Native Women's Association of Canada

L'Association des femmes autochtones du Canada

Aboriginal Skills and Employment Training Strategy (ASETS)

Orientation Manual - Client Case Management

February 2014

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1 Introduction

The Native Women's Association of Canada (NWAC) provides employment and training support services to Aboriginal women across Canada through the Aboriginal Skills and Employment Training Strategy (ASETS) program. Funded by Employment and Social Development Canada (ESDC), NWAC has provided this service since the previous Aboriginal Human Resource Development Agreement (AHRDA) program.

The NWAC ASETS program is delivered throughout Canada in partnership with the Provincial Territorial Membership Associations (PTMAs) who provide the program at the regional level. ASETS Coordinators are available in the Regional offices to provide direct client services. At the national level, NWAC provides the support to the regions through the overall coordination and administration of ASETS.

Aboriginal women looking for employment and training support services can receive:

- access to labour market information;
- use of computers and phones (in most areas);
- a complete service needs assessment;
- funding for training and upgrading (based on eligibility, assessment, approval and availability of funds); and
- referral to other employment agencies or support organizations.

The goal of the employment and training program is to provide Aboriginal women with specific services that directly support their long-term employment goals. Employment and training supports provided to Aboriginal women through the ASETS program, must focus on labour market demand driven priorities. The three priorities of ASETS as identified by ESDC are:

1. Support demand driven skills development
2. Fostering partnerships
3. Emphasis on accountability and results

The types of ASETS programs available to NWAC clients are based on individual needs, as well as community need reflecting regional realities. These include:

1. Individual Training Purchases (ITP)
2. Job Creation Partnership (JCP)
3. Self-Employment Benefits (SEB)
4. Targeted Wage Subsidy (TWS)
5. Group/Community Training (GCT)

2 Client Eligibility

1. Must be fifteen (15) years of age or older.

2. Aboriginal women (First Nation, Métis or Inuit).

3. Individuals seeking funding support must be unemployed, under-employed, or can demonstrate immediate risk of becoming unemployed.

4. Clients who successfully completed a training intervention, and decide (for reasons unrelated to labour market) to change field/occupation, will not be considered for additional funding until they have made reasonable use of their skills in the labour market. Clients must demonstrate they carried out an active job search between one intervention and new application.

3 Financial Funding Policies

1. The ASETS Coordinator has the overall responsibility for the initial client review, client recommendation, and development of a Selection Committee package for all client and employer funding requests.

2. All approved (active) funded client costs must be reported by the ASETS Coordinator following the reporting process as outlined by NWAC Head Office.

3. Ceilings on cost per client can be determined at the regional level, based on client targets and available budget. This includes identifying priority clientele such as single parents, youth or persons with disabilities.

4. Regional priorities may be set for these categories, for example, percentage of clients who will be served from the “employed or self-employed” categories, and possible contribution requirements from employed/self-employed clients.

5. Clients, employers, or organizations in an overpayment situation with this program, or overpayment identified by HRSDC as a result of fraud, will not be considered for future funding.

6. Child care costs, living allowance, and wage rate must be determined at the regional level and be based on prevailing costs as identified in the region.

7. Until funds are officially approved in writing by the PTMA, clients, training providers and/or employers assume all financial risk. Retroactive reimbursement may not be possible for costs incurred prior to the start of the training program.

8. Backdating of support or re-payment of student loans is not permitted.

9. Multiple interventions may be available to clients, providing each intervention supports the needs assessment and employment goals of the client. An example is when a client receives approval for upgrading, or support for a 2 year diploma program, followed by a wage subsidy placement leading to employment.

10. Multiple interventions may also be available to clients when labour market conditions are such that a client cannot find suitable employment in the training occupation (demand driven skills), consideration may be given to refer the client to another course, providing that the additional training will improve the person's employment potential.

4 Program Descriptions

4.1 Individual Training Purchase (ITP)

In order to obtain the skills needed for employment, the **Individual Training Purchase (ITP)** program offers assistance to clients by providing financial assistance to help pay for the cost of skills training courses, programs, or supplies.

Criteria:

- Eligible courses and programs provided by private/public accredited post-secondary institutions, non-profit organizations, businesses or union, or programs recognized by industry. Training must result in a diploma, certificate, or accreditation accepted in the field.

- Funding may be provided for full-time courses, part-time and online courses, adult basic education/upgrading, industry training, apprenticeships, and distance education/correspondence, based on individual client needs assessment.

- Eligible costs include: tuition costs, travel, living allowance and childcare supports, exam fees, special equipment, license or certificate fees, books, materials and supplies.

- Cost may be covered for criminal records checks, CPR and First Aid or similar costs that would assist the client with securing employment or training.

- Training programs up to two years in length may be considered, however, each year must be approved annually. Training must relate directly to employment goals, and must meet the need of both the client and the industry or labour market.

4.2 Job Creation Partnership (JCP)

The **Job Creation Partnership** (JCP) program offers paid work placement experience to improve long-term employment prospects. Funding is provided to employers to employ a client for a work experience tailored specifically to individual client skills set, education, and previous work experience.

Criteria:

- Rate of pay provided to client support is based on the prevailing wage rate the employer offers for similar positions and is comparable to regional rates.
- Clients in receipt of an active EI benefits claim may be considered for a "top up" wage while they continue on their EI claim, if their EI benefits are below the prevailing wage rate for the job that is created.
- Capital costs such as a computer may be eligible under this program, if it is required to support the trainee in the position.
- Employers must demonstrate the capacity to support a paid placement opportunity with confirmed Workers Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB), be registered with the Canada Revenue Agency, and have existing payroll services and the proven financial capacity to complete the project.
- Funding is available for up to 26 weeks depending on a detailed employment plan, including a defined orientation period and job description.

4.3 Self-Employment Benefits (SEB)

The **Self-Employment Benefits (SEB)** program provides financial support to clients pursuing self-employment opportunities. Consideration is made for expenses related to start-up costs, and includes the costs associated with the development of business plans.

Criteria:

- Clients must provide and demonstrate a clear and viable business idea as part of their application process.
- Start-up costs could include capital costs such as computer and equipment that is directly related to the type of business.
- Costs must be associated with a complete business plan. Clients who do not have a business plan may request financial support to assist in the development of their business plan.
- Living allowance available up to 26 weeks during the initial start-up of business including the time period needed to develop a business plan.

4.4 Targeted Wage Subsidy (TWS)

As an incentive to hire individuals who require on-the-job training or have marginal work experience, the **Targeted Wage Subsidy (TWS)** is provided to employers to off-set the cost of wages.

Criteria:

- Employers that are considered as program partners must focus on the needs of the individual clients by providing appropriate orientation and training periods that support employment training and goals.
- Clients and employers must complete an intake and application process.
- Work activities provided by employers through this program should be in positions that have the potential to lead to full time employment.
- Wage rate must reflect the prevailing wage within the organization.
- Subsidy cannot be utilized by employers to replace another permanent existing staff position.
- This program may be used to support Summer Student Work Experience positions.
- Subsidy to employers is up to a maximum of $10.00 per hour, plus MERCs and vacation pay. Non-profit organizations are eligible for maximum subsidy. Private sector employers are eligible for 50% of wages, MERCs and vacation pay.
- Capital costs are not eligible under this program.
- Subsidies are available for employers who demonstrate the potential for continued employment following the paid placement experience.
- Employers must demonstrate the capacity to provide on-the-job training, confirmed Workers Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB), be registered with the Canada Revenue Agency, make payments of Mandatory Employment Related Costs (MERCs) and have the financial capacity to complete the project.
- Funding is available for up to 26 weeks depending on a detailed employment plan, including a defined orientation period and job description.

4.5 Group Training/Special Project

Group Training/Special Project is a component of ASETS that provides funding to support training opportunities for employment skills and work experience through community based projects, which are focused on regional priorities. Partnership activities are a main focus of group training and special projects.

Criteria:

- Non-profit organizations and private corporations with a demonstrated capacity to provide the required management, supervision, and coordination, including financial reporting requirements and necessary liability insurances for the project.
- Partners in group training initiatives can include but are not limited to: education providers, PTMA's, employers and regional/band and provincial governments who are all potential beneficiaries of the outcomes of the program delivery.
- Delivery agents must demonstrate community support, or be regionally designed in partnership with PTMA.
- Eligible projects provide a combination of certification skills, life skills, pre-employment skills and practical work experience.
- A detailed project proposal is required for submission which outlines the project's goals and objectives, measurable outcomes, participant recruitment and selection process, detailed training plan of skills to be taught, trainer's experience, timetable, budget, management and supervisory support, and equity into the project.
- A contract agreement and/or Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) should be established for approved projects.
- Depending on the detailed training plan, funding is available for up to 52 weeks.
- A training program is required to confirm participants with recruitment and retention plan, and clearly demonstrate activity is linked to "training to employment" opportunity.

5 Eligible Costs

5.1 Tuition Costs

1. Tuition costs to either public or private education institutions for providing a training or instruction course or program to a participant.

2. Where possible tuition costs will be paid directly to the educational or training institution. If necessary, the client may be reimbursed for approved and eligible costs as indicated in the funding contract with original receipts.

3. Tuition assistance under this agreement is subject to taxation. All clients are to be informed of this fact. Each sub-agreement or special project is responsible for dispersing client T4As.

5.2 Completion Incentive

1. Completion incentive is provided to clients who successfully complete a funded program and participate in the required 12 week post-completion follow up.

2. Payment is not automatic. Client must be able to participate in a file close-out after 12 weeks following their funded training in order to receive stipend.

3. Maximum one-time payment is $500 per participant. Determined regionally.

4. Completion incentives are taxable with a T4A.

5.3 Living Allowance

1. Financial assistance will be provided to a client participating in a training intervention.

2. Living allowance should not exceed the amount that would reasonably be expected as income following the intervention.

3. Contributions are negotiable and based on household income. Documentation and proof of financial situation is required for verification prior to approval.

4. Maximum allowable amounts, if applicable, are determined at the regional level.

5.4 Disability Related Supports

1. To facilitate the participation of clients with a disability in an ASETS intervention, disability supports such as: attendant care, note takers, sign language interpreters, etc. are eligible costs.

2. Additional expenses for assistance are also eligible. For example, should a client need a job coach for the first three months of employment in order to support their integration to the job and workplace these fees are eligible. In addition, costs for an attendant to help a disabled person attend an interview/meeting are also eligible.

5.5 Dependent Costs

1. Financial assistance is available to a client while participating in an ASETS intervention for the provision of care for those who are young, ill, elderly, or disabled and dependent on the participant.

2. Childcare costs apply only in cases where increased costs are incurred as a direct result of entry to training, and are negotiated based on demonstrated needs.

5.6 Materials and Supplies

1. Cost of materials and supplies required for an employment or training activity are eligible. Items could include: hard hats, safety boots, safety glasses, work apparel, text books, work books, test fees, etc. Associated costs can be included in any of the funded programs, providing it is a clearly demonstrated necessity.

5.7 Travel and Transportation

1. Transportation costs, normally equivalent to the costs of a bus pass, or negotiable in the case of commuting to on-going training, or for short-term and one-time travel requirements, are eligible. Costs must be directly related to the training program. Reimbursement amount and availability will be determined regionally.

5.8 Upgrading

1. Short-term training courses or programs to help clients access employment opportunities are also eligible costs. These could include: First Aid and CPR training, WHMIS courses, SmartServe, French training as a second language, etc. Upgrading training can be included in any of the funded programs (such as part of a JCP) or can be a stand-alone training purchase.

6 Case Management

6.1 Client Intake Process

1. Client intake is ongoing throughout the year and funding decisions are based on the selection committee and availability of funds.

2. All Individuals seeking support services must meet with the ASETS Coordinator (in person, by phone and in some cases via email) to complete and sign the Participant Information Form (PIF). The PIF serves as a client declaration and release form.

3. **Social Insurance Numbers (SINs) are required as part of the intake process. Clients without a SIN are ineligible for assistance.**

4. After the completion of the PIF, ASETS Coordinators will complete Employment Insurance (EI) eligibility form for all clients and send it to NWAC Head Office for verification. Response confirming EI or Consolidated Revenue Funds (CRF) verification must be included in file.

5. The ASETS Coordinator conducts the initial intake, completes an assessment, and provides recommendation to the Selection Committee. The ASETS Coordinator will advise the client of the outcome of their request within four weeks from the date of receipt of a completed PIF and all supporting documentation.

6. Any request deemed unusual or high risk by the ASETS Coordinator can be referred to NWAC Head Office for clarification on eligibility concerns. NWAC Head Office may consult with ESDC in making this determination.

6.2 KETO Database

1. ASETS Coordinators are required to enter all client information into the KETO database.

2. The KETO database is the primary case management tool which is to be utilized by all ASETS Coordinators to track client activity, use reminder tools and record the success of client completion.

3. The KETO database automatically produces reports required under the NWAC ASETS program.

4. Training and support for the KETO database is provided by NWAC Head Office.

6.3 Needs Assessment and Action Plan

1. Client information is used by the ASETS Coordinator to prepare an individual Action Plan which guides the direction of the client funding request and training plan.

2. Action Plans include a needs assessment, which is a joint responsibility between the ASETS Coordinator and client wishing to access funding. Training must reflect the applicant's career goals as identified in the Action Plan.

3. The ASETS Coordinator is required to clearly identify the barrier(s) to employment that the client is experiencing.

4. The Action Plan is generated by the KETO Database and must be signed by the client and the ASETS Coordinator.

6.4 Client File

1. As part of their application process, the client is required to provide a letter of intent, summarizing their employment or training request.

2. A letter of acceptance from school/employer including fees, dates, and associated requirements. If at the time of intake letters of acceptance are not yet available; clients can provide the course outline and summary until such time confirmation of enrollment is provided.

3. Upon receipt of the client information, the ASETS Coordinator creates an individual client file and ensures that all required information is complete.

4. For each client, the ASETS Coordinator must complete the following:

    1. Create a summary that demonstrates the applicant has an increased probability of achieving employment once these skills are acquired.

    2. Letter of Agreement or Notification of Sponsorship (or decline).

    3. Forward a Letter of Sponsorship to the service provider or employer.

    4. Copy of the Selection Committee decision in client file.

    5. Training Contract (for approved files).

    6. EI Verification form and confirmed response from NWAC Head Office.

    7. Financial Assistance recommendation (Living Expenses, where applicable).

    8. Invoices, receipts and attendance or payroll confirmation.

    9. Final close out at the end of the contract.

5. Upon confirmation of funding approval, the following is required:

    1. Void cheque or direct deposit form from the clients is required for direct deposit.

    2. Promotional consent form must be signed.

    3. Inform client of the living allowance process regarding the method and timing of payment.

    4. Inform client of any income tax implications, depending on the sum of the allowance.

7 Approvals Process

7.1 Selection Committee

Applications for funding must be presented to a Selection Committee. The Selection Committee must be comprised of three Aboriginal women community members. Committee members can be a PTMA board member but cannot be the Board President. Committee members can be PTMA staff, including the Executive Director, but may not be the ASETS Coordinator. All decisions are based on review and recommendation of the ASETS Coordinator and finalized by the approval of the regional Selection Committee.

7.2 Selection Committee Process

1. To protect the confidentiality of the client and ensure impartiality, all requests presented to the Selection Committee must be referred to by file number.

2. The ASETS Coordinator prepares the applicant request which includes: a brief summary of the barriers to employment, the type of funding sought, connection to the needs assessment, funding amount, and dates. All information is then provided to the Selection Committee.

3. Two of three members of the Selection Committee are required for approval.

4. <u>Acceptance of any funding request is subject to availability of financial resources</u>.

5. Requests for special project funding (funded client interventions and group training overseen by NWAC Head Office), will follow the LMD selection review process.

7.3 Reasons for Non-Approval for Funding

1. <u>Insufficient funding available – appeals not permitted for this reason.</u>

2. The request is not employment-related or is not sufficiently supported by labour market information of the client's action plan (including conferences and/or workshops).

3. The applicant has not met ASETS program eligibly criteria or policy.

4. The applicant is not a resident of Canada.

5. The applicant has not met entry requirements of the requested training.

6. Training not adequately designated or does not provide certification recognized by the industry.

7. Applicant has not provided all the necessary information for the application/file.

8. The applicant has not successfully completed programs previously funded and/or is in an unsubstantiated overpayment situation.

7.4 Appeal Process

1. When a funding application does not receive approval, the client can appeal the decision.

2. If the reason for denial of support or training is insufficient funding, appeals are not permitted.

3. The client has five (5) days to start their appeal process after receiving written notification that their request was denied.

4. Client must provide written notification to the ASETS Coordinator to begin the appeals process.

5. After receiving notification, an ad hoc Appeals Committee will be formed at the regional level. The committee will consist of three (3) Aboriginal women (who are not original Selection Committee members) and include representation from youth and Elders. Selection for the Appeals Committee will be recommended by the ASETS Coordinator and assisted by NWAC Head Office if needed. The members of the ad hoc Appeals Committee must be identified and noted in the client file.

6. The ASETS Coordinator must provide all necessary information to the committee, while maintaining client confidentiality. The package will contain the training application, the response, letter of denial and the appeal letter.

7. The appeal committee will review package and may ask for additional information and may request support from NWAC Head Office to assist in their decision making.

8. Decisions must be made by the Appeals Committee within 5 days. Two of three committee member approvals are required.

9. The decision to approve or deny the application is final.

7.5 Client Notification

1. If approved, a letter outlining sponsorship details is sent to the client, as well as a training contract. This letter of confirmation must also be signed by the client and returned to the ASETS Coordinator who will place it in the client's file. The purpose of this letter is to ensure the client understands and accepts the terms and conditions of the approved funding.

2. If not approved, the ASETS Coordinator will inform the applicant in writing of the reasons for decline, and provide the applicant with information concerning the appeal process.

8 Contract Process

8.1 Amendments

1. If a client requires additional support not determined in the initial needs assessment, an amendment can be made to the contract by the ASETS Coordinator if it is under $ 500. New unexpected costs in excess of $ 500 are subject to approval from the Selection Committee.

2. ASETS Coordinators will make the official amendment to the client contract outlining the changes in funding amounts and clearly note rationale in the client file.

8.2 Termination

1. If a client stops training without providing notification or acceptable rationale, the contract will be deemed terminated as the terms have not been met. This may place the client in an overpayment situation and jeopardize requests for future funding.

8.3 Non-Completion of Funded Training

1. If a client is unable to continue their training program for any reason it must be reported to the ASETS Coordinator as soon as possible.

2. Extenuating circumstances may be considered with recommendation of ASETS Coordinator and clearly noted in the client file, as well as KETO.

9 Client Tracking and Monitoring

9.1 Client Tracking

1. ASETS Coordinators must maintain a summary of client commitments to ensure the total funding allocation is not exceeded, and to track clients in waiting.

2. The KETO database must be kept current and all data must be recorded (with corresponding paper file copy kept in the individual client file).

3. Client follow-up to obtaining results and closing the file must be conducted by the ASETS Coordinator at twelve (12) weeks post-completion of the intervention. Results and outcome must be documented in the file and KETO database.

4. Outstanding documentation is collected and completion incentive if applicable (as per Eligible Costs) is provided at this time.

9.2 Client Monitoring

1. A regular system of monitoring each client's progress such as attendance and payroll records must be implemented and documented.

2. Clients must notify ASETS Coordinators and the training institution of any absences.

3. Absences without notification, follow-up documentation, or a medical note are considered unauthorized and may be deducted from the allowance payments, if applicable.

4. Clients must be notified immediately of any deductions or payment delays.

5. ASETS Coordinators are required to check in with clients during training or employment placements to ensure activity is running smoothly.

6. Site visits to training institutions and employer sites should be conducted periodically, especially in the cases of new partnerships.

9.3 Close Out

1. The purpose of the close-out is to complete the full client file activities including whether or not the contract was completed.

2. As part of the close-out report, the ASETS Coordinator documents the intervention as completed in the KETO case management system (including whether or not the client was able to be contacted during and following the intervention).

3. The contract reporting amount must be amended to reflect actual costs of the intervention.

4. 12 weeks after the intervention completion date, the ASETS Coordinator is required to complete the 12-week follow-up form, which must be uploaded to the KETO database case management system.

5. Upon successful completion and follow up confirmed with client, the ASETS Coordinator performs the close out, and issues the stipend directly to the client.

Canada

NWAC wishes to acknowledge support for this project through the Government of Canada's ASETS Program