

# ACR Aboriginal Programs Project Program Template

<b>Program Area:</b>	1.0	Corporate Policy
<b>Sub Program:</b>	1.2	Benchmarking Performance in Aboriginal Relations
<b>Template:</b>	1.2.3	Progressive Aboriginal Relations (PAR) Program
<b>Sponsor(s):</b>		<i>Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business (CCAB)</i>

## 1. Objective

To provide a framework which companies can use to develop, maintain and benchmark their relationships with Aboriginal communities.

## 2. Description

Many companies recognize the need to develop and improve relationships with Aboriginal communities but are not sure how to get started or how to benchmark their progress. Progressive Aboriginal Relations (PAR) is a program sponsored by the Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business (CCAB).

PAR is a national hallmark and assessment program intended to: focus companies on the development and performance benchmarking of their corporate Aboriginal relations; accelerate the pace of change by providing a tool for consistent management of the goals and objectives for the relationship with Aboriginal communities; help develop and communicate consensus on what needs to be done to promote change within an organization; help communicate the company's commitment to key stakeholders; and act as a design template for negotiations and contracts.

PAR is a way for businesses to earn the right to use an identifying hallmark indicating that they are committed to proactive and equitable dealings with Aboriginal communities and have achieved results. PAR sets out a framework for establishing performance benchmarks in companies that want to develop mutually beneficial relations - or enhance relationships they already have - with Aboriginal individuals, businesses and communities.

PAR provides a framework for setting organizational objectives, developing action plans, measuring performance, achieving results and, eventually, excelling as a leader in Aboriginal relations. PAR participants measure their performance through a self-assessment and external verification process and use the results to determine the success of their efforts.

PAR is a systematic and sustainable approach to Aboriginal relations focused on four sectors:

- Employment: not only numbers but type of employment and opportunities for advancement
- Business development: the nature of contracts and supplier relations
- Individual capacity development: individual access to training, education and professional development initiatives
- Community relations: community involvement and investment leading to organizational and

community partnerships

### **3. Implementation**

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

- Participation in PAR begins at the commitment level with a statement of intent, wherein a company states and communicates its intention to develop respectful relations with Aboriginal businesses and communities by taking action in the four PAR sectors. A company can then identify its specific sphere of influence and begin to effect change by:
  - Setting organizational objectives in each of the four sectors
  - Developing action plans and performance measures to achieve their objectives
  - Achieving measurable results
  - Attaining and sustaining leadership
- For those companies that have been actively working with Aboriginal communities for years, PAR was designed to recognize the efforts they have made. Such companies can enroll in PAR by completing a self-assessment workbook and applying to have the results verified. The maximum PAR score is 400. Companies whose verified score is at least 160 points can earn the bronze hallmark, a minimum of 280 points earns the silver, and 320 points or more earns the gold PAR hallmark. The company sets its own performance benchmarks.
- The National Quality Institute (NQI) is an operational partner in the PAR program. It verifies the results of the self-assessments. NQI is an internationally recognized business standards organization that operates similar programs with companies in other areas of performance. NQI assessors perform on-site verifications of all applications for recognition beyond the commitment level.
- An independent jury consisting of eminent Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal business leaders decides the level of recognition that a company has earned after receiving recommendations from the NQI assessors.

### **4. Timeframe for Results**

PAR is designed to award progressive recognition levels to companies that are achieving results and leadership in the field. The first step is the commitment level. This involves filing a statement of intent and communicating that intent to employees and stakeholders. An applicant can only remain at the commitment level for 12 months. If the applicant has not begun work on the higher levels of achievement and applied for a corporate self-assessment within this time, the enrollment in PAR will lapse.

### **5. Measurable Criteria**

- Helps the company identify areas of operational strengths and weaknesses with Aboriginal people
- Helps identify potential opportunities for enhancing the bottom line through new business relationships and improved access to Aboriginal communities
- Announces to Aboriginal communities a commitment to building a relationship of mutual business self-interest
- Leads to public recognition that identifies companies as good corporate citizens to the Aboriginal community

## **6. Budget**

An entry fee of \$1995 (plus tax) is charged to obtain a copy of the entire program and other materials needed to complete a self-assessment at the Commitment level. Consulting fees are charged for on-site verification at the rate of \$1,500 per day plus tax (usually 2-2.5 days per verification site) and travel costs. All fees are payable to NQI. It should be noted that in addition to the direct costs, significant staff time needs to be allocated in order to conduct the self-assessment required under the program.

## **7. Partners and Sponsors**

Canadian Council for Aboriginal Business, National Quality Institute

## **8. Experience with the Program**

Twenty-three companies and other organizations are registered for the year 2005/06. These include Syncrude Canada (Gold level), Cameco Corporation (Gold level), Bank of Montreal (Gold level) Diavik Diamond Mines (Gold level), Alberta-Pacific Forest Industries (Silver level), Scotiabank (Silver level), Xerox (Silver level), Donna Cona (Silver level), Western Lakota (Bronze level).

Major benefits cited are external validation of commitment and achievement, and recognition of leadership. However, there is generally low awareness of the program in Aboriginal communities - an issue that PAR has identified as a priority.

## **9. General Applicability**

This program can help guide companies wanting to embark on a more systematic, strategic and manageable approach to Aboriginal relations or to obtain recognition for companies that have already achieved results and are established leaders in the field. It is applicable to all industry sectors.

## **10. Additional Information or Support**

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