



Native Women's
Association of Canada



L'Association des
femmes autochtones
du Canada

Aboriginal Skills and Employment Training Strategy (ASETS)

Orientation Manual – Partnerships and Procedures

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Introduction

The Native Women’s Association of Canada (NWAC) currently holds a national Aboriginal Skills and Employment Training Strategy (ASETS) agreement with the Government of Canada. In the broader context, ASETS is designed to help Aboriginal people prepare for, find, and keep jobs in high demand industries. Programs and services include:

- Skills development;
- Training for high-demand jobs;
- Job finding;
- Programs for youth;
- Programs for urban and Aboriginal people with disabilities; and
- Access to child care.

Fostering partnerships is identified by Economic Social Development Canada (ESDC) as one of three national pillars of the ASETS program. As NWAC recognizes the importance of this component in furthering Aboriginal women’s participation in the labour market, this document has been developed to guide the expansion and continuation of partnerships at the national, regional, and local levels.

For the purposes of this policy, partnerships will refer to those agreements that conform to NWAC’s mandate to “achieve equality for all Aboriginal women in Canada”. More specifically, partnerships will be negotiated and formed on the basis of ensuring there are opportunities for Aboriginal women in the labour market. It is anticipated that through these partnerships, employment and training opportunities will allow Aboriginal women to secure full-time, well-paying, and meaningful jobs to support the needs of themselves and their families.

1. Guiding Principles

NWAC recognizes the strength and value of creating effective labour market related partnerships to increase the number of jobs filled by Aboriginal women, particularly in demand driven industries and jobs. The following principles will guide us to positive results for the women we represent.

- NWAC values the assets that each partner brings to a partnership.
- Partnership development will only be considered if there is recognition for NWAC and our mandate.
- Partnerships will be formalized through the development of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) or contract partnership agreement.
- Potential partnerships will be evaluated to identify risks and benefits prior to beginning a partnership or relationship.

- An effective partnership begins and ends with communication. NWAC recognizes the need to be open and transparent with potential partners in relation to their mandate and how it fits into NWAC’s mandate, objectives, and project criteria.
- NWAC will promote and support the work of each partner through recognition, acknowledgments, and promotional material, as appropriate.
- Partnership success must be clearly defined with measurable objectives. Expectations need to be set and project roles and processes must be established for clear, regular communication, coordination, accountability, and reporting.
- NWAC will remain cognisant of external labour market factors that might affect the result or outcome of a project nationally or in a specific region.
- NWAC will measure and evaluate the success of the partnership once it is completed. Evaluation of a partnership will look at initiation of the project, major milestones, and impact on Aboriginal women.
- Potential partnerships will be formed with provincial or territorial government partners, educational institutions, training institutions, and private sector employers.
- Provincial and Territorial Member Associations (PTMAs) may also enter into partnerships with organizations, governments, or post-secondary institutions in their region.

2. Considering Potential Partnerships

NWAC/PTMA’s will have different values and beliefs than many of the partners that we will seek. Debates about differences often leave little room for compromise and create division instead of unity. It is important to understand and respect other values (often found through a departmental or corporate mission statement that is posted online) early in the relationship. Each potential partner has a set of values, which may be reflected in the partnership; however, it would be rare to find the entire partner’s (including NWAC and PTMA’s) institutional values formally addressed. In fact, too much emphasis on values and principles reflected in agreements could impede progress to obtain the desired results.

The following is a checklist of key considerations that needs to be worked through prior to any formal agreement:

- a. Does the company/organization/institution share a common interest or shared goal in advancing labour market development for Aboriginal women?
- b. Does the partner offer opportunities for a successful, long-term partnership?
- c. Does the organization possess the expertise, resources, reach, and assets that would complement and make the potential partnership successful?
- d. Can individuals be identified within both the partner organization, NWAC and/or the PTMA to facilitate and champion the project?

- e. Does the partner organization share the same targets as NWAC and/or the PTMA (i.e. number of individuals employed from the project)?
- f. What are the costs, risks, benefits, and opportunities in moving forward with a partnership? (i.e. cost per individual, chance of success, etc.)
- g. Is the partner organization one that NWAC and/or the PTMA would like to be associated with?
- h. Will all partnership parties have the capacity to fulfill their commitments? How can any shortcomings be mitigated?
- i. Does the partnership align with NWAC and/or the PTMA's requirements as an ASETS holder?
- j. Would the potential partner like a presentation for key staff about NWAC and/or the PTMA?

2.1 Partnership Procedure

2.1.1 Identifying Potential Partners

1. NWAC, through the Aboriginal Skills, Employment and Training Strategy (ASETS), is required to foster partnerships with the private sector and the provinces and territories as part of its agreement.
2. Partnerships must be formed based on supporting demand-driven skills development for Aboriginal women in Canada.
3. The purpose of each partnership is to leverage NWAC's funds, knowledge, and opportunities by working with partners that can also provide employment and training opportunities for Aboriginal women.
4. The NWAC LMD department will identify demand-driven skill areas to inquire about potential partnerships with educational institutions, government, training facilities, and private sector employers.
5. PTMA ASETS Coordinators will assist in partnership development in their region by identifying potential opportunities where the LMD department can make inquiries.
6. The LMD department will approach potential partners at a national, provincial/territorial, regional, or local level in order to initiate and facilitate the partnership process.

2.1.2 Starting the Process (Building Partnerships)

1. The LMD department and PTMA ASETS Coordinator will begin by researching and identifying any potential partners that may exist at a national or provincial/territorial level which will enhance the employment and training opportunities of Aboriginal women. The LMD department will take the initial lead in the process and will initiate contact to identified partners to gauge interest on a potential initiative.

2. The PTMA will be notified when NWAC is meeting with a potential partner that conducts operations exclusively in the PTMA territory. For potential partners that conduct operations nationally, appropriate or all PTMA's will be notified of NWAC partnership engagement.
3. The LMD department will schedule a meeting with any potential partners. If the partner works exclusively in one particular region, then that regional PTMA ASETS Coordinator and all necessary staff will also be invited to that meeting.
4. In advance of the meeting, the LMD department will conduct background research on the organization and share the information with the PTMA ASETS Coordinator as necessary.
5. Following the meeting the LMD department (and PTMA ASETS Coordinator if applicable), will evaluate and assess the potential partnership to determine the viability of entering into a partnership agreement.
6. Once a comprehensive evaluation has been completed, the NWAC LMD department will inform any potential partner of NWAC's decision regarding the project initiative.
7. If NWAC decides to move forward with a partnership, the Labour Market Development Director, Partnership or Outreach Coordinator and ASETS coordinator will discuss internally the necessary requirements for defining the parameters of the partnership.
8. A second meeting will be scheduled with the potential partner organization(s) to discuss, in greater detail, the structure and responsibilities of all members of the potential partnership.
9. In the second meeting, it is important that the LMD department Partnership Coordinator and the ASETS Coordinator gather the necessary information to create a formalized partnership agreement that is mutually acceptable to all parties involved in the project initiative. Some of the information potentially gathered at this point in the exploratory discussions will be as follows:
 - a. Potential Members – Who needs to be involved and at what level? What is each member bringing to the partnership table? Who is responsible for the overall project?
 - b. Partnership Relationships – What are the individual responsibilities, arrangements and objectives of the project? Who will lead the project? Who will have responsibility for moving the partnership forward? What are the accountability arrangements?

- c. Identify a shared vision and goal for the project – Why is this project being set up? How does the project fit within NWAC’s or the PTMA mandate? How does the project fit within the mandate of the potential partner?
 - d. Determine plans and priorities and targets – What are the necessary action items to ensure project success? What are the milestones that must be met? How many Aboriginal women will this project assist? What are the responsibilities of each member of the partnership? What will the project achieve? Will additional funds or in-kind contributions need to be leveraged?
 - e. Determine the function and nature of the partnership – Has the nature of the partnership been established? Is this a formal partnership?
 - f. Identify benefits for the target group – How will this impact Aboriginal women and lead to employment or training opportunities? Are jobs guaranteed? Are there other future employment opportunities?
10. Following the second meeting, the LMD department Partnership Coordinator, PTMA ASETS Coordinator, and Labour Market Development Director will make a final decision on developing this partnership. Should there be an affirmative decision; the process of developing a formalized partnership agreement will begin.

2.1.3 Setting up the Partnership

1. After confirming that all parties are in agreement to move forward with a partnership, clear procedures will need to be developed. This can be done in the form of a partnership agreement or a memorandum of understanding (MOU). The partnership agreement or MOU will set out the key aims, objectives, and outcomes of the partnership which will form the terms of reference.
2. When formulating a partnership agreement or MOU, both NWAC and partner organizations must take the time to answer the following questions related to their partnership:
 - a. Is there a genuine shared vision and set of goals across the partnership?
 - b. Are there clearly identified aims that all partners can articulate and agree to?
 - c. Is the purpose of the partnership clear? Are the members clear on what their role and responsibilities are? Are members clear on the “added value” that each brings to the partnership?
 - d. What skills and competencies do we need to manage to support the partnership? Has a full assessment been made of the skill and competencies required to support/manage the partnership?
 - e. To whom will the partnership report? Is there a process on reporting?

- f. Is there an accepted process for decision-making? Who is accountable for the partnership?
 - g. Is there an accepted performance management framework? Are processes in place to monitor performance and act on results? Do defined criteria exist against which to benchmark achievements?
 - h. Is there an accepted commitment to joint investments/resources to support the partnership by all organizations/individuals?
 - i. Is there a robust communication strategy in place? Do partners know about each other's organizations and what the pressures and imperatives are? Do partners talk to each other about their organizations, agendas, and priorities?
 - j. Are there accepted ground rules for partnership work that include the reconciliation of different organizational cultures and ways of working?
 - k. Is there an accepted program for partners to invest time so they can identify and agree to the vision, goals, and targets?
 - l. Is there a clear, measurable plan for administering the partnership? Is the plan clearly linked to partnership aims and objectives, and do all parties agree to this plan?
 - m. Are there clear processes in place to ensure all new members of the partnership are well informed of its purpose, aims, and objectives?
3. NWACs LMD department will outline the terms of reference and draft the partnership agreement for approval by NWAC signatories and the partner(s). Should a PTMA be involved in the process, PTMA signatories will also be required.

2.1.4 Implementing the Agreements

- 1. The LMD department will work with partner organizations to ensure that the agreement is implemented as agreed upon.
- 2. The LMD department will provide regular updates to PTMA Coordinators regarding new partnerships to see if there are goals and requests from Aboriginal women in the regions.

2.1.5 Monitoring the Agreements

- 1. The LMD department will review all of the Partnership Agreements. He/she will prepare a partnership report for the NWAC Executive Committee that highlights the successes, challenges and outcomes of current partnerships. This report will also include information on potential partners and the status of any agreements currently being negotiated.

2.2 NWAC Partnership Responsibility

1. Partnership, being one of the three pillars of the ASETS program, is a priority area. NWAC must provide the Government of Canada with a full breakdown of partners, contributions, and results achieved for each partnership.
2. NWAC will use partnerships to extend program reach, increase organizational capacity, and create a diversified funding base.
3. NWAC will use the partnerships to improve employment outcomes for Aboriginal women living off-reserve.
4. A special emphasis will be placed on leveraging employer partnerships to attain greater value for money spent.
5. New partners are considered those who have not previously partnered. NWAC will work toward forming new partners on a yearly basis and work to continue existing partnerships with “old” or previous partners.
6. NWAC will maintain strong governance practices and clear accountabilities in respect to its partners.
7. NWAC will refer to the ESDC endorsed “Partnership Development Handbook” to assist with establishing, maintaining, and assessing partnerships. The manual has tools available for each phase of the partnership cycle and will also provide clarity on what is considered a partnership.
8. NWAC will consider a Targeted Wage Subsidy for a partnership if it is driven by:
 - a. Mutual benefits (provide value for each party);
 - b. Shared risk, responsibility, and accountability (each partner has stake in the oversight of the initiative); and
 - c. Pooled resources (each partner invests something of value (monetary or in-kind)).

3. Conclusion

Strong and viable partnerships don’t just happen. They need to be understood, properly developed and well maintained. NWAC understands that there is capacity and resources required to seek ASETS partnerships. This capacity will develop continuity in procedures and protocol and help NWAC and PTMA’s move towards obtaining positive employment results with the support of partners. Working as a collective with partners is more effective than working in isolation. Relying only on a single network and skill set is not conducive to the knowledge that is required in today’s economy. Communication in both developing and maintaining partnerships will be paramount as NWAC moves forward and supports national and regional partnerships.



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