts.
- Whether the typical size of contracts awarded is too large for Aboriginal contractors to handle.
- Whether Aboriginal contractors have problems arranging performance and bid bonds.

If these existing contracting practices have the effect of excluding Aboriginal contractors and suppliers, a plan should be developed to modify these practices or procedures.

### 1.4 Setting Goals

It is important that realistic goals and timetables be set, ideally by having the individual business units in an organization define their own commitments.

A framework of long term goals combined with annual targets has proved to be a very effective strategy utilized by a number of corporate leaders across Canada.

#### 1.41 Employment Goals

Data from the occupational survey should be used to establish Aboriginal employment goals and a timeframe for reaching these goals.

The under-representation of Aboriginal people in the employer's workforce could be established by comparing the number of Aboriginal employees in each occupational category against the potential availability of Aboriginal people in the labour force in that category.

The timeframe for achieving full Aboriginal representation in a particular occupational category will depend partly on turnover and partly on the availability of Aboriginal candidates for the position. While low skill occupational categories may be filled relatively quickly (depending on turnover), professional and managerial jobs will usually take much longer.

## 1.42 Contracting Goals

Many organizations outsource a range of services from outside suppliers as well as purchase equipment and supplies. This information should be collected on a centralized basis and form the base for establishing goals for increasing purchasing of goods and services from Aboriginal suppliers.

There are a variety of options for setting Aboriginal contracting goals:

- One approach is to set a “fair share” target that represents a percentage of total goods and services that are outsourced.
- The organization can review its detailed business needs and then identify specific opportunities that can be met by local Aboriginal businesses.
- Some corporations set a series of stretch goals that aim to increase the annual purchasing from Aboriginal suppliers each year.

## 2. TAKING ACTION ON EMPLOYMENT

### 2.1 Creating a Supportive Workplace

A supportive workplace is the essential underpinning for both Aboriginal recruitment and Aboriginal retention initiatives.

A successful Aboriginal employment strategy needs the support and understanding of existing employees and managers. The key is to focus on the employees and managers in the organization’s business or operating units. They are the people who work on a daily basis with aboriginal people as co-workers and contractors and who are responsible for the hiring, training and contracting decisions that impact on Aboriginal people and communities.

Existing employees will embrace change more readily if they understand the reasons for it. This may involve initiatives on two fronts: first, it is important for employees to understand how a commitment to Aboriginal people can benefit the company; second, they need to understand why these commitments are important to Aboriginal people. Aboriginal Awareness workshops can be an important tool for building understanding.

The following considerations are important in planning and delivering effective Awareness workshops:

- Defining the needs and goals of the workshop(s)
- Developing the workshop content
- Determining who should deliver the workshop(s)
- Tailoring workshops to specific audiences
- Scheduling workshops to ensure they are accessible to the target audience
- Refining the workshops on the basis of participant feedback

#### SASKENERGY’S ECONOMIC ARGUMENTS FOR CHANGE LEARNING PROGRAM\*

- ✓ The program helps employees understand why SaskEnergy’s Aboriginal Framework policy makes good business sense
- ✓ It enables participants to explore and evaluate their views of Aboriginal people
- ✓ It helps participants increase their knowledge of the historical and socio-economic realities that underpin the partnerships with Aboriginal people.

\* Source: SaskEnergy

# A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO IMPLEMENTING ABORIGINAL EMPLOYMENT PARTNERSHIPS

## 2.2 Pre-Employment Training Initiatives

Many Aboriginal people still lack the education and skills needed for many positions in the workforce. If the high unemployment of Aboriginal people is to be resolved, employers should become part of the solution.

Given their high dropout rates, it is essential that Aboriginal youth be encouraged to stay-in school and acquire the education and skill levels needed in today's workplace. To this end, employers can:

- work in cooperation with Aboriginal communities to plan and implement stay-in-school programs in high schools.
- participate in career development programs in Aboriginal schools.
- prepare and distribute information packages for students that describe the types of job opportunities in the organization, their educational and skill requirements, job remuneration, and promotion and career advancement opportunities.
- encourage Aboriginal applicants to return to school by promising to reconsider their applications once they have acquired the education needed for the job.
- provide educational awards and scholarships for Aboriginal students entering post-secondary educational and training programs.

Employers can also work with training institutions to develop and participate in occupation-specific job readiness programs. Under these programs, Aboriginal trainees would receive appropriate training at the employer's job site. Math, language and reading skills could be developed using examples from the workplace that deal with tasks expected from employees. Interpersonal skill development should focus on skills needed to interact with colleagues, supervisors and service users. Aboriginal trainees could also be provided with information and training that helps them understand the new cultural environment they will be working in.

Employers can provide summer employment and coop work experience opportunities for Aboriginal students on a regular basis.

PRE-EMPLOYMENT TRAINING ROLES	
Stakeholder	Role
Aboriginal Community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ stress importance of education/training to Aboriginal youth</li> <li>✓ encourage/assist Aboriginal youth to get necessary schooling</li> <li>✓ provide rewards for successful completion of education/training</li> </ul>
K-12 Schools	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ emphasize importance of selecting and planning careers</li> <li>✓ provide career counseling to make students aware of training needed for specific careers</li> </ul>
Employers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ inform post secondary institutions of specific workplace training needs</li> <li>✓ assist post-secondary institutions develop appropriate training curriculums</li> <li>✓ assist institutions to provide student support services</li> <li>✓ inform institutions of specific job opportunities</li> <li>✓ partner with training organizations to offer training programs linked to job experience</li> <li>✓ provide scholarships/educational awards for Aboriginal students</li> <li>✓ provide summer employment opportunities</li> </ul>
Post Secondary Education and Training Institutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ inform employers of courses available, costs and timeframes and sources of funding</li> <li>✓ determine how current training can be enhanced or modified for Aboriginal students</li> <li>✓ develop appropriate cultural content to include in existing training modules</li> </ul>

## 2.3 Recruitment

The short-term and long-term hiring goals should drive the recruitment strategy. Successful Aboriginal recruitment initiatives may involve taking the following measures:

- ensure that all job opportunities are advertised, including casual and part-time positions.
- ensure that job qualifications reflect real job requirements and accept a range of equivalencies.
- establish relationships with Aboriginal organizations and human resource agencies to keep them informed about job opportunities.
- access inventories of Aboriginal job applicants.
- ensure that there is Aboriginal representation in the recruitment process.

### EMPLOYER STRATEGIES TO REACH ABORIGINAL JOB SEEKERS

- ✓ Use targeted media and communication channels recommended by local Aboriginal communities
- ✓ Ensure that job openings are posted prominently at all relevant organizations, including Aboriginal employment and training centres; band offices; Metis locals; Friendships Centres; schools and educational institutions
- ✓ Use public service announcements on CBC North
- ✓ Tap into Aboriginal networks to help identify and reach potential Aboriginal candidates

## 2.4 Selection

The selection process is an important component in ensuring that Aboriginal candidates are given fair access to available jobs. The following table sets out possible actions to ensure that there is no unintended bias in the process that works against Aboriginal candidates.

### FAIR SELECTION PROCEDURES

- ✓ Ensure that assessment tools are job related and pre-tested for bias
- ✓ Establish clear and objective screening criteria
- ✓ Establish clear and objective selection criteria
- ✓ Use prior learning assessments that recognize a range of equivalencies
- ✓ Include experienced and qualified Aboriginal people on the selection panel
- ✓ Ensure the selection panel explains the demands of the job in terms understood by Aboriginal applicants
- ✓ Give the selection panel the scope to discuss support needs with Aboriginal applicants

## 2.5 Advancement

A key goal in achieving a representative workforce is to ensure that Aboriginal people begin to fill management, professional and technical positions within a reasonable timeframe. At present the pool of Aboriginal candidates who can compete for such positions is limited. Therefore, employers may need to take a more proactive approach, such as:

- working with the Aboriginal community and training institutions to develop a recruitment strategy which identifies and hires Aboriginal people with high potential for these positions.
- preparing a training plan for high potential employees which would give them exposure to a variety of assignments, possibly under the mentorship of an experienced employee. Appropriate training programs could be integrated into this on-the-job learning experience.

## 2.6 Retention

Many workplaces experience a high turnover of Aboriginal employees. Retention problems can result from a number of causes, the most common being an unwelcoming corporate culture, harassment in the workplace, and a lack of assistance and support for Aboriginal employees.

In addition to taking steps to build a supportive workplace, employers can also take steps to help new Aboriginal employees with job orientation and Aboriginal support programs.

Many new Aboriginal employees may not be familiar with the expectations of the workplace. In these cases, develop a job orientation program that helps new workers understand the key workplace policies and procedures, why they are necessary for the efficient and orderly operation of the workplace, and what is expected of him. The program should also ensure that the new worker understands where to turn to for help and advice in both the company and its unions. Carry out a follow-up after a few months to ensure that the employee is comfortable in the workplace and to take supplementary action if needed.

Aboriginal employee networks can provide support and assistance to existing employees and also help new Aboriginal employees to adjust to the workplace. Aboriginal employees should be encouraged to develop a formal network to support each other and to deal with Aboriginal specific issues.

### KEY ELEMENTS OF A JOB ORIENTATION PROGRAM

- ✓ Provide a detailed explanation of policies and procedures of the workplace
- ✓ Provide details on how the workplace is organized and operates
- ✓ Clarify the expectations of the job
- ✓ Explain who new employees should talk to if they are experiencing problems
- ✓ Explain the support services or support networks that are available for Aboriginal employees
- ✓ Provide information on the employee association or union; union contacts; and sources of information on the collective agreement

## 2.7 Workplace Training and Career Development

It is essential that Aboriginal employees participate fully and fairly in on-the-job training and career development opportunities. This can involve:

- preparing training and career development plans for individual Aboriginal employees
- making career counseling and support systems accessible to Aboriginal employees
- ensuring that Aboriginal employees participate fully in development assignments
- developing mentoring programs for Aboriginal employees
- ensuring that Aboriginal employees are included in the succession planning process

*[See also: [AWPI Employer Toolkit: Key Issues- Recruitment, Retention, Advancement](#)]*

## 3. TAKING ACTION ON PROCUREMENT, CONTRACTING AND PURCHASING

### 3.1 Aboriginal Purchasing Initiatives

In order to increase the volume and value of Aboriginal contracting activity, the organization may have to adopt a specific Aboriginal purchasing policy. This would include measures that create specific opportunities for Aboriginal suppliers and procedures that ensure they are given a fair opportunity to compete, such as:

- the use of sole sourcing.
- restricting certain contracts for Aboriginal suppliers.
- breaking up contracts into smaller sizes to match the capacity of Aboriginal contractors.
- waiving bonding requirements.
- encouraging or requiring Aboriginal sub-contract opportunities in prime contracts.
- ensuring that Aboriginal contractors are on bid lists.
- providing early notice to Aboriginal communities and Aboriginal businesses of upcoming contracts.
- clarifying procurement processes for Aboriginal suppliers.

### 3.2 Aboriginal Supplier Development

Many organizations that provide opportunities for Aboriginal suppliers also work with them to strengthen their business capabilities so that they can compete effectively for contracts. This can take a variety of forms, including:

- providing timely information.
- putting on pre-bid workshops and supplier development forums.
- providing direct advice, coaching and training to potential bidders.
- providing help with financing.
- encouraging and facilitating cooperative business ventures with non-Aboriginal partners.



# A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO IMPLEMENTING ABORIGINAL EMPLOYMENT PARTNERSHIPS

EXAMPLES OF ABORIGINAL SUPPLIER CAPABILITY IN CANADA	
Business Sector	Aboriginal Contracting Examples
Oil and Gas	Well servicing Drilling Maintenance services Labour services Transportation services Environmental services
Pipelines	Bio-engineering Pipeline construction Reclamation services Sandblasting services
Forestry	Silviculture Harvesting Log Supply
Mining	Trucking Aviation Services Catering services Mechanical services Open-pit mining Laundry services Road work and maintenance
Electrical generation/transmission	Environmental assessments Tree clearing Communication services Meter reading Bill collection Security services Construction services
Banking	Computer services Printing services Training programs

### 3.3 Resources and Tools

An Aboriginal purchasing policy should be backed up with guidance, resources and tools to help line managers and procurement staff implement the policy. For example:

- build a directory of Aboriginal contractors in the region to develop a better understanding of Aboriginal supplier capability.
- develop guidelines to help managers to evaluate joint business ventures.
- establish an Aboriginal business development group to identify specific opportunities and work with Aboriginal communities and entrepreneurs to maximize the results.

Long-term commitment to an Aboriginal procurement initiative is vital. Most programs take time to make an impact.

## 4. WORKING WITH UNIONS

In a unionized workplace, employers need to work with employee unions to identify issues in the collective agreement that exclude Aboriginal people from the workforce or limit their scope for advancement. This should form the basis for a joint process to develop innovative ways of addressing these issues.

### 4.1 Understanding the Barriers

Two of the key issues in collective agreements that tend to limit opportunities for Aboriginal job seekers revolve around seniority and job entry levels.

- As a result of seniority rights in most collective agreements, employees are promoted, paid, laid off and recalled on the basis of seniority, rather than qualifications or merit. This means that Aboriginal workers, who are often the most recent employees, are last in line for advancement and first in line for layoffs.
- The requirement that vacancies for new jobs (other than entry level jobs) must be posted and filled internally means that Aboriginal workers can only enter the workforce at the entry level, whether they possesses the skills for higher level jobs or not.

### 4.2 Union Initiatives to Create Jobs for Aboriginal people

A number of unions have taken steps to address these problems and help create a representative workforce by including special provisions for Aboriginal people into collective agreements. These may include:

- special hiring, layoff and recall provisions.
- set-asides for apprenticeships.
- workplace preparation.
- in-service training.
- accommodation of spiritual or cultural observances.

Unions have also supported other initiatives to overcome labour force barriers for Aboriginal peoples, such as special employment subsidies and employment equity programs. They have also participated in employment equity plans and partnership agreements. Specific examples of union initiatives are set out in the following table.

# A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO IMPLEMENTING ABORIGINAL EMPLOYMENT PARTNERSHIPS

<b>UNION INITIATIVES TO CREATE OPPORTUNITIES FOR ABORIGINAL WORKERS*</b>	
<b>Union/Employer</b>	<b>Initiative</b>
IBEW Local 2034 and Manitoba Hydro	<p>The company and the union have signed a letter of intent to facilitate equitable participation of qualified Aboriginal people. Particularly in northern locations the union will give every consideration to management requests to waive posting of some positions to accommodate the hiring of Aboriginal people.</p> <p>The parties have also reached understandings on Aboriginal Pre-Placement Training Programs and a Technical Trades Aboriginal Pre-Placement Training Program.</p>
Saskatchewan Union of Nurses and SAHO	<p>The union and the employer agree with the principle of achieving a representative workforce for Aboriginal people. In consultation with the union, the employer will implement initiatives to raise awareness among all employees of cultural differences with an emphasis on Aboriginal people.</p> <p>The collective agreement also contains an article requiring every reasonable effort to accommodate an employee who wishes to participate in spiritual or religious observances required by faith or culture.</p>
USWA Local 924 and United Keno Mines	<p>The company and the unions agree that the company may give preference to First Nations or native employees regardless of their seniority in all cases regarding the filling of vacancies, promotions, selections for training, transfers, layoffs, and recalls from layoff.</p> <p>The company may develop special work schedules applicable to native employees to allow them to engage in traditional activities (such as hunting, fishing, trapping and spiritual activities), while maintaining employment with the company.</p> <p>Any native employee, who has completed the probationary period under the Collective Agreement, may request leaves of absence (which cannot total more than three months in any calendar year) in order to engage in traditional activities.</p>
USWA Local 1051 and Anvil Range Mining Corp	<p>The Company, the union and the local First Nation participate in quarterly consultation meetings to review the company's employment and contracting commitments to the First Nation and to promote cooperation, mutual respect, understanding and tolerance in all relations between the company, the union and First nation peoples.</p>
USWA Local 8914 and Cameco	<p>Preference will be given to residents of Saskatchewan's north and northern residents of Aboriginal ancestry in matters of hiring and recall. In the case of a reduction in the workforce, preference will be given to retaining residents of Saskatchewan's north and northern residents of Aboriginal ancestry.</p> <p>The company shall class apprenticeship vacancies as either "regular" or "special". The "special" apprenticeship vacancies shall be filled by northern residents of Aboriginal ancestry.</p>

\* Source: *Aboriginal Rights Resource Tool Kit*  
Canadian Labour Congress (2003)

## 4.3 The Union Role in Partnership Agreements

Employers should invite their unions to participate fully in partnership agreements that make specific commitments to improve job opportunities for Aboriginal people. The union then becomes a partner with the employer in removing workplace barriers and recruiting and retaining Aboriginal workers.

If changes in collective agreements need to be negotiated, this could take place around the concept of an “Aboriginal Representative Workforce”. This would be implemented in such a way as to open opportunities for new Aboriginal job seekers, while protecting the seniority rights of current staff.

### UNION ROLE IN THE PARTNERSHIP PROCESS

- ✓ Participate on the Steering Committee of the employment partnership.
- ✓ Develop programs to build mutual understanding between union members and Aboriginal people.
- ✓ Seek agreement with the employer on the principle of an “Aboriginal Representative Workforce” and how it can be incorporated into the collective agreement.
- ✓ Participate in pre-apprenticeship training initiatives for Aboriginal youth.
- ✓ Ensure that Aboriginal union members have access to union representatives who understand their problems and can provide solutions within the cultural context to their communities.
- ✓ Provide financial support to help educate and train Aboriginal youth through academic scholarships, workplace bursaries and interest-free loans to needy students.
- ✓ Take steps to increase Aboriginal representation in the union leadership and administration.

## 5. MONITORING AND EVALUATION

A process should be agreed to by the Steering Committee that identifies the information necessary to determine whether progress is being made and the required data retrieval system that will enable a thorough evaluation of the strategy to take place.

### 5.1 Determine Data Needs

The process of deciding on appropriate monitoring instruments could be done by the Steering Committee or by a sub-committee of the Steering Committee. The objectives would be to:

- identify indicators by which the implementation strategy could be measured
- identify the kind of information which must be retrieved and recorded
- design and/or recommend an information retrieval process
- determine how the information should be summarized in report form for distribution to stakeholders

### 5.2 Information Gathering

Base data must be established that provides a snapshot of the organization’s existing relations with Aboriginal people with particular emphasis on employment, training and contracting.

In order to track progress achieved through the employment partnership strategy information should be collected annually on a wide range of performance measures and results achieved by the key partners, including the employer, the unions and the training organizations. Examples of the type of data needed and the organization responsible for its collection is set out in the following table.

# A PRACTICAL GUIDE TO IMPLEMENTING ABORIGINAL EMPLOYMENT PARTNERSHIPS

DATA NEEDED FOR EVALUATION		
Type of Data	Responsibility	Performance Measures
Employment	Employer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ number of positions posted with Aboriginal organizations and Aboriginal media</li> <li>✓ number of Aboriginal people interviewed</li> <li>✓ number of Aboriginal people recruited/their positions</li> <li>✓ number of Aboriginal people promoted/their positions</li> <li>✓ number of Aboriginal people terminated/ their positions</li> <li>✓ number of Aboriginal employees in career development training programs/courses</li> <li>✓ participation in Aboriginal Awareness training</li> </ul>
Training	Training Organization	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ number of Aboriginal people applying for training positions/requested courses</li> <li>✓ number of Aboriginal people accepted for training/coursed selected</li> <li>✓ number of Aboriginal graduates/dropouts</li> <li>✓ number of Aboriginal graduates placed in jobs</li> </ul>
Collective Agreement	Union	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Assistance and services provided by union to Aboriginal employees</li> <li>✓ Aboriginal people in apprenticeships</li> <li>✓ Aboriginal people recruited into union jobs</li> <li>✓ Aboriginal people laid off from union jobs</li> </ul>
Procurement	Employer	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ total outsourcing of goods and services</li> <li>✓ purchases from Aboriginal suppliers and contractors</li> <li>✓ number of Aboriginal suppliers assisted by organization</li> </ul>

## 5.3 Annual Review

On an annual basis, each Committee should review its initiatives against the goals, objectives and targets set. This review should provide indications of what is working; what initiatives are achieving results; what those results are; what changes or new initiatives are required; and how these new initiatives should be implemented.

The annual review needs to be followed up with a specific plan of action to fine tune both short term and long term initiatives. This plan could address:

- fine tuning the operational goals and objectives
- identifying specific ongoing and new initiatives to be taken by each stakeholder to implement their role in the strategy
- identifying ongoing resource needs
- undertaking any necessary fine tuning to the strategy

## 5.4 Periodic Evaluation

A periodic evaluation of the strategy should be undertaken every 3-5 years. It could address:

- progress achieved in attaining goals, objectives and targets
- identification of problem areas and initiatives that did not work
- recommendations for modifications to the strategy
- suggestions for changes to future action plans