

ACR Aboriginal Programs Project Program Template

Program Area:	2.0	Workforce Development
Sub Program:	2.4	Programs Sponsored by Government and Non-Profit Agencies
Template:	2.4.7	Aboriginal Youth Career Initiative Project
Sponsor(s):	<i>Careers: The Next Generation</i>	

1. Objectives

- To help Aboriginal youth build a career vision and pathway by enhancing school- and workplace-based experiences to allow full and meaningful participation in the labour force
- To build community and regional partnerships with key stakeholders to enable future sustainability of career development elements for Aboriginal youth
- To promote career awareness among Aboriginal youth to increase career development opportunities and informed career choices leading to post-secondary studies and/or the workplace
- To promote student stay-in-school initiatives within the Aboriginal community, the education community, and among Aboriginal youth

2. Description

CAREERS: The Next Generation is an industry-led partnership of industry, government and education and a registered foundation whose sponsors and partners wish to create systemic change in the way Alberta youth prepare for the transition to work. The Aboriginal Youth Career Initiative Project is intended to:

- Develop and implement an Aboriginal community model to assist with the building of career awareness
- Promote high school completion, readiness for workplace entry and/or post-secondary entry
- Assist Aboriginal youth to become more aware of career pathway opportunities in trades and technical areas, health services, information and communication technologies (ICT), and financial services by combining schooling with workplace training in industry
- Enable Aboriginal youth to become more career entry-level ready through the provision of high school apprenticeships, internships and work experience programs
- Increase the number of Aboriginal youth entering technical and professional careers
- Engage key stakeholders within Aboriginal communities/regions to form productive partnerships that lead to sustainable efforts for youth career development

CAREERS has developed a community model to assist Aboriginal communities in working with their youth to gain career awareness for workforce readiness and/or transition into post-secondary programs. This model enables youth to participate in career exploration in existing Careers programs (trades, technical areas, health services, ICT and financial services) and to grow future trade apprenticeships or occupational entry-level skills for alternate pathways, both professional and technical.

The specific activities undertaken by CAREERS include: a) conducting career awareness workshops for Aboriginal youth in junior and senior high schools; b) recruitment of industry and regional employers for Aboriginal youth entering the high school Registered Apprenticeship Program (RAP); c) recruitment of industry and regional employers for internship and work experience programs; d) assisting local Aboriginal communities to build support systems to sustain the key purposes of the project; and e) working with industry and regional employers to facilitate ways to assist Aboriginal youth in acquiring a career vision through work-based learning opportunities.

CAREERS has an active presence in the communities of Wabasca, Loon River, Red Earth Creek, Trout Lake, Peerless Lake, Paddle Prairie, Slave Lake, Frog Lake, High Prairie, Peace River, High Level, Grande Prairie, Kinai, Bonnyville, Cold Lake, Lac La Biche, Hobbema, Valleyview, Sturgeon, Rocky Mountain House, Greater Edmonton and region, Calgary and region, and Standoff (Blood Reserve). In 2004, 19 Registered Apprenticeship Program (RAP) students were involved with 11 different employers, and 21 students participated in a Health Services internship. It was anticipated that Aboriginal student numbers would grow significantly in 2005.

CAREERS has focused primarily on promoting trades-based career pathways but has expanded to provide opportunities in other areas as well:

- ***Trades and Technologies career pathway.*** RAP allows high school students to take their apprenticeship training while completing their secondary education. A Co-op Apprenticeship Model is available to Aboriginal youth (post high school) in Fort McMurray and neighboring Aboriginal communities of Wood Buffalo.
- ***Health Services career pathway.*** This pilot project was developed to grow a future talent pool of high quality health care workers. Shareholders include Alberta Health and Wellness, the nine Alberta Regional Health Authorities and the Health Sciences Association of Alberta.
- ***Production Field Operator pathway.*** Career opportunities in the energy sector are provided for Aboriginal youth in the Wabasca area. The Oil and Gas Production Field Operator program commenced in summer 2004 with 15 Aboriginal youth enrolled in a dual capacity as high school students and post-secondary students through the Southern Alberta Institute of Technology SOLIS Program leading to certification as an oil and gas production field operator. Through summer internships provided by eight industry participants, the students receive two months of hands-on experience at the worksite each year in Grades 10, 11 and 12.
- ***Forestry pathway.*** A pilot project in partnership with the Alberta Forest Products Association, Northern Alberta Institute of Technology, University of Alberta, and CAREERS was introduced in summer 2005. The pilot is taking place in the northwest sector of

Alberta from Grande Prairie in the south to High Level in the north. A total of 10 student intern positions have been created by eight industry participants in the forester occupation. Two of the student intern positions were provided to Aboriginal youth.

The Aboriginal Youth Career Pathway Project (Phase I: 2001-2004; Phase II: 2004-2007) was developed by CAREERS as a pilot project to create opportunities to partner with Aboriginal communities in the career pathway areas noted above.

3. Implementation

Some of the key elements for implementation and management of this program are:

- *Education community:* Youth school attendance and graduation rates are low. There are few existing role models to assist youth in gaining a career vision and patterning career success. The transition from school to work appears out of reach. Worksite career opportunities will strengthen school relevancy.
- *Employer sponsorships:* Securing regional and local industries and employers to provide career workplace youth internships and apprenticeships is critical to the success of this initiative. These opportunities enhance the value of a high school diploma and introduce the youth to the work of work and its multi-dimensional applications.
- *Distance and sparsity:* Most Aboriginal communities are affected by distance and location. The proximity of industry and employers has a bearing on worksite learning opportunities. The time and travel factors associated with communities and schools have a bearing on the visible implementation strategies of the CAREERS initiative.
- *Community partnerships:* Building sustainable bridges takes time. Framing a solidarity base in Aboriginal communities requires facilitation and visionary leaders. The goal is to have local and regional committees become very supportive of this youth initiative.
- *Sponsorship:* To move beyond the pilot stage, increased industry participation in the funding sponsorship with CAREERS will be required between 2004 and 2007.

4. Timeframe for Results

Phase II is a three-year project, from October 1, 2004, to September 30, 2007.

5. Measurable Criteria

These include:

- Attendance level and graduation from high school
- Number of youth accepting work experience placements with employers
- Number of students entering trades, technical and professional career pathways after high school completion
- Level of support within the Aboriginal community

6. Budget

Total three-year budget is \$915,000. Confirmed (as of June 2005) funding parties are: Western Economic Diversification Canada, Government of Alberta, BP Canada Energy, Syncrude Canada

Ltd., Enbridge Inc., Nexen Inc., Alberta-Pacific Forest Industries Inc., TransCanada PipeLines Limited, EPCOR, EnCana Corporation, and CAREERS: The Next Generation.

7. Partners and Sponsors

The project is sponsored and implemented by CAREERS: The Next Generation. CAREERS was incorporated in 1997 as a not-for-profit foundation to help Alberta develop the skilled workforce necessary to ensure strong and vibrant communities. In addition to the contributing parties noted above, a key advisory partner is the Economic Development Discussion Group (EDDG) and Alberta Chamber of Resources (ACR).

Industry partners can become involved in a number of ways:

- By becoming a contributing sponsor of the Aboriginal Youth Career Initiative Project or a component of the project
- By providing workplace opportunities for youth apprenticeships and/or career internships
- By representation on the advisory committee
- By joining with CAREERS to develop a customized model to suit their organization or region of the province
- By being a cheerleader and gathering provincial industry support for the initiative
- By providing CAREERS with resources for the project (human, fiscal, or material)

8. Experience with the Program

CAREERS has exciting and compelling youth stories to share and is very optimistic about the future of this initiative with plans to expand into other rural regions and urban centres, particularly Edmonton and Calgary. There is strong support from Aboriginal leaders, schools, parents, educators and industry representatives. An important success factor was to have the Aboriginal representatives at the table from the onset of planning.

9. General Applicability

This program may be of interest to companies looking to grow an Aboriginal component in their workforce and who wish to participate in youth education and work experience initiatives in partnership with Aboriginal communities (particularly on-reserve schools or Métis Settlements).

10. Additional Information or Support

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