

Selected Collaborative Responses to Address Skill Shortages in Manitoba

Sector	Initiative
Health Care/Medicine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Expanded funding and admissions for registered nurses, LPNs, health technologists, therapists, nurses' aides. Adopted policy that allows a person to quit employment and obtain EI to pursue training in selected health occupations.
Information Technology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Developed Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition (PLAR) for software development diploma. Funded college and university programs to 512 graduates (2003) in applications programming, network support, multi-media.
Management/ Business Administration	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Funding for post-secondary programs leading to 823 graduates (2003) in business management programs at universities and colleges.
Construction Trades	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Programs offered for immigrants and other candidates who wish to challenge trades qualification examinations. Funding for pre-employment trades training for 383 graduates (2003) in building trades. Initiative in local communities is attracting more Aboriginal persons to apprenticeship.
Transportation Equipment Manufacturing and Maintenance	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Funding programs resulting in 33 graduates in metal-working trades and 85 mechanical and industrial engineering graduates. Programs for trades such as machinist, tool and die maker had 412 apprentices registered as of March 31, 2004.
Agriculture and Food Processing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Funding for programs leading to 147 university and 61 college graduates (2003) in biosystems engineering, swine technician, farm machinery mechanics.
Health Care Products	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Support for good manufacturing practices training.

On the Move

Over the past three years, the **Manitoba Training Strategy** has helped guide the activities of the department. The strategy has linked skills training programs directly to employment... Through partnerships with industry, small business, community-based organizations and educational institutions, we will continue to learn and apply new knowledge and experience to meet tomorrow's labour market challenges.

The Manitoba Training Strategy Linking Skills to the Manitoba Labour Market

The *Manitoba Training Strategy* was released in Fall 2001 by the department of Advanced Education and Training (MAET). Through a series of meetings in Brandon, The Pas and Winnipeg, leaders from business, industry, community associations, government and the post-secondary education system reviewed and commented on the strategy prior to its public release. Participants voiced wide-spread support for the strategy and its comprehensive, cross-departmental approach to building and sustaining a workforce that is well-educated, highly trained, flexible, and that meets the needs of the labour market.

The Training Strategy was developed as a three-year plan with the following three inter-related goals:

1. To build a skilled workforce aligned with labour market needs and emerging opportunities,
2. To expand access to relevant learning opportunities for all Manitobans, and
3. To create an integrated and high quality education and training system.

We are quickly approaching Fall 2004 and the end of the three-year Training Strategy. This issue of *On the Move* will be the last to feature particular initiatives that have been undertaken to meet our goals, paving the way to our final report on the Training Strategy. Previous issues of *On the Move* featured stories about students benefiting from a policy that introduced dual credits

into the education system, northern Manitobans participating in community-based training for future economic needs, and initiatives to support Aboriginal Manitobans to obtain the training and skills necessary to compete in the labour market. In this issue, *On the Move* illustrates how training for essential skills and building sectoral capacity contributes to the development of a highly skilled workforce.

Essential Skills

The Training Strategy identifies the need to support industry/labour partnerships to address workplace Essential Skills (ES). Employees with sufficient ES are critical to the development of an overall skilled and competitive labour force in Manitoba. ES are most commonly thought of as foundational skills such as reading, working with others, thinking, continuous learning, writing, oral communications, document use, numeracy (math), and computer use.

In February 2004, the Forum of Labour Market Ministers included Essential Skills for workers as one of its focal points for national discussion and action planning. In addition, the Conference Board of Canada has identified ES as a key issue, and business associations have called for improved employability skills which include literacy and essential skills.

Manitoba's efforts continue to focus on ES and how they are used by people in different occupations such as welders, pharmacists, and health care aides. This knowledge is being used to better prepare people for and support them in the labour market. Building on ES, the workforce can:

- maximize education and workplace training,
- have the skills and flexibility to take on new jobs and tasks in the workplace and deal with change, and
- reduce errors and increase efficiency.

Achievements include:

- direct delivery of 25 different ES programs to 282 learners in 30 worksites,
- developing and piloting trade-specific assessment tools and processes, and
- increasing the capacity for trade-specific essential skills support services in colleges.

“Because of new customers and an expanded product line, there were changes to what employees had to do. We found that our employees needed to use different math calculations, read new blueprints, verify estimates and talk to other staff about work orders more frequently. We gave everyone short-term ES classes and it has made a great difference in our efficiency and quality numbers.”

Doug Howell
Branch Manager
Russel Metals
Winnipeg, MB

Sectoral Partnerships – The Manitoba Model

Manitoba has implemented a unique, cross-sectoral approach to address human resource issues facing the business community. This approach brings together companies, education/training providers and other labour market partners through 14 sector associations. Each association develops and delivers training based on their sector's needs. Working together, Manitoba and the sector associations developed an accountability

framework that aligns training programs with each sector's individual needs.

The sector associations also work together to identify common training needs, discuss human resource issues, and seek joint solutions. In 2003-04, Manitoba partnered with the Health Care Products Association of Manitoba to provide training for 935 employees in areas such as Life Sciences/Medical Devices Commercialization Program, Management Development and Clinical Research. The department also supports a unique initiative with the Manitoba Aerospace Human Resources Coordinating Committee called Wings Across Winnipeg. Approximately 60 students from Tec Voc and Murdoch Mackay High Schools work together to construct an

aircraft. Graduates from the program have an increased opportunity to move directly into industry once they have completed their high school credits.

The sector associations found working together so successful they now collaborate on issues that go beyond human resources and training. These include initiatives such as Career Destinations, a website targeted at high school students and recent graduates that gives up-to-date, real life examples of available careers.

As well, in the past year, several of the sectors responded to the need to increase the participation of Aboriginal peoples in Manitoba's workforce and developed an Aboriginal Labour Force Strategy. The success of the Manitoba cross-sectoral approach and the development of a strong infrastructure to support workforce development have been credited with:

- increasing industry participation in training
- quick and innovative response to specific industry training needs
- maximizing the return on investment of training dollars, and
- attracting business to Manitoba.

The film industry has clearly benefited from the sectoral approach. With the support of the department and local producers, directors, union representatives and educational institutions, Film Training Manitoba has been instrumental in building both technical and creative film crews. “Winnipeg is an incubator of movie making talent and enthusiasm,” says Tibor Takacs, Director of *Nostradamus* (2000) and *Tornado Warning* (2002). “They have world-class crews. I've shot two movies in Winnipeg and I'd go back anytime. “

Addressing Skill Shortages through Collaboration

We often hear about the challenge of skill shortages in the labour market. Skill shortages occur when either not enough people are available to fill employers' needs or there are not enough people with the right skills in the labour force. In Manitoba, rapid employment growth has been a key factor in the current skill shortages reported by a range of industries. Addressing skill shortages requires MAET to work in partnership with education institutions, business, and industry to bring a multi-faceted approach that combines innovative policy, programs, and mechanisms. The goals of the Training Strategy support this approach and direct the department to ensure it has accurate labour market information for future planning; to ensure the work force has the skills currently required by the rapidly changing markets; and to support opportunities for upgrading and training.

Over the past three years, the *Manitoba Training Strategy* has helped guide the activities of the department. The strategy has linked skills training programs directly to employment. We have provided funding to sustain key programs such as apprenticeship, essential skills, and employment programs, and have learned a great deal from our experiences in developing and implementing the strategy. Through partnerships with industry, small business, community-based organizations and educational institutions, we will continue to learn and apply new knowledge and experience to meet tomorrow's labour market challenges.

Manitoba Provincial Sector Councils

Film Training Manitoba
Health Care Products Association of Manitoba
Manitoba Aerospace Human Resources
Manitoba Customer Contact Association
Manitoba Fashion Institute Training Centre
Manitoba Food Processors Association
Manitoba Tourism Education Council
Manitoba Quality Network
Canadian Manufacturers and Exporters
Manitoba Environmental Industries Association
Arts and Cultural Industries Association of Manitoba
Manitoba Audio Recording Industry Association
Graphic Design Society of Canada – Manitoba Chapter