

ACR Aboriginal Programs Project Program Template

Program Area:	2.0	Workforce Development
Sub Program:	2.2	Supporting Employment-Related Training
Template:	2.2.3	Aboriginal Workforce Capacity Expansion Project (AWCEP)
Sponsor(s):	<i>Alberta-Pacific Forest Industries Inc.</i>	

1. Objective

To increase the education and skill level of Aboriginal adults in northeastern Alberta for entry level employability in resource-based industry and for further training.

2. Description

AWCEP is a program which was initiated by Portage College in Lac La Biche and Alberta-Pacific Forest Industries Inc. (AI-Pac) working with Aboriginal partners to increase: (a) the number of Aboriginal people employed in Alberta's resource-based industries, (b) the number of Aboriginal people who wish to pursue further training opportunities, (c) the number of Aboriginal people qualified to work in the resource-based industries, and (d) the knowledge base in industry regarding Aboriginal needs and culture.

The target group is Aboriginal adults living in northeastern Alberta who:

- wish to pursue entry level careers in resource-based industries;
- have been assessed at a Grade 9 level or lower; and
- have the support of their First Nation, Métis Settlement or MNA Zone.

The program is 34 weeks in length and consists of two semesters. This includes 22 weeks of classroom and 'lab', and 12 weeks of work placement. The classroom component is at Portage College and the lab days are 7 days in length at a participating worksite. The work placement uses a variety of locations and worksites.

The program is designed for 18 learners who are assessed using CAAT B. The learners can write the Trades Entrance examination at end of the first semester, and can earn high school credits and other certificates (H2S, WHMIS, Chain Saw Safety etc). They also receive comprehensive career exploration and assistance in job placement.

3. Implementation

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

- an Advisory Committee is in place to support and coordinate the program. It includes Portage College, industry (AI-Pac, Imperial Oil, EnCana, Husky, etc.), and communities. As a community-based initiative, this brings together resources and support from across the region to provide training and job placement assistance;
- Portage College provides coordination, testing, development, training facilities, faculty, Academic and Skills for Success training. Industry provides workplace orientation, some Employability Skills training; and work placements where appropriate;
- the program delivers basic skills to graduates who are available for employment. A coordinator is employed to work with communities, employers and others to recruit students and place graduates;
- the program incorporates cultural and community support for learners throughout the training, and makes use of workplace mentors.

4. Intakes to date

The pilot intake was initiated in February 2003 and produced the first graduates in 34 weeks (September 2003). Of the 11 enrollees, 7 graduated successfully.

The second intake started in September 2003 and finished in June of 2004. Of the 9 enrollees, 4 graduated successfully.

5. Measurable Criteria

These include:

- the number of students who actually complete the program; and
- the number of graduates who find employment or go on to further training.

6. Budget

The estimated budget for a full program of 18 students is \$275,000. Students are eligible for student loans through Alberta Human Resources & Employment. The National Literacy Secretariat has supported the first two programs at \$75,000 and AI-Pac supported each program with a grant of \$50,000 each. AI-Pac is committed to support one more intake.

7. Partners and Sponsors

Portage College and AI-Pac are the major partners. Other industry supporters include Imperial Oil, EnCana, Canadian Natural Resources Limited, Husky Energy and Ledcor. Communities and organizations supporting the program so far include MNA Zones 1 and 2, all Métis Settlements in NE Alberta, 6 First Nations, National Literacy Secretariat, Northern Alberta Development Council, Alberta Learning and Alberta Human Resources & Employment.

8. Experience with the Program

AWCEP was launched as a pilot program. Key success factors include the emphasis on community support and coordination across industries to improve Aboriginal employability prospects and results. Attracting students has been a challenge and the program has not run since the second intake from September through June. Plans are in place to launch a third intake in January, 2006, pending sufficient enrollees. The goal is to attract 18 students.

9. General Applicability

This program should be generally transferable to other regions and can be expanded to include a broad range of resource companies and suppliers.

10. Additional Information or Support

Bill DeWeert, Training Specialist, Alberta-Pacific Forest Industries Inc., Boyle

Telephone: (780) 525-8101

Email: deweerbi@alpac.ca

Date Entered or Updated: September 7, 2005