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: 2.4.14 NAAF Scholarship Program

Sponsor(s): National Aboriginal Achievement Foundation (NAAF)

1. Objective

To increase the number of Aboriginal students pursuing post-secondary education and the number of Aboriginal people returning to the education system.

2. Description

The foundation operates the following programs:

- > Cultural Projects Program. Provides \$300,000 annually for theatre companies, film festivals and community events that will introduce a variety of artistic disciplines or that will deliver cultural enrichment to Aboriginal communities, especially youth.
- Arts Education and Professional Development Program. Awards approximately \$400,000 annually to individuals pursuing visual, performing and media arts as well as cultural industries and includes all aspects of artistic development dealing with film, video and television production.
- ➤ Post-Secondary Education Program. Provides approximately \$750,000 annually for individuals pursuing business, sciences, technology, law, public service, environmental studies, education, social sciences and social work. The priorities in this program are on business and science.
- ➤ Health Careers Program. Provides approximately \$550,000 annually to individuals pursuing all areas of health and medicine.

The education programs are national in scope and attract applications from every province and territory.

3. Implementation

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

> The jury process. Five jury reviews are convened every year. Six professionals comprise a jury. Jurors are carefully selected with a view to fair representation and an equitable representation from First Nations, Métis and Inuit groups. Jury composition changes every year. Every applicant is notified of the jury decision with respect to his or her

application within two weeks of the decision. Every successful applicant is linked to a participating sponsor and is encouraged to write to the sponsor acknowledging the award.

- Named scholarships. Instead of making a general donation to the NAAF's education program, donors often prefer to establish their own scholarship program under the foundation. The donor establishes an amount and makes a multi-year financial commitment to the foundation. NAAF advertises the specific scholarship program in its scholarship brochure, *Building Brighter Futures*. Since the inception of named scholarship programs, 32 have been established.
- ➤ Donor preference in selection process. Donors may target their support so that preference is given to applicants from specific Aboriginal communities, regions or provinces, or to students in special disciplines. The foundation prefers that participation be less limiting so that students studying in areas that are habitually underfunded or who come from areas that are habitually overlooked will have a fair chance at sponsorship.
- > Sponsorship amount. There is no "reasonable" amount because every student comes with a different set of circumstances: some are band funded; some receive tuition from their Métis association; some have parents who contribute generously; others have no parents to contribute; some are single and live with flatmates; and some are single parents.
- ➤ Partnerships are formed. Students are encouraged to acknowledge their awards by writing to the specific corporate donor. NAAF's corporate partners write back to the students, congratulating them. In many cases, the corporate donors keep the students' names to refer to for summer placements and for jobs after graduation. In this way, the relationship becomes a "partnership."

4. Timeframe for Results

Commitments vary for sponsorships: some sponsors renew annually; others make multi-year commitments. Every corporate partnership is unique.

5. Measurable Criteria

These include:

- Number of students successfully graduating from their program of studies
- Ability of graduates to find employment in their chosen career path upon completion of the program
- Returning students who continue to perform well academically in each succeeding year, as evidenced by their grade transcripts

In the final analysis, the success of the program is measured by whether the graduates are fully trained to enter the economy.

6. Budget

The first awards, in 1988, totalled \$46,185. NAAF increased its scholarship disbursements every year, reaching a total of more than \$2 million in the fiscal year ending March 31, 2003, and a

cumulative total of more than \$14 million between 1988 and 2003.

In 2002, NAAF awarded 543 scholarships and slightly more than \$2 million. There is no average scholarship size and no minimum amount. Usually, the smallest scholarships are for \$500.

7. Partners and Sponsors

NAAF and sponsors. Sponsors are listed on the NAAF website, www.naaf.ca, under "Program Recipients" in the "Business, Sciences and General Education Programs" section of the education programs. Some of the sponsors include: Suncor Energy Inc., AMEC Earth & Environmental, CIBC, Shell Canada Limited, Syncrude Canada Ltd., Petro-Canada Ltd., Diavik Diamond Mines Ltd., and Weyerhaeuser. NAAF has developed new corporate partnerships every year to add to its roster of supporters. NAAF is fully accountable to its supporters by publishing all of its scholarships and making them a matter of public record.

8. Experience with the Program

The foundation has increased its scholarships in every succeeding year since 1988. To measure the effectiveness of the scholarship program, NAAF has undertaken a tracking study involving 200 students who completed their studies in 2001 and 2000. The study, which is conducted through individual interviews, is designed to learn if the student has found employment following graduation and how many job offers were received. NAAF questions students who have not found employment about their job-search strategies. Students are also asked whether they plan to return to their home communities to work, or if they are planning to enroll in graduate studies.

Study participants are chosen from every program and from each sub-group within a program. As of 2003, 70 scholarship recipients had been interviewed. Of this number, 52 (81 per cent of the study group) were working in jobs for which they received training; seven students chose to pursue further or graduate studies; three graduates were working in other fields waiting for opportunities in their own areas; one graduate was searching for employment; and one student had not completed the program due to health and personal reasons.

9. General Applicability

This program is applicable to companies and business sectors that are looking to find an effective way to support Aboriginal scholarship at the post-secondary level. If Aboriginal people are to be gainfully engaged in all sectors of the economy, then NAAF must look for partnerships in all sectors and regions.

10. Additional Information or Support

Dr. Paulette Tremblay, Director of Education, National Aboriginal Achievement Foundation (NAAF), Suite 33A, 70 Yorkville Avenue, Toronto, ON M5R 1B9

Telephone: (416) 926-0775, ext 226; toll-free 1 (800) 329-9780

Email: naaf@istar.ca
Website: www.naaf.ca

Date entered or updated: October 26, 2005