

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:	2.4.6	Aboriginal Workforce Participation Initiative
Sponsor(s):	<i>Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, Alberta Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, Alberta Human Resources and Employment</i>	

1. Objective

The objectives of the Aboriginal Workforce Participation Initiative (AWPI), within the Province of Alberta, are to:

- Educate and inform employers about the advantages of hiring Aboriginal people
- Promote the various benefits of Aboriginal people, employers and governments working together
- Enhance collaboration and communication between the various Aboriginal employment programs, services, projects and initiatives
- Facilitate constructive cultural relations
- Enhance linkages to the labour force and educational opportunities
- Identify business development initiatives that will benefit Aboriginal communities
- Promote employment and career development opportunities for Aboriginal people

2. Description

The AWPI is a partnership initiative of Indian and Northern Affairs Canada that is committed to increasing the participation of Aboriginal people in the labour market. The AWPI facilitates the process of equitable participation of Aboriginal people in the Canadian workforce through enhancing awareness, capacity and partnerships between Aboriginal people and all sectors of the economy.

AWPI is part of the federal government's commitment to helping Aboriginal peoples build stronger, healthier and more self-reliant communities. As such, the initiative complements other federal, provincial and territorial employment and economic development programs.

In the early years of the AWPI, an "Employer Toolkit" was developed to assist employers in the process of increasing Aboriginal participation in their work environment. The "Employer Toolkit" was further developed to be regional specific. (It can be downloaded from http://www.ainc-inac.gc.ca/ai/awpi/index_e.html)

In 2003, Indian and Northern Affairs Canada (INAC) approached the Province of Alberta about taking the AWPI to its second phase – building and supporting partnerships that would facilitate increased participation of Aboriginal people in the labour market. On March 31, 2004, the Government of Alberta and the Government of Canada signed an AWPI agreement signifying

Alberta's commitment to support and promote the AWPI in Alberta.

The AWPI can assist employers in enhancing linkages to the Aboriginal labour force; facilitate constructive cross-cultural relations and misconception training; promote employment and career development opportunities for Aboriginal people through workplace reviews and job inventories; assist employers in developing Aboriginal procurement strategies; and facilitate union agreements/joint business ventures for Aboriginal employment.

AWPI partnership agreements

AWPI's partnership agreements are principles-based agreements, where employers, in partnership with various levels of government and the Aboriginal community, commit to reducing barriers to employment for Aboriginal people, providing equitable access to employment opportunities for Aboriginal people, and achieving a workforce that is representative of Aboriginal peoples, based on sound business decisions and processes.

The agreements consist of four basic principles:

1. Facilitate constructive cross-cultural relations (Aboriginal awareness/misconception training).
2. Enhance linkages to the Aboriginal labour force.
3. Promote employment and career development opportunities for Aboriginal people (workplace review, workforce analysis).
4. Promote economic development opportunities for Aboriginal people (procurement review).

Employer-led steering committees, with stakeholder membership from various Aboriginal and government organizations, and unions where appropriate, lead the implementation of the agreements, based on a results-based action plan.

AWPI is NOT a training program. AWPI works directly with employers, and Aboriginal and government stakeholders, to facilitate Aboriginal employment and achieve a workforce that is representative of Aboriginal people.

The AWPI team is working across Canada to raise awareness and fulfill its mandate by:

- Producing and distributing awareness-building tools and participating in awareness activities
- Promoting and facilitating the AWPI Partnership Strategy
- Organizing and participating in conferences, seminars and workshops
- Creating, promoting and participating in stakeholder networks
- Communicating events related to Aboriginal employment issues
- Identifying and promoting best practices and role models
- Developing and distributing capacity-building tools and resources for employers
- Facilitating pilot projects related to Aboriginal employment

3. Timeframe for Results

The program was launched in 1991 and is ongoing. Once an agreement has been signed, an employer/industry/union group commits to increase Aboriginal participation in their workforce.

Other projects such as a procurement strategy or job inventory vary in length depending on the size and nature of the organization.

4. Measurable Criteria

Recognizing that each party has its own rights, responsibilities and authorities, the parties further agree that their partnership will be based on close cooperation in an environment that reflects and fosters:

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

Working together the parties develop an action plan that outlines the activities they will undertake, as well as short- and long-term strategies for monitoring the progress and evaluating the results of the planned activities.

5. Budget

To be determined once the employer's AWPI partnership committee has been established.

6. Partners and Sponsors

The AWPI is a federal government initiative sponsored by Indian and Northern Affairs Canada. It is supported and promoted provincially through Alberta Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, Alberta Economic Development, Alberta Human Resources and Employment, and Human Resources and Skills Development Canada.

The AWPI will promote and facilitate Aboriginal employment partnerships with:

- Aboriginal communities, businesses and organizations
- Public and private corporations
- All levels of government
- Industry and trade associations
- Professional associations
- Labour unions
- Educational institutions

7. Experience with the Program

March 31, 2004: The Government of Alberta and Government of Canada signed an AWPI agreement signifying Alberta's commitment to support and promote the AWPI in Alberta.

June 23, 2004: The Aboriginal Workforce - Building the Labour Market of the Future conference was held in Edmonton. The conference focused on the important role the Aboriginal community can play in addressing skills shortages in Alberta and how employers and industry members can help create greater employment opportunities for Aboriginal Albertans. More than 200 public, private sector and Aboriginal employers met to discuss how to increase employment and economic opportunities for Aboriginal people in the province.

Post conference: Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, Alberta Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development, Alberta Human Resources and Employment, Alberta Economic Development, and Human Resources and Skills Development Canada formed the Alberta Regional Committee to assist in the development and implementation of the AWPI in Alberta. Terms of Reference were drafted to define the committee, its purpose and objectives. The goal is to meet quarterly to develop and discuss the annual work plan.

March 3, 2005: An AWPI partnership agreement was signed between the City of Grande Prairie, Aquatera Utilities Inc., Indian and Northern Affairs Canada, and Alberta Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development.

May 2005: Grande Prairie Regional College signed an AWPI partnership agreement with Indian and Northern Affairs Canada and Alberta Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development.

8. General Applicability

The AWPI will promote and facilitate Aboriginal employment partnerships with:

- Aboriginal communities, businesses and organizations
- Employers
- All levels of government
- Industry and trade associations
- Professional associations
- Labour unions
- Educational institutions

9. Additional Information or Support

For more information consult the AWPI website at www.awpi.gc.ca or contact:

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