



# YOUTH EMPLOYMENT: SKILLS LINK PROGRAM FINAL REPORT

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## AHB&R Sector Council: Background

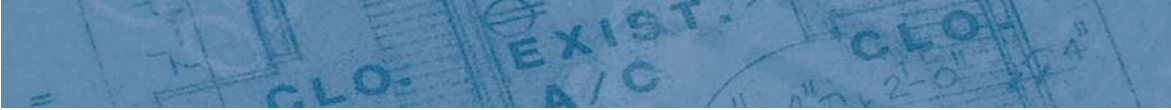
### 1.0 AHB&RSC Background

Established initially in 1991 as a non-profit organization incorporated in Nova Scotia, the Atlantic Home Building and Renovation Industry Sector Council (AHB&RSC) operates as a human resources council for the residential new home building and renovation industry in the Atlantic Provinces. A Board of Directors administers the Sector Council, with industry representation from organizations active in various aspects of new home building and renovation in Nova Scotia. Provincial Sectoral Partnership Working Groups are established on an ad hoc basis to develop and oversee specific projects in New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island, and Newfoundland and Labrador.

The Sector Council promotes increased awareness within the industry of the need for an ongoing commitment to human resources planning – as a key investment in its future viability. It works with a variety of public and private partners to improve the development and accessibility of high quality, state-of-the-art programs to support a more effective use of housing technology in better building practices in the Atlantic Region. The AHB&RSC has also provided exposure to expert industry trainers from across Canada, while at the same time worked to establish closer relationships with community colleges in our region. It is committed to cooperating with the public education institutions in the Atlantic Provinces to ensure an ongoing transfer of industry knowledge and expertise into their training programs, and to encourage recognition of previously acquired skills. This is viewed this as an opportunity to assist the colleges in upgrading their industry curricula and the skills of their teachers.

The AHB&RSC has also participated with related industry organizations in a number of strategic planning initiatives with respect to the skills requirements of the industry. These have included:

- ▲ Occupational analyses and career path planning;
- ▲ Labour market planning and adjustment;
- ▲ Industry certification and apprenticeship training;
- ▲ Career counseling and targeted skills development for the seasonally unemployed;
- ▲ Customized approaches to industry health and safety issues;
- ▲ Development of consistent, national standards for industry skills and training.



This groundwork laid by the Canadian Home Builders' Association (CHBA), as the national industry association, and AHB&RSC provincial counterparts elsewhere in Canada, have provided a framework and a focus for Nova Scotia initiatives undertaken in this Province. In light of ongoing discussions about increased cooperation for economic benefits within the Atlantic Region, reduced trade barriers - inter-provincially and with the United States - and an increasing emphasis on international competitiveness, there is a consensus on the critical importance of a skilled, professional workforce. The AHB&RSC considers this to be an essential pre-condition that will enable companies to take advantage of the opportunities provided through these initiatives.

## Project Description

### 2.0 Project Description

#### 2.1 Project Background


The Atlantic Home Building and Renovation Sector Council supports the professionalism of the residential construction sector by providing leadership and direction in a number of areas: occupational and labour market analyses; career counseling for enhanced employment opportunities; developing industry standards for occupational licensing, training and trades certification; skills upgrading to take advantage of technological changes; and exploring ways that residential construction can improve the economic capacity of local communities. Close ties with employers and employees, sector-related government departments and agencies, and industry organizations, allow the Sector Council to draw upon a broad range of resources and expertise in addressing these concerns.

The mandate of the AHB&R Sector Council (see Appendix A) had the organization well placed to partner with HRDC on the Skills Link program to support enhanced employability for targeted young people in the Province, as well as increase employer contribution to the long-term human resources development capacity of the Nova Scotia residential construction industry.

This proposal also builds on the intent of the Memorandum of Understanding between HRDC, the Province of Nova Scotia, and the AHB&RSC as a member of the AISC. As the Province moves forward with the development of a Youth Apprenticeship Program under the Skills Nova Scotia Framework, Sector Councils can provide an important resource for the coordination and implementation of youth employment projects within and between their industries. While other Sector Councils have been active in the delivery of youth programs for several years, the residential construction sector has not been able to take advantage of opportunities to do so. This project is intended to address the program planning and development phase, so the Council is prepared to move quickly to implement youth employment projects in the Province, if and when resources become available to support this activity.

#### 2.2 Labour Market Issues

The residential construction industry continues to experience severe skilled labour shortages in many trades occupations, a trend that is expected to worsen over the next decade. The industry has



become less seasonal in nature with evolving technologies, new occupations, and an increased growth of renovation sector activity that can allow for year-round employment. Wage levels and working conditions are beginning to improve for some residential trades in some parts of the Province. These labour market changes in the sector can support industry efforts to be more active in promoting full-time, permanent trades careers among young people. However, entry to residential trades training programs across the Province remains low and there continues to be a negative perspective of trades careers among parents, teachers, guidance counselors and other career development practitioners. In response to these conditions, the Sector Council has encouraged a partnership with the Nova Scotia Home Builders' Association and key employers in the Province to develop components of a youth employment program that can:

- ▲ provide a more realistic exposure to skilled residential construction trades career options through work experience;
- ▲ provide links to mentorship opportunities that can lead to long-term employment options; and
- ▲ encourage increased participation in apprenticeship and industry certification programs.

### **2.3 Project Objectives**

In February 2004, the AHB&RSC received funding from Human Resources Development Canada – Nova Scotia Region to undertake a research project under the Skills Link Program with the following objectives:

- ▲ to review literature and *best practices* in the development and delivery of industry-driven, client-focused youth employment support programs for the residential construction sector in Canada;
- ▲ to consider the scope, program guidelines and criteria for a pan-provincial youth employment program for the residential construction sector in Nova Scotia;
- ▲ to identify particular program criteria that can support the successful participation of youth currently facing barriers to employment, and guide the role of employers in the residential construction sector in Nova Scotia to respond to the needs of this targeted group; and



- ▲ to involve Nova Scotia new home building and renovation employers in the development and validation of the program criteria, both to ensure a realistic capacity of employers to meet client-focused objectives for development of employability and occupational skills, and to support sector efforts to encourage more young people to consider careers in the residential construction industry.

In addressing the project objectives, the AHB&RSC undertook the following activities over a three-month period:

- ▲ established a Project Advisory Committee;
- ▲ reviewed literature on key components of a youth employment mentoring program;
- ▲ researched *best practices* of youth employment programs across Canada, and mentorship programs specific to the residential construction sector;
- ▲ building upon the above research, developed an approach for a residential construction sector youth employment mentorship program for Nova Scotia;
- ▲ re-established links to existing Nova Scotia organizations and others promoting residential construction trades to youth;
- ▲ coordinated a Focus Group consultation with selected employer representation from Bridgewater, Kentville, Sydney and Halifax Regional Municipality, for input and validation of the proposed program; and
- ▲ prepared a final project report.

The project results are described in the following sections of the report.

### 3.0 Best Practices in Residential Construction Youth Employment and Mentorship Programs

The project undertook a review of several examples of youth programs across Canada, which involved sector councils, employers, High Schools, Colleges and private providers. Most of these sources have provided template samples of program and documentation materials that they are willing to share with the AHB&RSC. Also for most, there was an expressed enthusiasm for a more consistent and coordinated approach across the country and across occupations, to support the development of enhanced, high quality, appropriate and mutually-recognized programs.

Key informant interviews (see Appendix C) were conducted to explore the following specific components of youth employment mentorship, which are being considered by the Project Advisory Committee for the Nova Scotia program:

- ▲ Screening, orientation, sector job search and interview guidelines;
- ▲ Procedures to identify and assess pre-employment skills gaps in employability, occupational, safety and technical areas;
- ▲ Special requirements to enhance program success for targeted youth at risk, and women in the workplace;
- ▲ Components of an Employment Action Plan;
- ▲ Employment portfolio development guidelines for documentation of skills and knowledge competencies acquired in the workplace;
- ▲ Development of program criteria and guidelines for employers and on-site mentors;
- ▲ Components and logistics for on-site work experience;
- ▲ Client options for pursuing trades training and certification; and
- ▲ Development of monitoring, evaluation and follow-up procedures.

These components are considered in the description of each of the programs that follow.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The quotations in the program descriptions come directly from the Key Informant Interviews or supporting program information provided by the Key Informant.





### 3.1 Carma Centre for Excellence

The Carma Centre for Excellence has a membership of several Calgary home builders and developers who are committed to excellence and value in residential construction in their city. They have coordinated a mentorship program for five years, involving more than 200 students to date with a core group of 40 to 60 employers. The program is part of the Calgary Board of Education (CBE) *Career Pathways* program, which places approximately 1500 young people in summer employment positions throughout the Calgary area. The program is also linked to the Registered Apprenticeship Program (RAP) through Alberta Learning.

The Carma Centre's involvement initially focused on career awareness: "the program's goal is to introduce students to real world applications of skills learned in high school and explore potential career paths". In 2004 however, the program is shifting to a mentorship approach towards career development, with the emphasis on quality of learning rather than the quantity of students participating in the program. In support of this, Carma Centre staff is building a series of Skills Profiles through research on current training programs and matching these against occupational descriptions. This work has started with fundamental trades but is being expanded to include other occupational skills areas such as marketing and leadership, with the intent to link these more closely to a customized co-op program with local High Schools. Under the current program, students receive High School credits for the work-term but employers may also indenture the students so the latter can obtain credits towards Apprenticeship.

The Carma Centre program targets parents and students, describing how individuals can ladder in the industry. The CBE is responsible for much of the administration of the Program, including the following activities: inspecting to ensure safe worksites and responsible employers, screening participants, developing learning plans, delivering the pre-employment training, and monitoring the program. Employers are responsible for providing safe workplaces and are required to be Occupational Health and Safety compliant with provincial regulations. Participating youth provide their own shoes and gloves; employers provide hard hats. Wages are typically between \$8.50 and \$12.00/hour plus mandatory benefits. WCB coverage is funded by the Province as it is recognized that this could otherwise be a significant barrier, particularly for small employers. Students are supervised at all times and the



school instructor makes periodic drop-in site visits. The summer employment period involves a minimum of 150 hours but more typically reaches 250 hours and, occasionally, more.

### **3.1.1 Calgary Board of Education**

Integral to the current Carma Centre's initiative, but broader than that, is the *Career Pathways* program of the Calgary Board of Education referenced above. The Building Construction Technology program is one of 10 *Career Pathways* involving 1400 students in all. Others programs are available for health and tourism sectors, etc., but this is the most developed and is the program that the CBE operates in cooperation with the Carma Centre for Excellence. The program involves placing students in work situations for High School credit (25 hours/credit; 100 credits are required for a High School certificate), but also to build up employment skills and try out some occupations when there is little to lose. Students can participate in the Registered Apprenticeship Program (RAP) and have recognition for their training while also earning High School Credits. Many follow this route after a 125-hour pre-requisite introductory work experience component. This is essentially an extended interview between the student and the employer that starts early in July each year, and can then feed into a longer-term work situation or RAP. Some students might start on a summer program and, if there was a good fit (between the student and the employer, and between the student and the occupation), they might carry on through the fall semester, not actually returning to school until February of the following year. The CBE views the program as a win-win situation for everyone, especially the student.

If the student decides to pursue RAP, a contract is signed between the employer, the student and the Apprenticeship Branch of Alberta Learning, so the student can gain credit for the on-site work. The employer then agrees to support the student through the Apprenticeship classroom component.

The CBE sometimes uses *Careers: The Next Generation* to identify prospective employers. The Carma Centre assumes the responsibility for identifying participating employers for their program.

Every student is required to take a pre-requisite training program. The development of the curriculum for this is coordinated by CBE and *Career Pathways* staff, with input from the industry. As noted above, the Carma Centre is developing occupational Skills Profiles and these will be considered in future course development. Components of the CBE training currently include:



- ▲ career transition (résumés, research, etc.);
- ▲ personal safety (including Emergency First Aid);
- ▲ workplace safety (sometimes enhanced with an 8-hour, industry-specific session); and
- ▲ learning plans based upon the 1<sup>st</sup> year skills in the Apprenticeship training manuals; these are validated by employers and may also address skills areas such as the Conference Board of Canada's *employability skills* - employers indicate that the soft skills are more important than technical skills); the learning plan identifies what the students know (and need to know) before they start, and what they know when they finish.

Work placements are supervised by 'off campus' teachers, who try to visit sites every 25 hours or so. These teachers also carry out the initial visits of every potential worksite to ensure that they will be positive and safe worksites for the participants. Finally, teachers often visit the sites with the students for 'home show' events.

Documentation may or may not include a log book. Files are maintained on all students and include: transcripts, pre-requisite training results, safety certificates, and teachers' notes (these are critical and must be documented in case any future problems arise). The files also contain evaluations by employers and time sheets that each student must complete and have signed by the employer/site supervisor.

Students work in many trade areas: framing, cribbing, plumbing/heating (electrical is harder to get), sheet metal fabrication, landscaping, painting and decorating (generally, females who were not allowed to use rollers but did paint railings, stairwells, etc), and architectural drafting. Students developed varying depths of skills, depending upon their interest and ability. With the plumber, students go through three phases of work: on the service truck, fabricating the parts, and then installation. This approach is very successful.

Students are covered through WCB by the Province, from 7am to 10pm. It is accepted that employers should not carry this risk (there have been accidents). Employer may provide hard hats and glasses. Students provide their own boots as this is considered to be a personal preference.



The CBE program has been very successful, expanding steadily since first introduced. It is popular with Schools Boards, students and parents, and is used as a model for similar programs across Canada.

### **3.2 HardHATS in British Columbia**

*HardHATS* is an entry-level, residential construction trades training initiative of Grant-Thornton LLP, a national accounting and management consulting firm in Canada and part of Grant Thornton International. *HardHATS* builds on the Grant Thornton Job Placements Inc (GTJPI) *Destinations* program, a Tourism employment program delivered in partnership with the Council of Tourism Associations of British Columbia (COTA) that has been operating in British Columbia since 1994. *Destinations* is designed to assist in addressing the need for a “trained and stable workforce to meet the needs of the growing tourism industry over the long-term”. The program maintains a database of over 1,600 jobs orders through a network of over 10,000 employers. It has placed almost 17,000 BC Employment and Assistance clients into tourism jobs throughout the Province over the past eight years. GTJPI provides options of *fee for service* and *performance-based contracts* in administering its programs, and offers full operational and financial support.

In October 2002, GTJPI entered into a partnership with the Canadian Home Builders’ Association of British Columbia (CHBA-BC) to deliver *HardHATS* training and employment support to 168 individuals on income assistance. The program is funded under the Training for Jobs Pilot Program of the Ministry of Human Resources and involves 10-week training intakes of 21 individuals for each, in two locations in the Province.

HardHATS was developed to address shortages in the residential construction sector resulting from an aging workforce, reduced levels of immigrant tradespeople and fewer young people entering the trades. At the same time, it is intended to reduce dependency upon Income Assistance for individuals who might benefit from a “stepping-stone to an apprenticeship program in trades”. Key components are:

- ▲ participant screening;
- ▲ 10-weeks of training;
- ▲ job readiness support;



- ▲ job placement; and
- ▲ up to 18 months of monitoring and support.

The program involves both classroom and hands-on exposure to a variety of trades including: electrical, plumbing, carpentry, roofing, welding and mechanical training. Guest speakers and site visits are part of the program activities. The job readiness component includes: life skills, trades overview, labour market research, job search, career management strategies, and safety training in areas of WHMIS, occupational first aid and fall protection.

As with the other programs reviewed, there are specific criteria that apply to participant selection. Individuals must be in receipt of BC Employment and Assistance, be able and willing to work a minimum of 30 hours/week, be between the ages of 18 and 50, and have an interest and desire to work in construction.

Training and employment action plans are developed for each participant once they have been assessed and approved for the program. The training is typically delivered through a local Community College and the employment opportunities are pursued through CHBA-BC and the Victoria Construction Association. GTJPI provides ongoing support to both the program participants and the employers in areas of job issues management, resolution and coaching, and assisting the individual with re-employment strategies – all of these as required.

Recently, CHBA-BC has expressed interest in exploring the development of a customized HardHATS program that could have a stronger residential focus, serving as the Core Home Building Entry Skills component of their new training model for a Home Building Career Pathway that can also support bridging and laddering between home building careers.

GTJPI is currently promoting the HardHATS trades training to a number of Aboriginal communities and is exploring a partnership initiative with CHBA-BC to undertake this in British Columbia. They have also approached the AHB&RSC to consider the appropriateness of the program for Nova Scotia.



### **3.3 The Centre: Skills Development and Training**

The Centre: Skills Development and Training is located in Burlington, Ontario. The organization works with various partners: governments, industry associations and unions, employers and trades, individuals and school boards. Its mandate is to support the development of new and existing skills for construction trades. The Centre has a core youth program, called Career Explorations, but also has several ongoing programs that address specific target areas, for example: women (Home Service Technician); soft skills and portfolio (Get it in Gear); safety; and basic skills/job readiness (DoorWays).

The Centre's programs target out-of-school youth, with an average age of 22 years. These youth can still obtain six High School credits if they complete the full program. Projects start with an information session and initial interview. Once approved, the participants commence a three-phased program including:

- ▲ 10-week in-class component that addresses soft skills and safety;
- ▲ 10-week on-site placement with a construction employer; and
- ▲ 18-week period of paid-work.

Stipends are paid for 17 of the first two 10-week components, usually at a minimum wage rate of \$8/hour. WCB coverage and safety are financed through The Centre for the first two phases. WCB coverage is then financed by the employer for the third phase. The employer also provides students with hard hats and pays for the cost of the Fall Arrest training. The employer also donates materials for the in-class training component.

For many of their youth programs, and for several years, the Centre has worked with Mattamy Homes in the Greater Toronto area. Mattamy Homes has been a key and very supportive employer. The company has just recently backed out of the program as they undergo major re-structuring and expansion. Monarch Homes, another large developer and new home builder in the Toronto area, quickly moved in to fill the vacancy. The Centre's program has an excellent reputation and, as a result, has several employers on a waitlist to participate should the opportunity become available.



Students are monitored through all phases and Log Books are maintained to document skills development. The Log Books provide the basis for the High School credits, if applicable.

The Centre provides all students with safety boots, safety glasses and a tool kit valued at \$500. These are provided to the student at no charge, although students are required to pay a \$500 fee to participate in the program. The intent of the fee is to have individuals demonstrate a serious commitment to stay with the project to completion.

The Centre offers comprehensive programs that extend from basic career awareness for new entrants to literacy and technical skills upgrading for older trades people. Their materials are very professional, all of which have been made available to the AHB&RSC. They have a strong employer network and considerable credibility with industry and educational institutions in the Greater Toronto area.

### **3.3.1 Mattamy Homes**

Mattamy Homes has been an exemplary residential construction sector employer for several years, supporting youth employment opportunities in the South Ontario area. As part of their involvement, Mattamy organized an awareness presentation for students, parents and teachers. As well, both representatives from the company, and students and teachers involved in their programs, have made numerous presentations to industry and employer groups, to increase awareness of the benefits of a strong industry involvement in a partnership approach to the promotion and development of construction trades among young people.

Working with The Centre (see above), most crews of students were involved with the home builder (in framing only), but some also did job shadowing with sub-trades (electricians and HVAC). Training was coordinated by The Centre, as well as project administration. Safety training was completed at the school, before students arrived on the jobsite. Students all came to the jobsite with hard hats, tool belts with their own tools, and safety boots. A supervisor was always at the jobsite and a teacher was with the students at all times.

Mattamy Homes is, for the present, no longer involved with youth projects. The company is going through a re-organization, dividing into four separate companies that will operate autonomously. The



individual companies may or may not decide to become involved again with their local School Boards, or they may pursue new youth initiatives, such as mentoring with architectural design students.

### **3.4 Women in Trades & Technology (WITT)**

Women in Trades and Technology National Network (WITT NN) has been dissolved for a few years but provincial WITT programs are still active in several parts of the country. The WITT program at SIAST, SaskWITT, has the curriculum and lesson plans from WITT NN and these are available for sale. The SIAST program focuses on recruitment and retention of women in the trades, from Kindergarten to Grade 12, delivered through workshops and summer camps. The program also encourages graduates of WITT programs to continue to be involved as role models.

The most successful of the WITT NN programs is *Construction Technology for Women*, which provides structured internships for young women aged 16 to 19 years in Grades 10, 11 and 12. Students can gain equivalency for two credit courses per semester for two years (generally Grades 11 and 12, since students are required to be at least 16 years to work). Sometimes the two are taken consecutively in the same semester, which gives them a couple of periods in a row; otherwise the time is very limited. This is a hands-on program that helps women learn skills and acquire confidence that can build the foundation for careers in construction technology. The program has also been used in out-of-school situations, including on-reserve in Southern Saskatchewan where participants were granted credit from a local Community College. This delivery involved ½ day in class and ½ day on-site.

The program is career exploration of construction occupations, primarily trades but also design, architecture, surveying, etc. It includes strong role-modeling elements, hands-on use of tools and tasks, life/employability skills, and a paid summer work component. Each Province and/or Territory registered the course through their respective Education Departments.

Screening has been important to WITT projects, which are women-focused and not necessarily youth-focused. The concern is to keep the women in the trades and to feed into Apprenticeship. Their experience has suggested that it really doesn't work to have males and females in the same course or camp. The males are typically too dominant and, for example, this results in situations where the girls cannot get access to the tools.





Several women previously involved in the program have set up a local construction co-op to continue the development of skills, linked to working for pay.

Another WITT course, Orientation to Trades and Technology, is a nationally-developed career program that was a very collaborative initiative. Most of the work was done in British Columbia, through which the funding was provided. The local Nova Scotia WITT group was involved in this project as well, and applied it in the Kindergarten setting for 6 to 7 year olds, and Grades 7 and 8 summer camps.

### **3.5 Automotive Human Resources Sector Council**

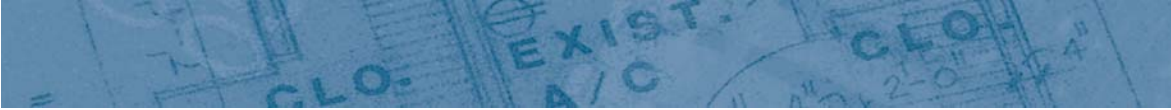
The Automotive Human Resources Sector Council has been involved in youth projects since 1998 and, over that six-year period, has coordinated the delivery of nine projects for the automotive sector in Nova Scotia. Projects have focused on improving career awareness, creating employment opportunities, developing essential pre-employment and transferable skills, and promoting industry-specific education and skills development. Projects strongly emphasize a mentoring approach that combines a sharing of knowledge, skills and experience, role modeling and moral support.

The Sector Council assumes responsibility for the project development and management, design delivery, accountability, securing involvement of industry partners, recruitment and selection of participants, payroll administration, and client intervention and counselling.

Projects start with the establishment of an Industry Advisory Group to oversee the project and act in the capacity of industry sponsor. The group includes employers who are prepared to hire participants and be mentors. The latter are involved in the development and approval of the curriculum and, whenever possible, assist in the second stage of participant screening. Initial screening is done by the Sector Council staff and involves a 15 to 20 minute interview of six to eight questions. For individuals who are successful with the initial screening, a second interview is generally arranged with the employer group.

Participating youth must meet 'youth at risk' criteria:

- ▲ disability;
- ▲ aboriginal origin;




- ▲ health, drug or alcohol-related problems;
- ▲ residence in a rural or remote location;
- ▲ residence in a lone-parent household;
- ▲ low levels of literacy or numeracy;
- ▲ visible or ethnic minority;
- ▲ street involvement;
- ▲ contact with justice, child and or social assistance; or
- ▲ other significant impediments to participating in school or the labour market.

Participants must also be between 16 and 30 years of age, and be unemployed or underemployed. Projects typically involve two phases:

- ▲ planning, development and recruitment for three months; and
- ▲ a four-month internship to introduce youth participants to the industry and the variety of professions within it.

The internship includes an orientation session, mandatory health and safety and environmental certification, pre-employment skills, job shadowing and hands-on experience.

Project financing has generally been provided through Sector Council partnership agreements with the Nova Scotia Region of HRSDC (formerly HRDC). Specific categories of funding support the initial training component through consultant fees, and also cover project-related costs for administrative support and accounting, and mentor support. The latter involves a professional industry consultant (sometimes an individual recently retired from the industry) who monitors the project on an ongoing basis, provides support to the youth participants, deals with any emerging problems, and ensures that the participants are learning the curriculum. Resource people are used extensively: a banking representative for basic financial planning; Workers Compensation Board on safety-related issues; a lawyer regarding labour standards and due diligence, etc. Representatives from Apprenticeship and Skills Canada are others that are involved. Some of these provide their services for free; others charge a



fee or honorarium. There is recognition of the importance of also providing some fun through these resource people. It is not uncommon to have participants who have served jail time; this may be the first time they have talked with a lawyer outside of that experience.

An additional component of the AHRSC program is the development of leadership qualities. Each student assumes the role of leader for a day: responsible for taking attendance, reporting any problems such as travel or no lunch, and so on. Benefits funds are available to cover emergencies such as the latter. On one occasion, an out-of-town participant required assistance with hotel room costs for three days while searching for accommodation, to supplement the limited subsidies provided through the participant's local HRCC. Funds are also available to provide participants with work-related clothing, such as coveralls, and some tools (if these are not are provided as part of the training contract).


The AHRSC objectives for the youth projects are to:

- ▲ create greater career awareness among youth participants;
- ▲ demonstrate the viable career options in the automotive industry;
- ▲ enable youth participants to gain pre-employment skills;
- ▲ include 40% of participants from any one of the visible minorities, black, women, disabled and/or Aboriginal communities; and
- ▲ promote professionalism and sustainability within the industry.

It is intended that, upon completion of the program, participants will have a sufficient understanding of the industry so as to be able to decide whether they want to pursue employment in the industry or industry-related education. The Council supports the individuals in these next steps.

### **3.6 TIANS Human Resources Sector Council**

TIANS has offered the national Canadian Tourism Human Resource Council's youth program since 1995. The program is based upon an industry-driven partnership model for transition from high school to the workplace. The program targets 18 to 29 year olds and is designed to "provide individuals



with the skills and experience necessary to put themselves on a path to long-term stable employment”. Both the classroom training and onsite skills development are based upon the industry-defined Occupational Standards. The former is generally provided through the Nova Scotia Community College (NSCC) as a key partner. Industry operators provide mentorship, on-site skills development and employment. Since the first graduates of the program in 1996, 186 youth have participated. Of these, 81% have completed the training component and entered the workforce.

The focus for *Tourism Careers for Youth* is an increased awareness of career opportunities within the Tourism sector. Objectives of the program are to:

- ▲ provide a young unemployed person with the skills and experience necessary to put him/her on a path to a long-term, stable employment and career in Tourism;
- ▲ develop a stronger training culture within the Tourism industry;
- ▲ develop, and make accessible to industry, useful training tools; and
- ▲ bring together the labour market partners and their programs in such a way as to create and establish a system that will ensure an effective transition from high school to work.

In addition to the age requirement noted above, participants must meet the following criteria:

- ▲ be a high school graduate or equivalent;
- ▲ be unemployed;
- ▲ do not intend to pursue full-time studies during the proposed six-month period of the program; and
- ▲ be legally entitled to work in Canada.

The selection and orientation process is viewed by the Sector Council as a critical stage. This involves both individual and group interviews, through which an assessment is made of the potential participant’s interest and enthusiasm towards the tourism industry, communication skills, employment gaps, and ability to be “an effective team player”. Reference checks are completed for all applicants before selection is approved.



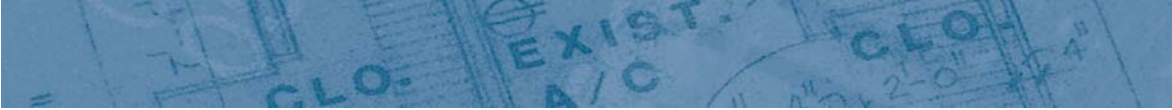
The 4-week pre-employment skills development involves 140 hours of classroom work and addresses the following:

- ▲ Career counselling;
- ▲ 105 hours of Entry Level Skills training;
- ▲ 35 hours of Technical Skills training;
- ▲ SuperHost;
- ▲ CPR;
- ▲ IGB (Good Business Responsible Beverage Program);
- ▲ National Sanitation;
- ▲ Etiquette training (industry-developed);
- ▲ Professional Image Workshop; and
- ▲ WHMIS.

The requirements of the national program are enhanced by additional provincial sessions and may be adapted to complement other training initiatives that might, for example, include Aboriginal cultural content. As well, depending upon the make-up of the classroom participants, sessions are offered to address specific needs such as violence in the workplace, sexual harassment and special issues related to disabilities. In all settings, there is encouragement to use external resources and field activities to supplement the core classroom curriculum.

Participating employers are asked to commit to at least six months of employment and training. TIANS HRC staff works with the participants and potential employers to address any gaps between employer recruitment needs and the possible program participants. When available, employers are provided with relevant materials on related Occupational Standards and, for occupational certification, trainers and participants are provided with customized workbooks.

TIANS HRC uses extensive documentation and evaluation forms, for completion by both employers and trainers at the workplace, and program participants. The Council provides ongoing contact through



on-site visits, to ensure that training is taking place and is being supported, and that monitoring is being done on a regular basis.

TIANS HRC serves as the focus group and advisory board for the youth projects. National/provincial focus groups are formed for ad hoc initiatives such as revisiting Occupational Standards. In delivering its programs, the Council has also developed many partnerships throughout the province with organizations such as Work Bridge, YMCA Enterprise, Aboriginal communities, Cape Breton Response Strategy, NSCC, Halifax Inner City Initiative, UCCB and CBBC.

## Focus Group Consultation

### 4.0 Focus Group Consultation


A Focus Group consultation was held in Halifax in April, with employers identified in Appendix A. These individuals also served as the Project Advisory Group. Additional consultations were held one-on-one with individuals who were unable to attend the Focus Group but who had expressed interest in being involved in a future youth program. Individuals were selected to provide geographic and sectoral representation.

The PowerPoint presentation in Appendix D was used to both provide an overview of the project findings and direction for input. The participants reiterated their support for a youth program for the residential construction sector in Nova Scotia, recognizing the increasing skilled labour shortages in their own companies and the expectation that this will worsen with the declining number of young people entering the construction trades. They also expressed the opinion that the latter situation has been exacerbated by the removal of trades-based vocational courses in the Junior and High School levels, and through an overemphasis on IT employment opportunities. They shared the opinion that most students are encouraged to pursue post-secondary education through universities and that they, their parents and guidance counsellors, and their peers have a negative perception of the trades as rewarding careers. They also expressed a concern that many young people graduating from High School do not have a good work ethic or a positive attitudes, or realistic expectations about the workplace. While the acquired skills of prospective employees remain a critical concern, the employers share the suggestion of several others that pre-employment preparation should address soft skills areas, such as those identified by The Conference Board of Canada:

- ▲ *Fundamental Skills*: communication, managing information, numeracy and problem-solving;
- ▲ *Personal Management Skills*: positive attitudes and behaviours, responsibility, adaptability, continuous learning and work safety; and
- ▲ *Teamwork Skills*: working with others, participating in projects and tasks.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>The Conference Board of Canada: [Employability Skills Toolkit](#). Ottawa. 2000.



The Focus Group emphasized the importance of taking a trades or sub-trades approach in exposing young people to career options in the residential construction sector. An increasing percentage of residential construction and renovation activity is being undertaken by specialist sub-trades, under supervision of the general contractor. There continues to be a very vocal concern on the part of both new home builders and residential renovators that trades training programs, and apprenticeship, have not reflected that changing structure of the industry, and this is reflected in inappropriate skills and knowledge of young people completing these programs. This puts an undue burden upon small employers who already carry responsibility for more than 80% of the skills development of new entrants. There was also an acknowledgement of the uniqueness of some renovation skills and a caution that program development needs to take this into account in identifying the specific skills that will be addressed.

Other issues and recommendations from the Focus Group are as follows:

- ▲ The Focus Group employers supported the program criteria identified in Section 3.3 and acknowledged the importance of procedures for documentation, monitoring and evaluation of project activities.
- ▲ Several employers stressed the necessity of working closely with individual employers to set appropriate timing for the employment phase, pay levels, scope of training and administrative requirements. Some employers will only be able to take one participant, and some will not be able to participate every year. There was agreement that projects should start in January or February, so participants could complete any pre-employment requirements and be prepared to start their employment in March.
- ▲ Overall administrative support should be provided by the Sector Council, recognizing that most of the employers are small companies with a very limited capacity to do this. Some employers expressed frustration with their previous experience in Provincial employment support initiatives where the burden of paperwork was prohibitive.
- ▲ Coverage of WCB premiums could be a disincentive. The employers expressed support for the approach of the Calgary Board of Education and The Centre, where WCB coverage was the responsibility of the program, rather than the employer, until the final employment stage.





- ▲ There was a positive endorsement for a formalized link to Apprenticeship, which should be providing the industry with more highly-skilled individuals, and a commitment to support any additional time that might be involved to address Apprenticeship requirements that could be achieved through the program.
- ▲ Employers want to be involved in the development of the curriculum – both for pre-employment training and on-site skills development, and in the ratios of experienced to inexperienced workers on the jobsite. The initial suggestion for the latter was that there should be two experienced workers for every inexperienced worker but recognition that this might vary in particular work situations, or for the development of specific skills.
- ▲ Employers expressed a concern that participating employers be recognized for their involvement in the program. This marketing will have a positive effect upon attracting professional employers to participate and in giving the program a higher public profile, which is critical if there is to be a reversal in the current negative attitudes towards trades occupations.
- ▲ There must be a careful selection of employers who will participate in the program and these should be identified by the Sector Council and the Project Advisory Group. Employers must be professional, operate safe worksites, provide appropriate supervision, and commit to complete the required training and documentation. Not all employers are suited to, or appropriate for, this responsibility.
- ▲ School Boards, the NSCC, Apprenticeship Training and the Provincial Department of Education must be on side in supporting the program and working with industry to ensure appropriate recognition for the skills gained through the program.
- ▲ From the perspective of the Atlantic Home Warranty Program representation, homeowners should perhaps be advised if there is a youth employment relationship in place with that employer.
- ▲ One employer emphasized that there must be a zero-tolerance policy in place with respect to drugs and alcohol.

These comments have been incorporated into the recommendations for a Nova Scotia program in Section 6.0 below.

## Potential Partnerships with Other Nova Scotia Initiatives

### 5.0 Potential Partnerships with Other Nova Scotia Initiatives

For the past several years, the AHB&R Sector Council has worked with existing Nova Scotia, Atlantic Region and national organizations, to provide input into the development and/or of delivery youth programs that have involved employment in construction trades. These have included ongoing consultations with the Halifax Inner City Initiative and some its spin-off activities, several native communities but particularly the Membertou Band in Cape Breton, the Nova Scotia Advisory Council on the Status of Women, and WITT/Lincien College based in Cornwall, Ontario. More recently, potential partnership initiatives have been discussed with SaskWITT, The Centre and Grant Thornton, the programs of which have been included in this review of best practices. The Council has been active in the review of the Apprenticeship Act for Nova Scotia that resulted in a commitment to develop a Youth Apprenticeship program for the Province. The Council has also participated in preliminary consultations with the Black Construction Association, discussions around articulation issues with the NSCC, and potential Sector Council involvement in Habitat for Humanity, Techsploration and Skills Canada-Nova Scotia.

The Sector Council does recognize the value and importance of building on current initiatives and existing programs wherever possible. However, priority issues for the Sector Council in formalizing a partnership with any of these programs or organizations would be that Occupational Standards provide the basis for curriculum and skills development, that professional employers be selected for the on-site work component, and that every effort be made to link to articulation opportunities with other, particularly public, trades training programs. Industry consultations during this Project have indicated a willingness to consider joint program development and delivery if these conditions can be met.

## Youth Employment Sector Mentorship Program for Nova Scotia

### 6.0 Youth Employment Mentorship Program for Residential Construction in Nova Scotia

Based upon the Focus Group consultations and subsequent presentations to the Central Nova, South Shore and Nova Scotia Provincial HBAs, there is a strong support for the implementation of a pan-Nova Scotia Youth Employment Mentoring program for the residential construction sector. It is agreed that, ideally, this would start with two concurrent pilot projects - one in partnership with the South Shore HBA and one in the HRM area in partnership with the Central Nova HBA.

Each of the following criteria identified in Section 3.3 were considered to be valuable. It was agreed that, for next steps, the AHB&RSC should prepare customized documents for use in a Nova Scotia program. These should be based upon the templates and resources available or offered through the Key Informant interviews. Specifically, for each of the criteria:

- ▲ Screening, orientation, sector job search and interview guidelines:


*It was agreed that these activities should be coordinated by the Sector Council, although participating employers must provide input into the development of the content and in a final interview before agreeing to take on a particular participant.*

- ▲ Procedures to identify and assess pre-employment skills gaps in employability, occupational, safety and technical areas:

*This is an important phase of the program. Again, employers want to be involved in identifying required pre-employment skills and the skills that can realistically be supported through the on-site employment component.*

- ▲ Special requirements to enhance program success for targeted youth at risk, and women in the workplace:

*There is an interest and willingness to include 'youth at risk' and women as participants. The Sector Council should identify any special requirements early on in the selection process, ensure that these will not be a barrier to successful completion of the program, and be prepared to assist employers and participants in addressing these.*

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- ▲ Components of an Employment Action Plan; Development of program criteria and guidelines for employers and on-site mentors; and Components and logistics for on-site work experience:

*These were recognized as critical components of a youth employment mentoring program, to ensure that there are clear expectations about the depth and breadth of skills to be developed under the program, and that appropriate documentation is produced. The research and Key Informant Interviews have indicated that there are already excellent templates for Employment Action Plans, program criteria and support materials for on-site activities.*

- ▲ Employment portfolio development guidelines for documentation of skills and knowledge competencies acquired in the workplace:

*The NSCC requires that a portfolio be developed by each student. The Sector Council has recommended industry involvement in the design of the portfolio, and sees advantages in a consistent approach between that used by the NSCC and the PLAR component of an industry-driven youth program.*

- ▲ Client options for pursuing trades training and certification, for full-time employment:

*The AHB&RSC has extensive experience in developing and delivery industry training programs. This involves almost 15 years of an ongoing program of management, regulatory and technical training for existing industry certification requirements. It has also involved several years of partnership agreements with HRDC throughout the Atlantic Region to oversee skills development programs for targeted EI clients. The 'Contact 4' documentation and follow-up of these program results indicated high post-training employment statistics. In many cases, the Action Plans included assisting clients who wished to pursue formalized trades training or Apprenticeship.*

- ▲ Development of monitoring, evaluation and follow-up procedures:

*As noted above, this is critical to ensure that the program is addressing sector, employer and participant needs. The industry consultations indicated a commitment to meet these requirements and, again, suggested that appropriate templates for forms and procedures are available to the Sector Council as models for these activities.*

## Conclusions and Recommendations

### 7.0 Conclusions and Recommendations

There is strong employer and industry Association support for the implementation of a residential construction sector Youth Employment Mentoring program in Nova Scotia, linked if possible to the emerging Youth Apprenticeship program for the Province. In particular, the South Shore and the HRM have been identified as the optimal locations for pilot deliveries of a program, with employers in those areas committed to participate and the Local Home Builders' Associations willing to support AHB&RSC program administration.

The review of *best practices* underway in other parts of Canada has provided examples of developmental approaches, content for pre-employment preparatory programs, curriculum for on-site skills development, templates for required documentation, and models for articulation and recognition that are relevant for a Nova Scotia program. The willingness to share these with the AHB&RSC can contribute to an improved consistency with residential construction sector programs across Canada and support mutual recognition, both which are viewed as value-added.

The Focus Group, and subsequent consultations with the Central Nova and South Shore Home Builders' Associations, identified strong employer endorsement for appropriate screening, monitoring and evaluation of the program, to ensure benefits for both the employers and the participating youth. It was recognized, however, that as the typical employers are small companies with limited capacity in this area, these are activities that will require the support, coordination and administration of the Sector Council.

In summary, it was agreed that AHB&RSC should forward to HRSDC an Expression of Interest for the funding of the two Youth Employment Mentorship pilot deliveries as soon as there is an indication that Regional program funding is available.

## Appendix A

### Appendix A: AHB&RSC Mandate

The Atlantic Home Building & Renovation Sector Council (AHB&RSC) is committed to serving as a comprehensive human resources sector council for the residential construction industry in the Atlantic Region:

- ▲ To build the leadership and organizational capacities of the residential construction industry in the Atlantic Region to address the common human resources development needs of the sector.
- ▲ To contribute to improving the competitiveness of the residential construction industry in the Atlantic Region through the development and implementation of effective and relevant human resources strategies.
- ▲ To contribute to improving the capacities of the residential construction industry in the Atlantic Region to meet the challenges of technological advance, and organizational and communications changes in the industry.
- ▲ To contribute to improving health and safety in the residential construction industry in the Atlantic Region and to ensuring that workplaces are free of personal and sexual harassment.
- ▲ To give the residential construction industry in the Atlantic Region an effective and responsible voice on human resources issues with the federal and provincial governments, and the public and private education and skills development systems.
- ▲ To contribute directly to improving access to employment in the sector for unemployed people.

AHB&RSC supports the capacity of its industry to be professional, skilled and competitive, with a safe workplace, opportunities for growth and employment, and an infrastructure for effective skills development.

## Appendix B

### Appendix B: Advisory Committee Members

The following individuals were involved in various capacities in preliminary and follow-up industry discussions, project development and Focus Group consultations.

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		Cell	902 456 4013
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Ian Startup	South Shore	Tel	902 354 4563
		Fax	902 356 3300
		Email	ian@greenneighbourhood.com

## Appendix C

### Appendix C: Key Informants for Telephone / Internet Interviews

The following individuals were contacted for Key Informant Interviews:

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Susan Pitt	Mattamy Homes	Tel	905 829 7966
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## Appendix D

### Appendix D: Employer Focus Group PowerPoint Presentation

The following PowerPoint presentation was reviewed by the Focus Group on April 28<sup>th</sup>, 2004. Click on the ICON below to view.



Acrobat Document



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