

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:	2.4.3	Aboriginal Human Resources Development Strategy (AHRDS)
Sponsor(s):	<i>Service Canada</i>	

1. Objective

The AHRD Strategy is built on six pillars, each focused on expanding the employment opportunities of Aboriginal people across Canada. They are: capacity building, partnerships, horizontal management, internal Service Canada program integration, the Aboriginal Human Resources Council of Canada, and the Aboriginal Human Resources Development Agreements (AHRDAs).

2. Description

Service Canada's policy regarding program design and delivery for Aboriginal people has evolved from a non-participatory approach to one in which Aboriginal authorities and communities have responsibility for program design, delivery, budgets and results. This evolution to local responsibility has seen a corresponding growth in effective public administration, completion of training interventions, employment results, and savings to income support programs.

The Aboriginal Human Resources Development Strategy (AHRDS) is a key component of *Gathering Strength - Canada's Aboriginal Action Plan*, which made a commitment to improve Aboriginal people's access to jobs. Key program components include:

- The AHRD Strategy is a pan-Aboriginal program, which means that access is available to Inuit, Métis and First Nations people who live both on and off reserve. Service Canada recognizes the uniqueness of Aboriginal groups in various communities; thus, the AHRDS is flexible to ensure that Aboriginal organizations have the authority to make decisions that will meet the needs of their communities, while being accountable for clear performance results.
- The AHRD Strategy is built on six pillars as identified above. One of the pillars, the Aboriginal Human Resources Council of Canada, is a national-level board advising Service Canada and federal ministers on Aboriginal policies related to employment development. The council also acts as a key link with industry. One initiative is a databank of capabilities and skills of Aboriginal workers that can be accessed by employers.

- Another key pillar is the Aboriginal Human Resources Development Agreements (AHRDAs). These are contribution agreements between Service Canada and Aboriginal organizations. AHRDAs are the primary mechanism for transferring funding and responsibility for skills development and employment initiatives to Aboriginal communities.

3. Implementation

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

- There are 80 Aboriginal Human Resources Development Agreements (AHRDAs) established across Canada. Funding is provided through the AHRDAs to Aboriginal organizations to design and deliver labour market programs and services that are tailored to their communities. The majority of funding is available for labour market interventions, with funds set aside for urban delivery, capacity building, First Nations/Inuit child care, and for youth and people with disabilities.
- Service Canada works in partnership with the AHRDA holders. Decisions regarding programming are made by the Aboriginal communities, based on the recognition that Aboriginal people best understand their own needs and are best able to design and implement effective programs and services.
- In Alberta, 13 AHRDAs have been signed. There are eight First Nation AHRDAs: six within Treaty 8, one with the Treaty 7 Economic Development Corporation, and three within Treaty 6. There are two Métis AHRDAs signed with the Métis Nation of Alberta and Métis Settlements General Council. The Oteenow Employment and Training Society provides programs for First Nations within urban Edmonton; in southern Alberta, Treaty 7 Economic Development Corporation is responsible for providing programs for urban First Nations.
- Each AHRDA has an executive director responsible for the program, and a board of directors comprised of community members. AHRDA holders also sign sub-agreements with individual First Nation, Inuit and Métis communities, which in turn run programs through an employment or human resources center.
- For ACR members to develop partnerships with First Nations that may use AHRDA funds, contacting the executive director of the relevant AHRDA is a good first step.
- The programs delivered by the employment centres must be status-blind, that is, the centre must assist any Aboriginal who applies for assistance and resides within the geographic area of the AHRDA.

4. Timeframe for Results

The AHRDA agreements were renewed April 1, 2005, and expire on March 31, 2009.

5. Measurable Criteria

The AHRDA agreements include specific performance measurements and accountabilities, using both quantitative and qualitative measures.

6. Budget

The national AHRD Strategy budget totals \$1.6 billion over five years. Alberta AHRDA holders receive approximately \$48 million per year to deliver employment programs and services. This funding is used to support labour market initiatives, programming for youth and people with disabilities, on-reserve child care centres and capacity building.

7. Partners and Sponsors

Because funding is in the hands of the AHRDA holders, they are able to leverage funding and develop partnerships with other communities, industries and governments. Service Canada is also involved with partners in developing Aboriginal initiatives, both nationally and regionally. Finally, the Aboriginal Human Resources Council of Canada works to build national-level partnerships.

8. Experience with the Program

Since its start-up in 1999, the Aboriginal Human Resources Development Strategy has assisted some 280,694 Aboriginal people to gain the skills they need to prepare for, find and keep jobs, including over 146,000 youth and 6,400 persons with disabilities. Between April 1999 and March 2005, 93,883 have found jobs while 27,925 returned to school. These interventions resulted in reduced dependency on public expenditures. As well, AHRDS funding supported approximately 7,000 day care spaces in 390 First Nations and Inuit communities to support parents who are working or in training programs.

9. General Applicability

The AHRD Strategy provides funding to Aboriginal communities and organizations that have responsibility for developing and implementing labour market programs and services designed to meet community-specific needs; therefore this program is not directly applicable to ACR members.

10. Additional Information or Support

Ralph Bellstedt, Regional Manager, Aboriginal Partnerships - Alberta/NWT/Nunavut Region, Service Canada, Mezzanine Floor, John E. Brownlee Building, 10365-97th Street, Edmonton, AB T5J 3W7

Telephone: (780) 495-5653

Email: ralph.bellstedt@servicecanada.gc.ca

Website: www.servicecanada.gc.ca

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